**A**

**Guide**

**To**

**Sixth Grade**

***To: 6th Grade Parents***

***From: Former 6th Grade Parents***

***ST. GILES SCHOOL***

September 7, 2016

Dear Sixth Grade Parent,

As parents, we know how important communication is to making a school year go smoothly. PTO believes that the parent-to-parent communication is an important link in the communication network.

This guide is PTO’s attempt at documenting parental helpful hints. Parents who previously had children in sixth grade have compiled these hints. We hope they provide you with an overview of the upcoming year, highlighting the differences from previous years.

Please keep in mind that this guide is to serve as an “unofficial” guide, please look for “official” details from the school and teachers. The communication tools used at the school, grade and teacher level remain the foundations of strong communication.

**School-wide** information on policies, rules, and regulations is in the **School Handbook** (the “Handbook”). A copy of the Handbook may be found on the school website at [www.stgilesschool.org](http://www.stgilesschool.org).

**Teacher-specific information** such as expectations, best ways to communicate with them, grading, etc. will be presented at **Curriculum Night**. The school website [www.stgilesschool.org](http://www.stgilesschool.org) and individual teacher webpages on the school site, found under “Teacher Pages,” have critical and current information including but not limited to curriculum, homework, field trips, special events, etc. Please check those resources daily.

**eNews** is your information lifeline to the school. All information will be delivered via e-mail to all parents. If you ever need a flyer or announcement included in the eNews, please forward a DIGITAL copy to [enews@stgilesschool.org](mailto:enews@stgilesschool.org). All submissions due by noon Friday for publication on Sunday. All articles subject to approval.

**We hope this guide helps your student to have a happy and successful 6th grade!**

St. Giles PTO

**GENERAL**

Sixth grade has gradual changes from fifth grade. Therefore, many of the helpful hints for fifth grade also apply to sixth grade. Hopefully, your child is a little older, wiser and more mature, so they have more skills in place to handle the workload.

* **They’re growing up.** Your child will be going through a lot of changes this year physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially.
* **Their schedules are getting busier.** Many extracurricular opportunities are available. The Student Life section on the school website provides detailed information on the various school-sponsored activities, as well as a monthly calendar of events.
* **They need new skills for the increased workload.**  More will be expected of your child in terms of organization and study skills.

They will need your help in working on new skills, your guidance with time management, and your encouragement.

# Daily Schedule

**Arrival/Dismissal**

School begins at **8:10 a.m.** with the entry bell. The **tardy bell is at 8:20 a.m.** 4th through 8th grade students must report directly to the school office where the tardy will be recorded and a classroom admittance slip will be given to the late student. Instruction begins at 8:25 a.m. School instruction ends at 3:00 p.m. and the school day ends at **3:10 p.m.** Students not picked up before 3:20 p.m. will be brought to the office and will need to be picked up there.

**6th graders enter the Frawley Building on the Columbian Avenue side.** Car pick-up after school is on the Columbian Ave. side, except if they are meeting younger children at the Corrigan Building. Remind your student that they must cross at the corners.

Refer to the Handbook for a complete description of the traffic and safety plan.

Take special note of the times and rules. The drive-up lines may be long, especially on rainy/snowy days. The process for the whole school is usually finished in 10-15 minutes, if everyone follows the rules. Be especially aware of the no parking areas. The Village of Oak Park will issue tickets. If you want to walk your student up to the school, you should park on one of the side streets. Do **NOT** get out of your car if you are using the carpool line!

**Absences**

Absences must be reported to the school office by 8:30 a.m. either by phone call to (708) 383-6279 or by e-mail to [office@stgilesschool.org](mailto:office@stgilesschool.org). Phone messages should be left on the main line voicemail any time before 8:30 a.m. Note: Parents may let teacher know of an absence, if desired, however, this is secondary to the office receiving notification of a student’s absence and does **not** replace school office notification.

**Bicycles** –Beginning in fifth grade, students may ride their bicycles to school. Bicycles must be locked up at the bike racks near the Corrigan Building playground.

**Switching of Classes**

Students switch classes for Reading, Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Religion.

**Mass**

Sixth graders go to the 8:30 a.m. Mass on Tuesdays. Parents are welcome to attend.

**“Specials”**

Art – once per week on Monday

Music – once per week on Friday

Computers – once per week on Thursday

Gym – twice per week Monday and Wednesday

Spanish – twice per week on Tuesday and Friday

Library – Sixth grade students are provided an opportunity to visit the library with their language arts teacher and check out books at least once every other week.

**Lunch**

Sixth graders have lunch in the basement of the Frawley Building followed by recess in the church parking lot. They are on the same lunch schedule as fifth graders. Send food ready-to-eat, transfer hard to open food (e.g., oranges, fruit, etc.) to reusable containers. Healthy lunches are appreciated. If your sixth grader forgets his/her lunch, bring it to the school office marked with your child’s name and room number. It will be delivered.

* **Nut Free Policy -** The only food items that may be served at classroom or school events are pre-packaged food items with complete ingredient lists so that potential food allergens can be screened at the event. Foods sent in for an individual student’s snack or lunch should be carefully checked to make sure they are peanut/tree-nut free.
* **Zero Waste policy** - Students are encouraged to use reusable containers. The lunchroom in the Frawley building is equipped with compost, recycle, and trash bins.
* **Fun Lunch** is a PTO sponsored fundraiser. It consists of hot lunch meals delivered twice each month from restaurants. The meals are pre-paid/pre-ordered. Most kids participate in the fun lunch program. Ordering for the program is available in early September and January for each semester. A link to the ordering platform is available on the school website, and reminders will be sent through eNews.
* **SmartLunches** - A representative from Smartlunches.com will be at the PTO coffee hour to talk with parents about our new daily lunch program at St. Giles Smartlunches. The representative will again be at Curriculum Night in the Corrigan building lobby with a display of the different lunch box sizes & to answer any questions.

SmartLunches will be dropped off in the student's building and given to the student in a box clearly marked with their name, grade and room number. Parents can order these lunches up to 48 hours in advance.

Log onto Smartlunches.com and you can order a lunch for your child(ren) almost everyday school is in session. The SmartLunches calendar has some dates blocked out that coincide with school holidays or our PTO Fun Lunch. This is a service provided to our students that does not require the help of our fabulous parent volunteers.

**Forgotten Items**

Bring forgotten items to the office. The office will deliver the items or ask you to place them on the table outside of the locked hallway door in the Frawley Building. They will be brought to your child if adequately labeled (student’s full name, room #). Parents should not deliver forgotten items directly to the classroom.

**Uniform**

There are no changes to the uniform for sixth grade. Refer to the Handbook for a complete description of the uniform code including restrictions for “out of uniform” days.

# Homework

**“Ten Survival Tips for 6th Grade”**

*From a 6th grader*

* **Study ahead.**
* **Try your best.**
* **When you have long term assignments do them as soon as you can.**
* **Set aside time to do your homework.**
* **Pay attention in class.**
* **Do all of your homework.**
* **Ask Questions!**
* **Don’t turn in homework late.**
* **Be organized.**
* **Don’t ask to go to the bathroom during class (unless it’s an emergency).**

**Assignment Notebook**

It’s essential that your child make good use of their assignment notebook by writing down complete information. Students are expected to write down all assignments and know when assignments are due. Although a parent is no longer required to sign the assignment notebook on a daily basis, a parent may want to check their assignment notebook daily and discuss time management with your child. **Do not use the assignment notebook to communicate with the teacher.** The teachers will communicate on Curriculum Night what is the best method for communicating with them.

**Projects**

Your student may be responsible for more projects this year. These projects will require research and materials. Help them to plan ahead.

**Homework Timing**

Work with your child to determine the optimal time to do homework and how to balance homework with their activities. Note that there is often homework on the weekends. The amount of time spent on homework varies by student.

**Homework during Absence**

It is helpful for each student to find a reliable buddy in each class from whom he/she can get notes missed due to absence or a music lesson. Students may also ask the teacher for any missed notes. **If you want a teacher to get your child’s homework during an absence, you must call the office no later than 9:00 a.m. on the day of** **the absence for pick up after school in the school office.** Remember that homework assignments are also listed on the teacher’s webpage at [www.stgilesschool.org](http://www.stgilesschool.org/).

# STUDYING

Development of your child’s time management skills is important. Students need to study for major tests more than one night in advance to the extent possible. Please advise your child to plan accordingly. Students may enjoy working in study groups. Most weeks, your student can plan on taking spelling and Simple Solutions tests on Fridays.

**Note Taking Skills**

Your child will be taking notes during class that will be important to their academic success. Reinforce with your child that it is important to take notes from the SMART Board. **If something is unclear, or the teacher is moving too quickly, remind your student to seek clarification from teacher after class.** Some information discussed in class may not be in their books, but may appear on a test.

**Essay Tests**

Students will have to apply critical thinking to concepts they’ve learned in class, and write about them in short essay answers. Students will practice writing an essay answer in class.

**Extra Help Sessions**

Teachers are often available before or after school for extra help by appointment.

# STUDENT’S PROGRESS

**Progress Reports**

Progress reports will be distributed mid-trimester to all students. If you believe your child is having difficulty, you may want to communicate with the teacher prior to receipt of the progress report.

**Daily Progress Reports**

**Your child’s grades will be accessible through PowerSchool.** The web address is <https://archchicago.powerschool.com/public/home.html>. Returning families can access the grade page by using the Log In and Password they set up last year. New families will receive log in information the week of September 7. Please check PowerSchool regularly.

**Letter Grades**

Students will receive letter grades in all subjects, including Art, Religion, Gym, Music and Spanish.

**Parent-Teacher Conferences**

In November, parents meet only with the homeroom teacher. If needed, a separate conference with other teachers can be scheduled at a different time. Optional parent-teacher conferences with any teacher are offered in March.

**Tutoring**

A child’s need for tutoring may be mutually discussed between the teacher and parents. The actual request for tutoring must be parent initiated. There are several teachers in the school who will provide tutoring. The arrangement must be made with the approval of the principal and tutoring fees paid by parents/guardians for at-school tutoring must be paid directly to the school in the school’s name. The teacher will be paid by the school through the school’s regular payroll system.

**SPECIAL DAYS AND EVENTS**

**Birthday Celebrations** – Sign up your child for participation in Birthday Book Club in the month of the student’s birthday on the hot lunch website <https://stgilesschool.hotlunches.net/admin/>. Students may be out of uniform one day during the week of their birthday or half birthday. Food treats sent to school in celebration of birthdays are **not** allowed.

**Christmas Program** – Fifth graders are included in the annual Christmas program. Rehearsals are held during November and December during school. The concert is held in the church in December.

**Early Dismissal** is scheduled **every Wednesday at 2 p.m.** with the same pick-up procedures as regular days. In addition, there are **occasional half days** scheduled which typically means that **dismissal is at 11:40 a.m.** with the same pick-up procedures as regular days.

**May Crowning** is a special celebration of Mary with the second and eighth graders playing a special role. All students attend the May Crowning ceremony which takes place at the beginning of May.

**Institute Days** are days that school is not in session, but the teachers are in meetings and/or training sessions.

**Picture Day** is the day students are photographed for their individual and class photos. The students are **out of uniform***. (Refer to the Handbook for information on appropriate attire for out of uniform days.)* If for some reason you miss picture day, a make-up/retake day is scheduled.

**Halloween** is traditionally celebrated with a school parade. Students may bring their costumes to school, or they may go home for lunch and to change. Teachers will send home a permission slip. Specifics on costumes, parade and party will be provided by the teachers.

**ASPIRE TEST** – ASPIRE Tests are given in third through eighth grades at St. Giles. They are based on the Common Core State Standards. Parents can help by ensuring their child gets a good night’s sleep and a nutritious breakfast. Since it is the first time taking a standardized test, they may need some reassurance from home. Scores are mailed home.

# SCHOOL’S MAJOR FUNDRAISERS

**Lion’s Leap** is the name of the school’s walkathon that takes place in September. It is one of two major fundraisers for the school. The minimum amount due is $100 for a one child family in K – 8, $200 for a family with two or more children K – 8, and $50 for preschool. Read the back of the Lion’s Leap form that is distributed early in September for the details of the walkathon and incentives. It’s a fun day for the kids and is a vital source of funds for the operating budget. Parent volunteers are needed to count laps, hand out water, supervise the students, and students love to see parents at the event.

**Black and Gold Gala** is the second major fundraiser - an auction which includes silent, live and online bidding items. This year it will take place on March 11, 2017 at McDonough Hall. This event is organized by the Development office and committee coordinators. Parents in 3rd and 6th grade each year will be expected to commit some volunteer time for the event. Parents, parishioners and friends can enjoy a social evening and bid on a wide variety of items with lower and higher bid amounts in order to support the school.

# EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**Information regarding all the extracurricular activities are sent home via the eNews. Watch it closely – most sign-ups have deadlines!**

**Band** - *Contact: Mr. Gloppen, Mr. Knauf*

Sixth graders who participated in band last year play in the Wind Ensemble this year. Wind Ensemble practices are Wednesday and Thursdays during lunch. Sixth graders are also eligible for Jazz Band; tryouts are required.

Band lessons are given during the week according to the schedule posted in the homeroom. Students must make note of the posted time for their instrument lessons each week, and get there on their own without a reminder from the homeroom teacher. **Also, teachers expect that students on their own will get any class notes they miss during their band lessons.**

**Safety Patrol** - *Contact: Ms. Dankowski, Mrs. Lucas*

Sixth graders will be assigned to assist the primary students as they exit school and assist them into their cars.

**Student Council** - *Contact: Mrs. Lechowicz, Ms. Gallo*

Classroom elections are held at the beginning of sixth grade for homeroom representative. The elected representatives attend Student Council meetings that are held at school during lunch. At the end of sixth grade, students may run in a school-wide election to serve as a Student Council officer for the following year.

**Altar Servers** - *Contact person: Colleen Johnson at the Ministry Center*

Boys and girls may serve as altar servers from 5th through 8th grade. Sign-up for new servers is typically in the spring, but there are also a few training sessions in the fall. After a brief training session, students are placed on the servers' schedule. The Masses they serve are on a rotating basis. Servers are used at the 8:30 a.m. weekday Masses, the 8:00 a.m. Saturday Mass and all weekend Masses. Typically students serve 2-3 times per month.

**Interscholastic Sports** - *Contact Athleticdirector@stgilesschool.org*

St. Giles offers many ways for students to participate in sports. Coupled with the greater workload, parents are cautioned not to over-commit students to too many sports at one time. Rules and philosophies of the sports program are listed in the Athletic Handbook, a copy of which may be found on the school website at [www.stgilesschool.org](http://www.stgilesschool.org).

Interscholastic sports opportunities for sixth graders include:

Co-ed Soccer (Late August – October) Co-ed Soccer (April – May)

Girls Basketball (October-January) Boys Basketball (November-April)

Girls Volleyball (January-April) Boys Volleyball (March-May)

Cross Country (August - October)

A description of the sporting teams offered, fees, and specifics regarding field locations, uniforms, schedules, etc. may be found at <http://stgileslionsathletics.org.assn.la/> or on the school website at [www.stgilesschool.org](http://www.stgilesschool.org) under “Student Life” “Athletics” “Interscholastic Sports Website.”

**APEX (After school PE Extension) and Summer Programs -** *Contact Mr. Collins*

APEX offers after school gym games, and intramural team sports. The program includes a wide variety sports including soccer and hand hockey for the primary grades and basketball, volleyball and kickball for the middle and junior high grades. All teams are coed and the emphasis is on learning and having fun! Sessions are held throughout the school year and take place immediately following the school day. Information regarding registration is distributed by Mr. Collins, the gym teacher. APEX also runs a gym program from the end of school in June to mid-July. Various activities are programmed throughout the day and students pay one fee and drop in for activities of interest. Summer program information is distributed in the spring.

**Enrichment**

The St. Giles PTO is proud to offer a wide variety of after-school Enrichment Programs that provide extra-curricular experiences in arts and academics that enhance what our children are learning in school. The programs range from debate, cooking, and musicals to Mandarin and more. These fee-based programs are run by outside vendors, St. Giles teachers, and parents.

The PTO manages registration, set up, and payments. Programs are available to all St. Giles students grades K thru 8. Financial aid is available each semester.

Enrichment Programs will have a rolling registration. We have a session each semester. Registration is run thru our PTO payment platform <http://stgilesschool.hotlunches.net>. Don’t let the name fool you. This site manages all PTO program payments: hot lunch, birthday book club, enrichment programs and more. PayPal is the preferred payment method on the site. If you choose to pay by check or cash, simply note the student information on the envelope with the cash or check you submit to the Enrichment Program mailbox in the office.

For more information and details on specific programs go to the PTO tab on the school website.

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENTS TO PARTICIPATE

Parents should sign up with the PTO if they are interested in being involved. All volunteers in the school must complete the Archdiocesan requirements for Protecting God’s Children (VIRTUS) in order to volunteer. Virtus information may be found on the school website at [http://www.stgilesschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SGS-Volunteer-Requiements.pdf](http://www.stgilesschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SGS-Volunteer-Requiements.pdfa) and in every edition of eNews. Please contact Assistant Principal Mrs. Lofgren with any questions.

**Field Trips –** If sixth grade has any field trips during the year, parents may be needed as chaperones. If you are interested in helping in any way, please check with the office to fulfill the Archdiocesan requirements for volunteers.

**Room Parents –** There are typically two room parents per classroom who organize class parties with games, crafts, and treats at Halloween, Christmas, and Valentine’s Day. They also work jointly with the fifth grade room parents to organize the year-end picnic fifth/sixth grade picnic. Parents will be asked to help with these parties.

**Visitors/volunteers in School -** All visitors or volunteers must report to the office for an identification badge while in the buildings. Upon leaving, please return the badge to the school office.