

# Incoming 6<sup>TH</sup> Grade Parent Guide

## Whatcom Middle School

810 Halleck Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
(360) 676-6460

**School hours: 9:15 am – 3:45 pm**

**Main Office and Attendance Office hours:  
8:45 am – 4:15 pm  
Counseling Office 8:45 am – 4:00 pm**



**Mascot: Wildcats  
Colors: Green & White**

### Administrative Contacts:

Beth Pelto-Fishbeck, <i>Attendance</i>	Option 1
Annika Cardwell, <i>Athletics/ASB</i>	Option 2
Beth Schille, <i>Counselor</i>	Option 3
Molly Foote, <i>Counselor</i>	Option 3
Nancy Howell, <i>Registrar/Counseling Secretary</i>	Option 3
Jeff Coulter, <i>Principal</i>	Option 4
Tina Allsop, <i>Assistant Principal</i>	Option 4
Aileen Walton, <i>Principal's Admin. Assistant</i>	Option 4

### ***The first week of school, your child will:***

- ❖ Be warmly welcomed by classroom teachers
- ❖ Be taken on a detailed tour of the school by a teacher
- ❖ Be assigned a locker in PE by the PE teachers
- ❖ Be taught the cafeteria routine (students will use the same pin number they had in 5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- ❖ Go over middle school grading and classroom expectations
- ❖ Review the student handbook with his/her teacher (available on the WMS website)
- ❖ Learn about the daily bus routine

## **PRIOR TO SCHOOL STARTING**

### **C.A.T. (Connections, Acceptance, Trust) Day – August 27, 2021, 1:00 – 3:00**

This is our orientation day designed to welcome our incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders and help familiarize them with Whatcom before they start school. They will play games, tour the school, and meet some of their classmates, as well as several 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who will be leading their groups. Class schedules and locker assignments will be given out at this time. Students who cannot attend will have their schedules mailed home the following day. Parents will have the opportunity to meet and ask questions of our PTSA officers, principal, and assistant principal.

### **Annual Information Updates**

Later in the summer, families will be notified by email to log in to their Skyward Family Access account to update and verify family information such as address, phone, emergency contacts, and student health information. If you don't know your Skyward password, you can request a password reset by going to [bellingshamschools.org](http://bellingshamschools.org), click on the Skyward link to go to the login page and select the "Forgot your Login/Password" link. Enter the email address that you have on file with your student's school to receive a re-set email.

### **Classroom Transfers/Changes**

No classroom transfers will be considered within the first ten teaching days each semester. If you have a concern about your child's placement, please contact a counselor or administrator to set up a meeting to discuss your concerns.

## ***FAQs & Miscellaneous Information***

### **SCHOOL DAY**

#### **How early can my student arrive at school?**

Students who do not ride the school bus should not arrive earlier than 8:30 am. Breakfast is available from 8:30 am to 9:10 am.

#### **What are the school hours?**

The first bell rings at 9:10 am and the late bell rings at 9:15 am. Students need to be in their seats ready to start the day at 9:15am. Dismissal is at 3:45 pm on regular days and 12:00 pm on Early Dismissal days.

#### **What are the Office Hours?**

The main office and the attendance office are open from 8:45 am to 4:15 pm – Monday through Friday. The counseling office is open from 8:45 am to 4:00 pm. On Early Dismissal days, we close at 12:00 pm.

#### **How does the A and B Day Schedule work?**

The first day of school starts with an A day and alternates A, B, A, B, for the rest of the year. A days and B days determine whether a student has their elective that day or PE. (example: elective on A days, PE on B days or vice versa). The rest of their classes remain the same on both A and B days.

#### **How do I contact my student during the school day?**

Reminders and/or information regarding appointments and after-school activities should be given at home whenever possible. We appreciate your cooperation in limiting messages to students throughout the day. Since students are expected to not use their cell phones during school hours, we advise parents/guardians to call either the main office or attendance office and leave a message for your student.

## **ATTENDANCE**

#### **What do I do if my student will be absent? \*Do not leave attendance messages with teachers!**

When your student is absent from school please call the attendance line each day at 676-6460 option 1. Please leave a message on the voicemail letting attendance know your student's name, reason for absence and whether you are "excusing them." Students will also need to bring a parent/guardian signed note to the attendance window on the day that they return to school.

#### **How do I get homework for my student if they are absent?**

The best way for students to get makeup work is to email teachers directly. Teacher email addresses are [firstname.lastname@bellingshamschools.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@bellingshamschools.org) and can also be found on the school website and on Skyward Family Access. Homework, when available, may be emailed to you or hard copies may be picked up in the homework folder located in the main office (back table) between 3:45-4:15pm.

#### **My student is going to arrive late – what should I do?**

When students are late arriving to school, please send a note with them. Upon their arrival, students must report to the attendance window with a parent/guardian signed note. You do not need to accompany them. Students without notes will have until the following morning to bring one. Lack of a note will result in an unexcused tardy.

#### **I must pull my student out of school early – What do I do?**

When students need to leave school early – **please send a signed note with them the day they need to leave early.** Students take the note to the attendance window first thing in the morning in exchange for a "permission

to leave” slip. This slip is shown to the teacher and your student leaves the premises at your specified time to meet you outside at your prearranged location. You do not need to come in.

**If you do not send a note with your student ahead of time, you will need to come in and go to the attendance window to sign your student out.** Please allow yourself plenty of time as (depending on the day - assemblies, P.E. class, field trips, etc.) it may take longer to locate your student. If your student is returning to school on the same day, they need to check back in at the attendance window when they return to school.

### **What if my student wants to go home during the school day?**

Students should not call from the classroom or their cell phones for attendance or health issues. Students need to come to the Attendance Office to call home to talk to a parent/guardian. Parent/Guardians must come to the main office to meet their student.

## **VISITING THE SCHOOL**

### **Can I visit the school at any time?**

We encourage you to pre-arrange your visits with your student’s teachers in order to avoid disrupting the class. All visitors need to report to the main office to sign in and put on a visitor badge that allows you access to the hallways or classrooms. We are continuing to do our best to keep WMS a safe place for students and staff – please help us by cooperating and checking in at the office each visit.

### **Where can I park?**

The school has very limited parking. You may park on “D” street, “F” street or Irving street. Handicap parking is available on D St. and in the parking lot behind the school.

**Please do not park or drive in front of the school.** Halleck St. is closed during the school day because this area is used as a playground and walkway area for students during the school day and during after school sports. It is also our bus drop-off and pick-up area. Driving in this area is extremely hazardous to our student population.

### **Where can I drop something off for my students?**

Deliveries for students may be dropped off in the main office. It is the student’s responsibility to check the table for his/her items. If a student is not aware a delivery is coming, office staff will deliver to classrooms or students will be called out of the classroom to come get their delivery at a convenient time. **NOTE: Birthday or special occasion flowers and balloons will not be delivered to students during the school day. We encourage parents to give flowers/balloons at home rather than at school. Please know that balloons are not permitted on school buses.**

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to become familiar with the school and how it works and can get involved in middle school in a variety of ways. Although students may express independence at this age, they still enjoy parental participation – especially at a distance. When you volunteer for an activity at school, it helps you feel like a part of our school community, while providing invaluable support to our school and students.

All volunteers need to register online at least one week prior to service. Volunteer applications are available online at <https://bellingshamschoolsvolunteers.hrmpplus.net/Home.aspx>. Once approved, volunteer status is valid for two academic years. Parents wishing to drive to a field trip will need to complete a Driver Authorization Form and provide proof of insurance and a copy of driver's license.

Visitors are welcome at the school. Please come into the main office, sign in and take a badge, prior to going to a classroom. When you do visit a classroom, we ask that your visit be pre-arranged with the teacher to avoid disrupting the class.

## PTSA

The Parent, Teacher, Student Association has general meetings throughout the year. Times and dates will be announced as they are available. All parents are welcome to come and participate. There is a small fee for PTSA membership. The PTSA offers many opportunities for involvement. New officers and committee heads are sought each April/May. Find what interests you and plan your service for the years you are at Whatcom.

## COMMUNICATION

**Website** Our school website can be found at: <http://whatcom.bellingshamschools.org/> The tabs across the top of the page allow you access to athletic information, parent information and student information as well.

**Back to School Night** is held in early Fall and provides an opportunity for parents and teachers to get acquainted. This is a night when *general* information will be provided about the curriculum, course content and special activities planned for the year.

**The Daily Announcements** are read each morning to the students over the intercom system. This is how we communicate upcoming school and sports information to our student body. The announcements are also posted on the WMS web site daily. Look for it under "Our School".

**The WMS Newsletter** is posted on our school website by (approx.) the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month with information about current and upcoming school activities. A link and email message are sent to everyone who is signed up to receive emails on our SchoolMessenger system and has up to date contact information in Skyward.

**Staff email** addresses can be found on the Whatcom Middle School website and in Skyward Family Access.

### **Info Finder I (Bus schedules)**

In mid-August, new bus routes will be posted online at [www.infofinder1.com](http://www.infofinder1.com)

### **SchoolMessenger**

SchoolMessenger is a quick alert messaging service that the Bellingham School District and its schools use for emergencies, weather-related closures/delays, attendance and general communications such as important school announcements and for other general e-news. To update your primary phone number, please contact the registrar or main office.

## **Skyward Family Access**

An online program where you can track your student's attendance, assignments, grades, and receive messages from teachers. It is used to update your phone, email, and emergency contacts, and add money to your student's lunch account. Each year you will be asked to update important health information via Skyward. Skylert is a part of Skyward that enables you to designate which devices you want to receive district communications.

Parent/guardians automatically have login access to Skyward when their child is enrolled in the Bellingham School District. To login for the first time or if you have forgotten your password, look for the link to the Skyward login page at the top of the [bellingshamschools.org](http://bellingshamschools.org) website. Select the "Forgot your Login/Password" link and enter the email address that you have on file with your child's school. You will receive an email to reset your password and then you can return to the login page with your new password.

## **School Supplies**

Our school provides supplies students need for learning, as we do with books and other materials. Backpacks are recommended, but not required, for all students.

Students are required to have clothes for PE as follows:

- Athletic shorts: black, gray, white or green - no buttons or zippers (length at least to my fingertips with the arm/hand extended against the thigh).
- Short sleeved t-shirt: plain white, gray, black or green - no buttons or zippers (with my last name written with permanent marker across the top back).
- Tennis shoes with non-marking soles.
- Absorbent socks.
- Deodorant is recommended.

Optional:

- Sweatpants: black, gray or green
- Sweatshirts: white, gray or green

## **SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM**

### **Do I need to fill out a free/reduced application every year?**

Yes! Free and reduced lunch applications take approximately 10 days to process. Students will need to pay for their meals until their application has been approved. RETURNING students who were on a free or reduced lunch the previous year have 30 days to file a new application. If after 30 days parents have not filed an application, students will need to start paying for their lunches. Applications can be completed at any time throughout the year as incomes change.

### **How does my student get lunch or breakfast?**

Parents or students can deposit money into their lunch accounts and use it whenever they choose. Account numbers will be the same as the number they had in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. It is a good idea to memorize the number as they are required to use it each time. To avoid line ups in the cafeteria we ask that payments to lunch accounts be paid directly to the cafeteria in the mornings. Additionally, parents may deposit money online for a fee.

Please visit [bellingshamschools.org/food-services](http://bellingshamschools.org/food-services) for income guidelines, an online application and more information.

## ATHLETICS

Sports are organized on an intramural and inter-school basis. Intramural play is when students from Whatcom compete amongst themselves. Interschool play is when students compete amongst other middle schools.

Students will be permitted to participate once ***all*** the following are in place by each signup deadline:

- **Online Registration** (Families will be receiving an email from a company called **FinalForms** inviting you to complete and sign athletic forms for your students.)
- Current **physical exam form** is turned in to the main office.

### ***Interschool Sports*** *(subject to change)*

**Fall:** Track 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade all students  
Soccer 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade all students

**Pre-Winter:** Dance & Tumbling 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls  
Basketball 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys

**Winter:** Volleyball 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls  
Wrestling 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade all students

**Spring:** Basketball 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls  
Football 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade all students  
Cross Country 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade all students



A Physical Examination is required ***before*** participating in interschool middle school athletics. The physical exam needs to be done by a medical authority licensed to perform a physical exam. ***This physical is valid for a 24-month period.*** Physical exams are not needed for participation in intramural athletics. Physical forms are available at <http://bellinghamschools.org/forms/> and on the WMS website under Activities.

Practices for each middle school sport will be held on a Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs., & Fri. schedule and will run from 4-5:30 p.m. Practices will not be held on early release days and non-student days. Coaches will hand out game schedules for each sport the first week of practice. You may also check the WMS Website/Activities for game schedules after the individual sport season begins.

Activity buses will transport students to and from games.

***Intramural Sports*** – **Volleyball** and **Basketball** may be offered to 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the intramural program. Students need to listen to the morning announcements to find out what is being offered and to hear the sign-up deadlines. Parents will need to sign their students up for Intramural sports in Finalforms.

## Extracurricular Activities

Below is a listing of clubs that we've had in the past. Opportunities for clubs are dependent on advisors and interest and may change from year to year. Students are encouraged to listen for announcements of clubs starting up.

- Dungeons and Dragons Club
- Photojournalism/Yearbook Club
- Leadership
- Math Club
- QSA
- STEAM Club
- Drone Club
- ASB
- Bike Club
- Choir Club

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **How will parents be informed of school events?**

In middle school, students begin to take more responsibility for themselves. Most of the information for students is read over the PA system each morning (our morning announcements). It is the student's responsibility to listen and respond. For example: when it's time to sign up for a specific sport, students will be instructed to do so.

However, we also post our morning announcements on our website each afternoon for parents to view. Parents are encouraged to become familiar with our website and school calendar for updated information regarding sports and other activities.

Our monthly newsletter is posted on our website by (approx.) the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month and is sent home via SchoolMessenger. You will also receive SchoolMessenger phone calls/emails when we want to draw your attention to an upcoming school event or situation. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, teachers will also keep parents updated on classroom assignments through their own classroom email lists. Be sure to sign up with your student's teacher if they make that available to you.

### **Can my student have a cell phone at school?**

We accept no responsibility for portable electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, cameras, personal laptops etc. lost or stolen on school property. Students are expected to turn off and store cell phones and devices in their lockers. Portable electronic devices may not be displayed or used on school property during school hours 9:10 a.m.-3:45 p.m. **If you need to contact your student, please call the main office and leave a message for your student to call you back.** Students who do not follow these expectations will have their items confiscated. A parent or guardian will need to come and claim the item from the main office. Parents/guardians can help their students learn the school policy by not texting or calling during school hours. If you need to contact your student during the day, call any office line (pg.1) and we will relay your message.

### **Dress Code**

Part of The Bellingham Promise, our district's strategic plan, strives to develop students and graduates who are respectful and compassionate humans. We want students to respect themselves and others. While we encourage individuality, the district's dress code aims to foster a positive and healthy environment.

- Students should dress casually and comfortably for school, while wearing clothing that is well-suited for a school environment.
- Clothing, drawings, tattoos and accessories that display or promote negative messages are not permitted. These could include drug, gang, weapon, alcohol or tobacco-related information, obscenities, put-downs, stereotypes, sexual innuendo, offensive words or graphics.

- Students must be able to actively participate safely in all PE activities. The student's last name should be printed/written across the back of their PE shirt/sweatshirt. It is advisable to have extra socks and a sweatshirt for cooler, wet days.

A violation of the dress code will require a change of clothing. Special circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **What and where are counseling and student services?**

The counseling and student services offices are located across the hall from the main office. Counselors are available to support students in their academic and social/emotional development. They provide classroom, small-group, and individual guidance on a variety of topics. Counselors are also available for consultation with parents.

For an appointment with one of our counselors, please contact the Counseling Secretary/Registrar or one of the counselors directly. The Counseling Secretary/Registrar is available to answer questions regarding registration and withdrawal, student records, scheduling, and parent connect.

## **BEHAVIOR**

### **What if my child is being bullied or harassed?**

We encourage students to speak up if they are being bullied, and we encourage you to notify us if your child shares that he/she is being picked on or bullied here at school, so that we can take action. Students receive training about bullying and harassment every year and as 6<sup>th</sup> graders attend team building activities to promote cooperation and fellowship. Students who are being bullied are encouraged to:

- Stand up for themselves by using their words to tell bullies to stop
- Let teachers know
- Let school counselors know
- Talk with assistant principal or principal

### **What if my child is bullying or harassing someone else?**

We take bullying and harassment very seriously and have a hierarchy of responses here at school. The usual progression of discipline (depending on the severity of the bullying/harassment) looks like this:

- Warning and problem-solving with assistant principal and/or counselor
- Suspension – short term
- Suspension – long term

## **What are Whatcom's Behavioral Expectations?**

Behaviors that lead to a productive, cooperative working and learning environment are promoted at Whatcom. Behaviors that distract from learning will necessitate consequences designed to discourage such behaviors. It is critical that students, parents and teachers work together to promote a positive school environment.

Students have the right to:

- a quality education
- be informed of their progress in school
- participate in co-curricular activities
- a safe school environment that respects their dignity and self-worth

Students are expected to:

- attend all classes every day on time
- be ready to work, with necessary learning materials, books, pencils, etc.
- respect the rights of others and the school district
- exercise self-discipline

- obey school rules
- use appropriate language free of profanity and harassing statements
- keep personal belongings in locker
- not use cell phones or other electronic devices during school hours
- move through halls appropriately
- consume food and drink in cafeteria only unless they have teacher permission to do otherwise
- avoid public display of affection
- adhere to dress code
- wait for teacher dismissal
- use e-mail and Internet appropriately
- follow individual classroom rules
- not to use or possess tobacco, alcohol, drugs or drug paraphernalia while on or around school property
- keep weapons and imitations of them away from school
- remain on campus from the time of arrival at school until the conclusion of the last activity, unless parents have requested permission through the attendance office to leave campus

Students who fail to follow school expectations will receive progressive consequences based upon the number and severity of their infractions.

## HEALTH

If your child shows signs of illness, he/she should not be sent to school. A child's health seldom improves on the way to school, and a day at home can often be preventative medicine. If a student gets ill at school, they are to go to the attendance office where they will be asked to call home. Sick students will not be permitted to leave school premises unless the attendance secretary has first spoken directly with a parent/guardian.

### **What happens if my student gets hurt or sick while at school?**

If a student is injured at school, they will be administered first aid by an office staff member or the school nurse, when available. Parents will be contacted in cases that are serious enough to warrant communication. If the parent cannot be reached, emergency numbers, provided by the parents, will be called to help locate the parents or to pick up the child. If necessary, paramedics from the Bellingham Fire Department will be called. It is extremely important that we have **UPDATED local emergency numbers** as well as your doctor's name, in case the school cannot reach you. Please keep in mind that emergency contacts should be local people we can reach in the event parents cannot be reached. (Older siblings should be included on your list if you wish them to be contacted.) These contacts will be the **only people we are authorized to call and/or to pick up your child**. If you are going out of town - please make sure the family your child is staying with is on your contact list.

### **My child has serious health issues.**

If your child has any special health problems (e.g. diabetes, allergies, migraines, asthma, seizures, etc.) please notify our school nurse. This information should also be written on the annual student health concern form.

### **What if my student needs to take medication at school?**

Please call the attendance office to arrange for paperwork and delivery of medication. Students are NOT to bring their own medication to school. Prior to any medication on school premises, paperwork is required for all students whether they will be self-administering or if we will be administering the medication for them. **(This includes cough drops).**

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Eligible bus riders will receive a letter home by mid-August notifying you that routes and times are available online.

### **My student needs to take a different bus after school.**

If your student needs to get off at a different bus stop or needs to take a different bus, they will need a variance authorization (pink slip). To receive the variance slip, send a note with your student or email the main office. The note needs to indicate the bus number and stop number. Bus notes with all the correct information, need to be given to the attendance office prior to 12:30 p.m. on the day of the request.

### **Large items are not allowed on the bus.**

Please remember that helium balloons, large musical instruments, skateboards, etc. cannot be carried on the bus. In general, items must be lower than their knee level when in a sitting position.

### **Can students ride their bikes, skateboards and scooters to school?**

Yes. Bike racks are available at the front of the school and we have parking for skateboards and scooters in the main office. Bikes must be locked up to prevent theft.

## SIXTH GRADE CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The sixth-grade curriculum includes the study of literature, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, music (band or orchestra) or art, and physical education. Specialists teach music, art, Spanish, technology and PE on an A/B day schedule, while team teachers teach the remaining subjects daily.

**Literature/Language Arts:** The language arts block includes a focus on both reading and writing. Our readers use strategies to think deeply about the texts they read. In fiction, students study the many facets of literature including the elements of plot, the author's use of language to convey a specific theme, mood, or to create vivid characters. While reading informational text, students develop a variety of skills including the ability to read complex texts, expand their vocabulary, identify text features and main ideas, connect the author's purpose to their style, and differentiate between fact and opinion. As writers, students use the traits of writing and the writing process to write a personal narrative, essays, short stories, scripts, reports, news columns, and poems.

**Math:** Skills to be maintained and reinforced include multiplication, division, subtraction, and addition of whole numbers, decimals, fractions, and mixed numbers. Students engage in real-life problem-solving activities and regularly use manipulatives. They explore mathematical patterns and work with probability, ratio, and percentages. Resources and materials include the math text, calculators, and a variety of manipulatives.

**Science:** Science units include physical, earth/space and life sciences. Day trips on the Snow Goose, to the Maritime Heritage Center and Marine Park are part of our science education program.

**Social Studies:** Sixth graders will be introduced to Ancient Civilization, have an overview of World Geography, foundations of Modern Western Civilization, elements of Civilizations, and elements of Society.

**Computers:** All WMS students will receive a laptop device to use during the school year. Technology tools and instructional strategies will be embedded in curriculum across content area. Students and families will receive the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in the fall. Students will receive direct instruction on using the device and the district's Acceptable Use Policy prior to receiving a device. Teachers may use a program called ClassPolicy to monitor student laptop use in class and to launch or restrict specific programs and websites.

**PE:** Sixth graders have units in Soccer, Football, Gymnastics, Basketball, Pickleball, Volleyball, Fitness Conditioning, Softball, and Track & Field. We focus on cooperation, teamwork, and self-esteem.

**HIV/AIDS:** In 1988, the Washington State Legislature mandated that a program of prevention education be presented to students - yearly, beginning with fifth grade. The Bellingham School District has adopted an appropriate program for HIV prevention education to meet the intent of this law. State law provides that a parent or guardian must preview the curriculum materials before they can have their child excused from participation in the HIV prevention program. Opportunity to preview the curriculum materials is provided each year at a parent information night in the fall. The HIV program is usually taught during the spring. Information letters reminding parents are sent out prior to the presentation of the curriculum.

**Assessments:** 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are required to take several state and district/school level assessments. These include the Smarter Balanced Assessment and CBA. Information regarding these assessments will be in the corresponding Monthly Newsletter and/or a letter will be sent home with details prior to the assessment.