**A**

**Guide**

**to**

**Junior High**

***To: 7th & 8th grade parents***

***From: Former 7th & 8th grade parents***

***ST. GILES SCHOOL***

September 7, 2016

Dear Junior High Parents,

As parents, we know how important communication is to making a school year go smoothly. The PTO believes that the parent-to-parent communication is a vital component of the communication network.

This guide is PTO’s attempt at documenting helpful hints from parents whose children have been in 7th and 8th grade at St. Giles School. We hope this grade guide provides you with an overview of the upcoming year, highlighting the differences from sixth grade.

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 happy and successful junior high years!**

St. Giles PTO

**General**

The moment your student has waited years for is here - he or she is a "junior high" student. Junior high students may be a little nervous at the beginning, but their confidence builds as they become familiar with what is expected of them. By the beginning of eighth grade, most are very confident in their role as the oldest students at the school. Until then, you and your student will be adjusting to new experiences...

**They're adolescents** - For most students, these years are typically marked with a moment of maturity followed by a few moments of immaturity. Boundaries will be tested at home and at school.

**Their class work is structured more like high school**. The junior high teachers have the difficult task of getting the students prepared for high school, while remembering that the students are still in grade school.

**The students are, or will become, very social** - socializing becomes an important priority for most junior high students. As socializing increases, so should the parent-to-parent communication.

**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 admin (pink) 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.

**7th and 8th graders enter the Frawley Building on the Columbian Avenue doors.** Car pick-up after school is on the Columbian Avenue 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.

**Classes**

In junior high, each student has four to six teachers (not including the art, music, Spanish, computer and gym teachers.) Remind your student of the importance of knowing the requirements and expectations of each teacher. It's difficult at first, but it is a skill needed for high school.

**Mass**

Junior high students attend 8:30 a.m. Mass on Tuesday. Parents are welcome to attend.

**Lunch**

8th graders go to recess from 11:45 a.m. - 12:05 p.m. on the playground, followed by lunch in the lunchroom from 12:05 – 12:25 p.m. 7th graders go to lunch from 11:45 – 12:05, followed by recess on the playground from 12:05 – 12:25 p.m. Teachers supervise the students during recess on the parking lot and in the lunchroom in the basement of the Frawley building.

Send food ready-to-eat, transfer hard to open food (e.g., oranges, fruit, etc.) to reusable containers. Healthy lunches are appreciated. If your junior high student 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 fast food 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.

**Uniforms**

Refer to the Handbook for description of the dress code and for guidelines on proper attire on out of uniform days.

Students may receive a lunch detention if they are found in violation of the dress code. These detentions are served for 45 minutes during the lunch/recess period. Students are fully apprised of teacher expectations at the beginning of the year, e.g., shirts/blouses must be tucked in, etc.).

**Homework**

The type of homework assigned will vary between teachers. In addition to the overnight assignments, there will be assignments that will be due in 2-3 days, two weeks, or in a month. Some homework needs to be on loose leaf, some in notebooks, some typed, some done on the internet. Reinforce with your student the importance of listening to all the requirements for the homework. Not fulfilling all of the homework requirements, as well as forgetting to bring assignments to class, may result in a lunch detention due to being unprepared for class.

Occasionally, students may have the opportunity to work on a project either individually or in a group. The social aspect of working together appeals to many. Through experience, they usually discover the difficulty in coordinating the group's schedule and learn to plan accordingly or opt for individual projects.

**Web Page**

The junior high homework assignments, permission slips, and calendar are located on each teacher’s page, which is found on the school website [www.stgilesschool.org](http://www.stgilesschool.org).

**Lunch Detention**

In addition to receiving a lunch detention for uniform violations, students may receive a lunch detention for a variety of infractions including **tardiness, unprepared for class**, food and gum violations, and disruptive behavior.

Lunch detentions are served for 45 minutes on the day the detention was received.

**Studying**

Students may have multiple tests on the same day. Help them to anticipate a heavy test day and to schedule studying accordingly.

**Student's Progress**

**PowerSchool**

Parents should check student’s progress periodically on PowerSchool at <https://archchicago.powerschool.com/public/home.html>. Current families continue to use log in information from the prior school year. New parent/child PowerSchool passwords will be distributed soon after the beginning of the school year.

**Parent-Teacher Conferences**

At fall parent-teacher conferences, you meet only with your student's homeroom teacher. You will be provided a written summary of your student's progress in the classes taught by the other teachers. Sign up for conferences is done at the Fall Curriculum night. Of course, a separate conference can be arranged with any teacher by contacting them directly.

**Report Cards**

Report cards are distributed each trimester and the envelope must be returned to school with a parent's signature. A grade point average will now be indicated on the report card.

**Behavior Detentions**

Refer to the Handbook for a description of the school’s multi-tiered discipline system. Processing is done during a class when repeated misbehavior disrupts the learning of the class. A student is asked in writing to describe the undesired behavior and reflect on a better course of action in the future. The Handbook also lists behavior that warrants a detention. **Parents receive a phone call** notifying them of the detention and when it is to be served. Junior high students serve behavior detentions for 45 minutes after school on the day of the incident. [Parents have the right to request an alternate date and time in the event a student is unable to serve detention on the day for which it is scheduled.] Does this have to be printed here? Most parents if the student has a dentist appointment, just say so.

**Electronics**

Cell phones and iPods are turned into homeroom teachers every morning and returned to student at dismissal. If you need to get an **emergency** message to your student during the school day, please call the school office and ask that a message be relayed to your student.

**Junior High Dances**

**St. Giles Dances**

Junior high dances are held three times each year in the St. Giles gym. Only St. Giles School junior high students may attend. The dances are held on Friday nights around Halloween (costume), and Christmas. Students wear dressier attire for the Christmas dance, such as khaki pants/trousers and button down shirt & tie for boys and girls wear a dress or skirt/blouse. There is a nominal fee for the dance. Teachers chaperone the dances. Parents sell soda during the dance. An email request for volunteers is sent out about a week prior to each dance.

**A signed permission slip, which can be found on the Resource section of the school website (http://www.stgilesschool.org/student-life/forms) must be returned to school by the stated deadline or the student may not attend the dance. The permission slips state the range of time that students may arrive. Students arriving after that time will not be allowed to attend the dance. Students are not permitted to leave the dances early.**

**Other Dances**

Occasionally, local schools sponsor junior high dances and invite St. Giles students. Attendance at these dances is completely at the discretion of the parents. These dances are not sponsored or monitored by St. Giles School.

**Extracurricular**

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

Classroom elections are held at the beginning of the school year for 5th through 8th grade homeroom representatives. The elected representatives attend Student Council meetings that are held at school during lunchtime. In May, students may run in a school-wide election to serve as a Student Council officer for the following year.

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

Junior high students may participate in Wind Ensemble and Jazz Bands. Both bands practice during the school day. These bands participate in the four St. Giles concerts and a few competitions throughout the year.

**Diplomat Club** - *Contact: Development Office*

Sixth through eighth graders may become members of this service club. Members help out with school tours and other school events.

**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.

**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.

**7th graders getting a glimpse of 8th grade . . .**

There are a few events typically considered to be 8th grade events, but 7th graders may participate in them to some extent:

* The 7th graders also attend the High School Day at St. Giles during the school day in early to mid-September.
* 7th grade parents co-host the Confirmation Bishop’s reception along with Religious Education and Family Mass parents. Confirmation is typically scheduled for a Saturday morning in March.
* 7th grade students are responsible for the cost, decorations, and food for the 7th/8th grade breakfast. Funds collected for homeroom parties are used the offset the cost of this event.

Details of these events and others specific to 8th graders can be found in the next section of this grade guide. It is information that 7th grade parents may be interested in as they look forward to that 8th grade year.

**Parents' Guide to 8th Grade Events**

This next section provides information about the following events:

1. **Confirmation**
2. **8th Grade Special Activities**

* Graduation pictures
* Service projects
* Field trips - a day trip to Springfield is scheduled for early October.
* 8th grade fundraising
* 8th grade class gift

1. **Preparation for High School**

* High School Day
* Open houses
* Shadow dates
* Entrance exams
* Placement exams
* Scholarship information
* List of area high schools

1. **Year-End Events**

* May Crowning – early May
* Chicago walking tour – early May
* 7th/8th grade breakfast – Graduation week
* Great America trip – Graduation week
* Parent/Graduate dinner dance – Graduation week
* Graduation – **Saturday, June 3, 2017** in Church

1. **Confirmation**

Your eighth grader will be preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation in the classroom, at home, and at scheduled Formation Faith Groups and retreats. Teachers, parents, the Religious Education Department, and Mrs. Zver are all involved in the planning and preparation of these religious events. Preparation will begin during the first part of the school year, and the Parish Religious Education Department will distribute a schedule of events for the year. The Parish determines the date of Confirmation based mainly on the availability of the presiding Bishop and typically is held on a Saturday in early March. This year Confirmation will be held for both School and Religious Education students at on **Saturday, March 4, 2017**.

Visit the parish website at <http://www.stgilesparish.org/sacraments/first-reconciliation-first-eucharist/> to view the information for this year’s process and preparation. If you have questions regarding Reconciliation or First Communion, please contact Marrey Picciotti at [mpicciotti@stgilesparish.org](mailto:mpicciotti@stgilesparish.org).

1. **Eighth Grade Special Activities**

The PTO will facilitate planning for 8th grade activities. There will be a committee formed (including an 8th grade treasurer who will manage the 8th grade bank account, which is separate and distinct from the PTO account). There will be an organization meeting early in the school year, typically on the evening the students return from the trip to Springfield, to identify volunteer opportunities, fundraising goals, and decide upon and outline activities for the year. Some of the activities in the past have been a dinner dance (which includes a multitude of tasks ranging from a slide show to creating the program for the evening to organizing the venue/food), trip to Great America, day in Chicago. The number and type of activities, as well as the amount of funds to cover part or all of the costs of the activities, will be decided upon by the 8th grade parents collectively.

**Graduation Pictures**

In addition to the regular picture day, eighth graders also have graduation pictures taken. There are two types of pictures taken - 1) Cap and gown, and 2) Dress clothes - boys typically wear jackets and ties and girls wear skirts/blouses or dresses. Both or either pictures may be purchased. The cap and gown pictures are used for the class composite picture.

**Field Trips**

There is a separate fee for most field trips. The teachers serve as chaperones. Permission slips will be available on the teacher’s website generally a week prior to the trip.

* On **October 7, 2016**, the 8th graders travel to Springfield. The bus departs early morning (~ 6 a.m.) and returns in the evening (~ 9 p.m.). For social studies class, students are required to take notes on the sights and activities.
* See *Year-End Events section* for graduation field trips to downtown Chicago and Great America.

**8th Grade Fundraising**

* **Purpose -** The funds raised are used for two purposes to subsidize the cost of the dinner dance and to purchase a class gift to be given to the school.
* **Goal** - 8th grade fundraising goals have traditionally been set between $2,000 - $4,000.
* **Examples of past fundraisers** - The fundraisers are organized by parents but are typically designed to have 8th grade student participation to the greatest extent possible. Fundraisers have included: bake sale, hot lunch, popcorn sale, cookbook sale, raffle, Amato's pizza night, and Jewel days.
* **8th Grade Class Gift** - The eighth grade class has traditionally given the school a class gift. This gift is presented to the Principal at the end of year Dinner Dance. The money for the class gift is raised through various fundraisers. Recent gifts to the school have ranged in valued from $1,000 - $3,000 and have included; landscaping, digital camera, personal microphones, shades for the gym, digital overhead projector, scoreboard, and outdoor announcement sign.

1. **Year-End Events**

There are certain traditional events that take place to make the end of eighth grade.  The dates and places listed below are the ones that have traditionally been set, but obviously the schedule may change from year to year.  Eighth grade students and parents receive a letter prior to the (third trimester outlining the actual dates and stating the behavior and academic requirements to be eligible to participate in the activities.

**Date Event Attendees Place Comments**

Early May **May Crowning** Entire School Church 8th graders wear "dress" clothes.

(Parents welcome) ***Planned by the School.***

Early May **Chicago Walking** 8th graders Downtown Day-long tour of downtown **Tour with**  Chicago. Approx. cost $30-$35

**Fr. Morello** per person. ***Planned by Fr.***

***Morello/parent volunteers.***

Grad. Week **7th/8th Grade** 7th/8th graders McDonough Hall Given by the 7th graders***. Food* Breakfast *planned by 7th grade parents.***

***Decorations planned by 7th***

***graders/teachers. 7th graders are***

***responsible for the cost.***

Grad. Week **Dinner Dance** 8th Graders & Banquet Hall 8th graders wear "dress" clothes.

Parents, Teachers Approximate cost $30 per person.

***Planned by 8th grade parents.***

Grad. Week **Great America** 8th graders & teachers Great America Day-long trip to Great America by

bus. Approx. cost $40 per student.

***Planned by 8th grade teachers.***

Grad. Week **Graduation Mass** 8th graders Church Graduates wear caps & gowns

provided by the School.

***Planned by the School.***

1. **Preparation for High School**

St. Giles students are fortunate to have many choices in high school. To make this guide useful without being overwhelming, we have provided some detailed information for the schools most attended by St. Giles students (Fenwick, Lane Tech, OPRF, St. Ignatius, St. Patrick's and Trinity.) Specific and current information regarding open houses, entrance exams, admissions and placement for these schools and the many other options available should be obtained at each school's website or by calling the school directly.

* **High School Day at St. Giles** – [NEED DATE AND TIME], representatives from area Catholic High Schools have booths set up in the McDonough Hall where students obtain general information about the schools.
* **Open Houses** - In the fall and/or winter, area high schools hold open houses for prospective students and their parents. These open houses typically include an introductory presentation, tour of the school, and opportunity to hear about extracurricular activities. Information may be sent home through school mail, but parents are encouraged to contact the individual schools to confirm dates/times and to be sure to be on their mailing lists for prospective students.

Those students interested in attending OPRF should be aware of two additional opportunities that have been available in the past for parents to visit the school:

* + An information meeting for all 8th grade parochial school parents.
  + Parent Visitation Day where parents are invited to visit while classes are in session.
* **Shadow Dates** - Area high schools offer shadowing programs where 8th graders "shadow" a student as they go through a typical high school day. Most students will be deciding their high school choice in February/March, so shadowing is typically done in the last semester of 7th grade or during the first trimester of 8th grade. The schools need to be contacted early because there are some timing restrictions. Some schools arrange shadow dates upon request, while other schools have specific dates set aside as shadow days.

St. Giles students are encouraged to "shadow" at high schools on days St. Giles is not in session. Most schools allow the student to request a freshman they would like to shadow. Most shadow programs are for the full day.

* **OPRF Placement Exam** - OPRF holds placement exams on a Saturday in December with a make-up date during the week. No pre-registration is needed and there is no fee for the test. The exam takes 2-3 hours.
* **Catholic High School Entrance Exam** - All Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese conduct their entrance exam on the same date, typically the first or second Saturday in January. This year the Catholic high school entrance exam is scheduled for **Saturday, January 14, 2017**. Students typically sit for the test at their first choice school. Fenwick and Ignatius both have the policy that students must sit for the entrance exam at their respective school in order to be considered for admission. Other Catholic high schools may consider the scores of exams taken at high schools other than their own.

Traditionally, no pre-registration has been needed. A registration fee is paid on the day of the test. The exam takes about a half-day.

* **Catholic High School Acceptance and Placement** - Students are notified by mail of their acceptance to Catholic high schools by mid-February. The basis for admission varies between schools, but typically includes some combination of entrance exam results, 7th grade standardized test scores, and grade performance (typically the last two trimesters of 7th grade and the first trimester of 8th grade).

Verify the acceptance criteria with each of the schools. The criteria for placement in honor classes also vary with each school. The criteria may include teacher recommendation and any of the criteria previously listed. Fenwick uses the high school entrance exam for placement in honors classes. St. Ignatius gives placement tests after acceptance. Language placement tests are given at all the schools.

* **Scholarships** - Financial aid is available at most Catholic high schools as well as some scholarships. Most school websites have information regarding scholarships and financial aid.
* *St. Giles CCW and St. Giles Men's Club* - These two organizations each award a monetary scholarship to a graduating girl and boy, respectively, who will be attending a Catholic high school. The recipients are chosen on the basis of an essay.
* *Fenwick* - Any student who scores in the 99th percentile on the entrance examination is eligible for an academic monetary award that is renewable annually until graduation provided the student maintains a "B" grade point average.
* *Trinity* - The students who achieve the top two scores on the Trinity entrance exam are eligible for an academic scholarship for their freshman year.

The student from St. Giles taking the Trinity entrance exam who achieves the highest score among those St. Giles students taking the exam is eligible for a Sinsinawa Dominican scholarship for her freshman year.

* **Area High Schools**

**Fenwick**

505 W. Washington

Oak Park, IL 60302

(708) 386-0127

[www.fenwickfriars.com](http://www.fenwickfriars.com)

**Gordon Tech**

3633 N. California

Chicago, IL 60618

(773) 539-3600

[www.gordontech.org](http://www.gordontech.org)

**Lane Technical**

2501 W. Addison

Chicago, IL 60618

(773) 534-5400

[www.lanehs.com](http://www.lanehs.com)

**Guerin College Prep**

8001 W. Belmont

River Grove, IL 60171

(708) 453-6233

[www.mtguerin.org](http://www.mtguerin.org)

**Oak Park River Forest**

201 N. Scoville

Oak Park, IL 60302

(708) 383-0700

[www.oprfhs.org](http://www.oprfhs.org)

**St. Ignatius College Prep**

1076 W. Roosevelt

Chicago, IL 60608

(312) 421-5900

[www.ignatius.org](http://www.ignatius.org)

**St. Patrick's**

5900 W. Belmont

Chicago, IL 60634

(773) 282-8844

[www.stpatrick.org](http://www.stpatrick.org)

**Trinity**

7574 W. Division

River Forest, IL 60305

(708) 771-8383

[www.trinityhs.org](http://www.trinityhs.org)