

Phoenix Handbook

2020-2021



Welcome to Phoenix Middle School!

This handbook outlines key concepts and basic procedures of Phoenix Middle School. It is the staff's hope that the information presented will be useful as the new school year gets underway. During the year, please inform staff members if there is any additional information you would like to see in this handbook; suggestions that help Phoenix Middle School be the best place possible for students, families and staff are always welcome!

Please note that there is also a [Worthington City Schools Middle School Handbook](#). The Phoenix Handbook serves as an addendum to the Worthington City Schools Middle School Handbook. Also, this handbook is created with a typical school year in mind. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, certain aspects of our school will be impacted, and that information will be sent out separately.

School Contact Information:

Phoenix Middle School
2341 Snouffer Rd.
Worthington, OH 43085
Phone: 614.450.4100
Fax: 614.883.3610
www.phoenixms.org and Twitter: [@phxms](https://twitter.com/phxms)

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Phoenix Middle School Staff 2020-2021

The staff at Phoenix understands that every school year brings new faces and changes for students and parents alike. Below, you will find a listing of “who’s who” on the Phoenix Middle School staff:

| | Staff Position |
|---------------------|--|
| Sean Flynn | Principal |
| Lori Whitlatch | Art, 7th / 8th grades |
| Kevie Bovaird | Band, 7th/8th grades |
| Jill Mains | Cafeteria Manager |
| Wendy Capehart | Cafeteria Support Staff |
| Robert Estice | Connections, 7 th grade; Digital Art, 7 th /8 th grades |
| Kara Smith | Connections / Foundations, 8th grade |
| Damien School | Daytime Custodian |
| Julie Brown | Evening Custodian |
| Terri Goldring | Global Cultures, 7 th grade; Foundations, 7 th grade |
| Karan Dunn | School Counselor, 7 th /8 th grades |
| Jayne Rosandich | Media Assistant |
| Deb Warren | Instructional Aide |
| Rachel Martin | Intervention Specialist, 7th/8th grades |
| Hayley Meyer | Intervention Specialist, 7th/8th grades |
| Rose Aly | Language Arts / Foundations, 7th grade |
| Jordan Beck | Language Arts / Foundations, 8th grade |
| Micah Hudson | Math 7 / Compressed Math 7/8 / HS Math 2, 7 th /8 th grades |
| Kevin Hall | Math 8 / HS Math 1; 7th /8th grades |
| Abby McGreehan | Orchestra; 7th/8th grades |
| Tony Kabealo | Science / Foundations, 7 th grade |
| Stephanie Lemyre | Science/ Foundations, 8th grade |
| Christina Cavaluchy | Secretary |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Amanda Pettigrew | Social Studies / Foundations, 7th grade |
| Kelly Allen | Social Studies / Foundations, 8th grade |
| Troy Combs | Spanish, 8th grade; Digital Art, 8 th grade |
| Jessie Evans | Vocal Music, 7th/8th grades |
| Collin Smith | Wellness, 7 th /8 th grades; Math, 7 grade |
| Amanda Cooksey | Mental Health Specialist |
| Dawn Piccinich | Nurse |

Teacher Contact Information

Phoenix teachers welcome emails and phone calls from parents and students. **The phone number at Phoenix Middle School is 614-450-4100.** We understand that sometimes you may need to contact us outside the school day. Below, you will see email addresses and alternate phone numbers listed. We do ask that, if you call us at home, please respect our family schedules and do not call after 10:00 p.m.

| | <i>Email Address</i> | <i>Phone</i> |
|------------------|--|--------------|
| Kelly Allen | gallen@wscloud.org | 937-578-0050 |
| Rose Aly | raly@wscloud.org | 614-330-6033 |
| Jordan Beck | jbeck@wscloud.org | 330-317-4863 |
| Kevie Bovaird | kbovaird@wscloud.org | 614-407-6728 |
| Troy Combs | tcombs@wscloud.org | 614-204-1210 |
| Amanda Cooksey | acooksey@wscloud.org | 614-450-4100 |
| Karan Dunn | kdunn@wscloud.org | 614-450-4100 |
| Robert Estice | restice@wscloud.org | 614-268-7782 |
| Jessica Evans | jevans@wscloud.org | 614-450-4100 |
| Terri Goldring | tgoldring@wscloud.org | 614-519-9742 |
| Kevin Hall | khall@wscloud.org | 614-431-5904 |
| Micah Hudson | mhudson@wscloud.org | 614-547-3541 |
| Tony Kabealo | ckabealo@wscloud.org | 614-284-4203 |
| Stephanie Lemyre | slemyre@wscloud.org | 614-257-9474 |
| Rachel Martin | rmartin@wscloud.org | 614-507-3258 |
| Abby McGreehan | amcgreehan@wscloud.org | 614-450-4100 |
| Hayley Meyer | hmeyer@wscloud.org | 614-450-4100 |
| Amanda Pettigrew | apettigrew@wscloud.org | 614-783-4044 |
| Kara Smith | krsmith@wscloud.org | 614-323-0282 |
| Collin Smith | csmith@wscloud.org | 614-565-0147 |
| Lori Whitlatch | lwhitlatch@wscloud.org | 614-450-4100 |

Arrival / Dismissal Policies

NOTE: Please read the following arrival / dismissal policies carefully. It reflects a desire by the principal and staff to preserve the safety of each Phoenix student. We understand that it requires extra parent responsibility, but we ask for your cooperation in the interest of protecting your children.

Arriving after 7:40 a.m.:

All Phoenix students should report to the office of Phoenix Middle School and sign in with the secretary.

Leaving school:

IMPORTANT: Students can only be released to parents and those adults listed on their emergency information registered with the school district. If other arrangements are necessary, these must be made through the school office ahead of time.

Leaving between 7:40 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.:

If a student is going to leave during the day **between 7:40 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.**, a parent(s) signature is required. All parents are **required** to check in with the office in order to take their child out of the building. For security reasons, parents should not enter any other doors to take their child out of school during the school day. (Please note: **All visitors must sign in at the office before coming to the Phoenix classrooms.**) Phoenix uses the SchoolSafeID system, which requires a state issued photo ID for student sign out.

A note at the beginning of the day will help staff with planning, however it is not required. This note should be taken to the office when the student arrives at school in the morning.

If parents need to pick up their student before 4:30 p.m., they are required to **come into the building and talk with the office personnel before taking their child...** **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Friday Schedules, Professional Days, and Weather Delays:

Friday Schedules:

During a regular, full week of school, Phoenix students are released on Friday at 1:40 p.m. to allow the staff to meet. When the school week is shortened (due to holidays, school breaks, professional days, etc.), we will dismiss at 1:40 on the last day of that week. For example, during Thanksgiving week, school is in session on Monday and Tuesday. Therefore, students would be released at 1:40 on Tuesday afternoon; this way, staff meeting time will not be missed due to losing a Friday during the week.

Professional Days:

When Professional Days are listed on the Worthington Schools calendar, please note that Phoenix will not be in session. Professional Days often include district activities that Phoenix teachers are expected to attend. **Please refer to the calendar on the Phoenix website or contact your advisory teacher if you have further questions. (www.phoenixms.org)**

Weather Delays:

If Worthington City Schools are on a 1-/ 2-hour delay or cancelled due to weather, **Phoenix Middle School is included**. School start times will be moved from 7:40 am to 8:40 am (1-hour delay) or to 9:40 am (2-hour delay), **even if the delay falls on a school day with a 1:40 dismissal**. We will shorten our schedule accordingly.

Wellness Class Expectations

Our Wellness program at Phoenix is based on holistic conception of health. Holistic health includes physical as well as mental health. Our Wellness classes account for that by focusing on all aspects of health like collaboration, self-expression, body perception, and all fundamental movement skills.

To ensure your student's safety and help them maintain good hygiene, please make sure that your child has **a set of appropriate work-out clothes and shoes that are just to be worn for his/her Wellness classes**. The students should bring their clothes home weekly so that the used clothes can be washed regularly.

Mastery Grading

At Phoenix Middle School, we believe that learning is more than accumulating points and competing for the top grades in the class. It is crucial that students grow to be accountable for what they are learning. Teacher feedback is important, but only in the sense that students use it to understand their strengths as well as the areas that need improvement. One way we address academic accountability is through “mastery grading”. Our dream for every student is to see them motivated *intrinsically* rather than by an endless competition for points and percentages.

There are two equally important concepts about mastery grading that parents and students need to grasp: types of assignments and assessment.

Types of assignments:

Phoenix assignments are driven by the Ohio Department of Education content standards, as well as the Worthington Schools graded course of study. These assignments are designed to reflect a natural learning curve: introduction, practice, and mastery. *Introductory* assignments are used to present new concepts / skills; *practice* assignments (these typically make up the majority of work at Phoenix) give students opportunities to develop their understanding of the new concepts / skills; *mastery* assignments enable students to demonstrate their solid understanding of concepts and skills presented.

Content Assessment:

To foster an environment that supports growth and risk-taking, assessment at Phoenix looks different than it does in more traditional programs. Teacher feedback on introductory and practice assignments is in the form of \checkmark , $\checkmark+$, $\checkmark-$. A check indicates the student’s work is “on target”. A $\checkmark-$ is given for incomplete work and/or significant misunderstanding of the presented concept/skill. In rare instances, a teacher may use a $\checkmark+$ to indicate that the student has gone above and beyond expectations of the assignment.

There are 4 possible assessments that can be given to mastery assignments. An “M” (Mastery) is earned on a mastery assignment if the student has demonstrated solid understanding of the concept or skill to the teacher’s satisfaction. Following directions and presentation are also factors considered in the assessment. If aspects of the assignment are missing or clear understanding is not evident, a teacher may give an assignment a “P” (Progressing). An “NP” indicates “Not Progressing”; this is rare and is reserved for work not turned in or work that is absolutely unacceptable. Equally rare is the assessment of “E” (Exemplary) on a mastery assignment. **The goal for a mastery assignment is M**; Phoenix teachers reserve an “E” for work that “knocks our socks off”.

Please note the following distinction: Introductory and Practice assignments are evaluated as described above, and displayed online. Missing work will also be displayed. However, these grades WILL NOT be rolled into the Mastery grade for the class. The Mastery grade posted on MAP (online grades) will only reflect Mastery assignments – summative judgments – that show to what degree the student is mastering academic content standards.

One last note on this matter: please DO NOT equate E, M, P, and NP with A, B, C, D...this is not a traditional grading scale that just uses different letters. It may take time to understand this new way of thinking, but please bear with the program, ask questions of us, and talk to your student!

Assignment Deadlines:

At Phoenix, we expect students to do their ***“best work, the first time, on time.”*** Turning work in when it’s due is an expectation of Phoenix students. Meeting deadlines will not only help Phoenix students “stay afloat”, but is a life skill that is integral to success outside the classroom. If a student does turn work in after it is due, the content assessment will not be devalued due to tardiness. However, the student’s ability to turn in work on time will be appropriately assessed under “Work Habits and Behaviors” (see section below).

Students and parents should be aware that late work and assignments that are not at mastery **do not go away**; students will still be responsible for current work while they are working to catch up on work that is tardy. ***This can become problematic very, very quickly!!*** **Keeping up with work, revisiting Progressing and $\sqrt{-}$ work, and honoring deadlines are crucial to academic success at Phoenix.**

****Note: Unlike traditional assessment programs, **assignments not at mastery at the end of the quarter will carry over to the next 9 weeks.** ****

Summer Expectations:

At the end of 7th and 8th grades, Phoenix students who have not achieved mastery in a class will be asked to report to school after the school year ends to work with the teacher until mastery status is achieved. This is not “summer school”, as it is not provided by the school district, nor do families pay tuition. Rather, Phoenix teachers volunteer time to make sure students understand what they need to in order to progress the next grade. Days and times will be arranged by individual teachers. District deadlines for grade submission will be followed, which means if the student is still not mastered by the Final Grade deadline, that grade they have at that time will be entered on the grade card. Phoenix teachers may choose to include a letter in the student’s file to explain further the reason (s) the student did not achieve mastery during the school year. We strongly recommend students complete all work in order to ensure their success the following year.

Assessment of Work Habits and Behaviors:

Phoenix teachers also assess students on a number of work habits and behaviors that are crucial to academic success:

T: Timeliness:

Work is completed and handed in on time. Students come to class on time.

Q: Quality of Work:

Includes handwriting, evidence of appropriate effort, general neatness issues (no torn paper, ripped-out holes, stains, smudges, wrinkled papers), and errors corrected appropriately / neatly, etc.

A: Active Engagement in Class:

Actively listening to teachers and other students (good eye contact, not whispering to others, not using class time for recreational reading, drawing, completing homework for other classes, etc.), participating in class discussion, taking notes when appropriate, completing in-class work, working cooperatively in groups, making good use of independent work time in class.

O: Organization:

Student comes to class with all papers, assignments, and materials needed. Student has a successful system for organizing work for each class. Locker is neatly maintained.

D: Directions / Formatting:

In class, student listens to and follows directions correctly and consistently and will appropriately ask questions for clarification if needed. On written assignments, papers are headed correctly and completely as directed by teachers. Written directions are read and followed. If assignments are word-processed, Times New Roman font, size 12 should be used unless otherwise noted; paragraphs should be double-spaced. Word-processed documents should be printed with blue or black ink. All handwritten work to be turned in, should be completed in pencil or with blue / black ink pens (unless otherwise noted by the teacher).

The letter codes above (T, Q, A, O, and D) may be written on the top of an assignment to indicate that the student **has not met** work habit / behavior standards expected by the teacher.

On each quarterly progress report, teachers may assess the following work habits / behaviors listed above on a mastery scale as follows:

E - Always

M - Consistently / On a Daily Basis

P - Sometimes

NP - Rarely / Never

Discovery Days

What are Discovery Days?

During the school year, there are designated days when students can participate in a self-designed exploratory experience. Students could choose to carry out a service-learning project, shadow an adult working in a career that interests them, create / complete an extension project in a particular content area, or perhaps go on a curriculum-related field trip...the possibilities are limited only by the students' creativity. The Phoenix staff believes Discovery Days are an important way to include student voice in our school's curriculum.

When are Discovery Days? (subject to change)

- 1) **Mon., Nov. 23, 2020.** (Mastery work deadline, Wed., Oct 7. Only students at Mastery will participate).
- 2) **Tue., Nov. 24, 2020.** (Mastery work deadline: Wed., Oct. 7. ALL STUDENTS participate.) Note: There is no school scheduled in Worthington on Fri., Oct. 16; no classes for students.
- 3) **Thurs., Dec. 17, 2020.** (Mastery work deadline, Thurs., Dec. 10. Only students at Mastery will participate).
- 4) **Fri., Dec. 18, 2020.** (Mastery work deadline: Thurs., Dec. 10. ALL STUDENTS participate.)
- 5) **Wed., Mar. 10, 2021.** (Mastery work deadline, Wed., Mar. 3. Only students at Mastery will participate).
- 6) **Thurs., Mar. 11, 2021.** (Mastery work deadline: Wed., Mar. 3. ALL STUDENTS participate.)

Who participates in Discovery Days? What does "Mastery work deadline" mean?

Discovery Day is an opportunity for all students to experience the process of designing and planning with teachers and parents. ****Every Phoenix student is required to participate in the 2nd, 4th, and 6th Discovery Days as listed above.**

Every student who has mastered all classes will fully participate in the “Discovery Days” program at Phoenix. Students who are not at mastery in all classes by the Mastery work deadline listed above will use the 1st, 3rd, and / or 5th Discovery Day (as listed above) to stay at school and consult with teachers on missing work, as well as assignments that need to be revised and resubmitted. The ultimate decision on Discovery Day eligibility rests with the student’s advisor.

“Mastery work deadline” is the last day that a student can turn in revisions to be considered for Discovery Day eligibility. Students and parents can keep track of progress toward Discovery Day eligibility on Phoenix MAP, our online assessment program.

Where do Discovery Days take place?

The Phoenix staff believes that meaningful education can take place outside the school walls as well as in the classroom. To that end, we strongly encourage students to plan their Discovery Day experience to take place off school property. Students who require equipment / space at school for their experience will be approved on a case-by-case basis by staff members. (Note: Phoenix students are not permitted to visit / shadow a staff member or student at another Worthington middle school.)

The Phoenix staff understands that families may initially struggle to make arrangements for offsite Discovery Day experiences for their student. Hopefully, thoughtful planning by students (with the support of parents and staff) will work out any difficulties.

Do Discovery Days get planned? Who’s supposed to do the work?

In the spirit of the Phoenix Middle School philosophy of “Student Voice – Student Choice”, the primary responsibility of planning Discovery Days falls squarely on the student’s shoulders. Students are led through the planning process (discussion, brainstorming, goal-setting, completion of planning forms) at school under direct instruction by the Phoenix staff. That being said, the staff also recognizes that 12-14 year-old students need guidance and support when it comes to communication, scheduling, transportation, gathering materials, etc. To make each student’s Discovery Day a success, parents must also take active roles in the process.

How can families help their Phoenix student with Discovery Days?

No one knows middle school students better than the adults that live with them. Adult family members can support their Phoenix student by:

- marking Discovery Days together on the family calendar;
- informally discussing ideas and dreams with the students about what those days could involve;

- looking over brainstorming / pre-planning paperwork that the student works on at school and brings home to complete.
- taking time to **carefully read** the student's plan before signing off on it. A parent's signature on the plan tells the advisory teacher that families have read the plan, have full knowledge of all it entails, and are willing to support their Phoenix student in carrying it out. Furthermore, a parent signature indicates that families believe the plan to be meaningful and worthwhile for the student (not just something to "fill time" before going to the mall.) **Teachers take their cues from parents...we will not sign off on a plan that families do not approve for their child.**

Accountability for Discovery Days:

At the end of each Discovery Day(s), all students (whether they went on a Discovery Day experience OR worked on mastery at school) will complete a written reflection assignment at home to bring in to share with his or her advisory group the following week. The reflection assignment will be given at school as homework, and will present questions such as:

What did you do?

What was exciting, frustrating, challenging, rewarding, etc. about your experience?

What did you learn?

What did you discover about yourself?

If appropriate to the Discovery Day experience, students are encouraged to bring in an artifact to share; for example, if something was constructed, baked, composed, written, sewn, etc., it would make sense that the student share the finished work with teachers and peers as part of the advisory group discussion. When deciding whether to bring an artifact, students should ask themselves, "Would this make it easier for me to talk about my experience? How can I engage my audience when I talk about what I did for Discovery Day?"

Learning Extensions

Unless involved in school-sponsored sports, clubs, or other school related activities after school, all Phoenix students are strongly encouraged to stay for Learning Extensions until 4:30 p.m., Monday -Thursday. Students report to their Learning Extensions classrooms, where attendance is taken at 3:50 p.m. During Learning Extensions, students should make it a priority to work on assignments that are not at mastery before starting homework assignments. This way, students have access to teachers; staying current with revisions should prevent students from getting too far behind with work required to achieve mastery.

Extracurricular Eligibility

Worthington Schools' student eligibility policy is aligned with Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) guidelines: for students to participate in a school-sponsored extracurricular activity, they must have had passing grades in 4 classes the previous quarter. ***At Phoenix, "passing grades" means achieving mastery in 4 out of 6 core classes at the end of the quarter.*** For example, if a student is not at mastery in at least 4 core classes after fall quarter, he/she is ineligible for the winter season. Parents and/or Phoenix staff may also decide a student sits out a week if he or she is missing significant numbers of Introductory and Practice assignments.

At Phoenix, academic eligibility is also tracked on a week-to-week basis. The Phoenix MAP (online assessment portal) provides families with this information on a daily basis with a red / green button. ***Students should be at mastery in at least 4 out of 6 classes or under 9 assignments in order to participate in their extracurricular that week (this means practices and games / matches).*** Weekly eligibility is determined by specific assignments turned in during the week, quality of the work, and student effort. Therefore, "P" and "NP" work should be addressed as quickly as possible.

Students and parents can stay updated through MAP when the student is ineligible to participate in school-sponsored extracurricular events for that week. The first week of ineligibility is considered a warning. Students may still practice and participate in games / matches/practices and performances. If the student has not taken care of the classwork in question by the following Monday, he or she is declared "ineligible" for that entire week: this includes all practices AND games / matches and practices/performances.) ***Ineligible students are expected to stay at school during learning extensions to work on assignments throughout that week.*** Families will be notified by the following Monday once the student has again become eligible.

Contracts

If a student shows clear signs of struggling in all / most classes (i.e., not turning in work, not revising assignments, not participating in classes, etc.), a contract may be put into place. The contract process involves the student, the Phoenix teachers, and parents. Failure to meet contract provisions can eventually result in students leaving Phoenix at semester or not being invited back the following year.

Parent Involvement and Mastery Grading

So, what can a parent do to stay on top of their child's academic progress at Phoenix Middle School?

- First of all, ***talk to your child***. If students are appropriately engaged at school, they should be able to talk about what's going on every day in detail. Look for a "Weekly Update" from the grade level team (delivered via email) that briefly describes classroom activities and /or curriculum-related announcements. These can be great conversation starters!
- Second, please ***help your child stay organized***. Check to see that their planbooks are (almost) always complete and up to date; their binders are organized, which means that papers aren't getting lost in the "black hole" between home and school.
- Third, when there is work to do at home (and, yes, there will be homework from time to time), ***please help your student find a quiet place to work***—away from distractions, and stocked with materials they may need to do their work (paper, pens / pencils, white-out, stapler, paper clips, etc.). At Phoenix, this is called "the place of most potential." **Computer access is important!** Your student will often need to use a computer outside of school to word process, do research, and complete online assignments. If you have a computer at home with internet access, appropriate adult supervision is recommended. If there is not a computer at home, students may access computers with internet access at the Northwest Library on Hard Rd. , Worthington Library in downtown Worthington , and the Worthington Park Library on the northeast side.
- Fourth, ***stay connected***. Make checking your child's online grades a weekly routine for you and your student. Go to the Phoenix website regularly (www.phoenixms.org) to check individual teacher pages, if applicable, as well as the calendar and announcements on the home page. Check your email; we often send group announcements that you need to read, as well as individual student updates as needed. ***If there are problems with accessing online grades or our website, or if your email changes, please let us know immediately!***
- A note about Phoenix MAP (online reporting system for grades):

The Phoenix Mastery Assessment Portal (MAP) is set up to send an email update weekly. You will also be sent alerts of any missing or late work. Review MAP parental control for any automatic alerts you choose to turn on or off as the year progresses. Please review the online information with your child on a regular basis (at least one time per week), and if necessary, help your student make a plan to catch up.

- Finally, if you are feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, confused, uninformed, **contact the staff**. Communication is key: addressing any concern you have should always begin with a conversation between you and a Phoenix staff member. How can you contact staff? Send an email to your child’s advisory teacher, or any of the other grade level teachers. Call a staff member on the phone using the numbers in this handbook. Write a note. Request a conference. The program at Phoenix simply doesn’t work if parents aren’t involved...**talk to the staff**.

Student Involvement and Mastery Grading

Make no mistake...while parent involvement is paramount, **ultimately, Phoenix students are responsible for staying updated on their own academic progress**. What is a Phoenix student expected to do on a regular basis?

- Fill in every square of the student planbook **every single day**. Every Phoenix teacher posts the day’s homework in the classroom. Copy it down right away. If there is no assignment, write “no homework” in the square for that class. Be sure to keep track of long-term assignments, as well as work that needs to be revised (see below).
- **Use the “To-do List”** in the right column of the planbook to write down work that needs to be revised for mastery.
- **Be smart about saving your work!!!!** When you use the computer to complete an assignment **at home**, be sure to save the work on the W-Cloud, Google Drive, or on the hard drive of your computer at your house before you bring it to school on your flash drive. **At school**, always save anything you are working on to your K-Drive folder on the school server as well as Google Drive. **YOUR FLASH DRIVE SHOULD ONLY BE USED TO TRANSPORT WORK TO AND FROM SCHOOL!!!** Flash drives often break or get lost. ***Work that has only been saved on a flash drive that has been lost or destroyed will have to be re-done—no exceptions.***
- **Talk to the teachers**. Sometimes, students are nervous about approaching a teacher to ask individual questions about assignments or progress. When these conversations are avoided, the problem invariably becomes much bigger than it needs to be. If a student is having a hard time seeing the teacher alone, he or she should write a note or email that teacher to set up a time to meet.
- **When returning from an absence, seek out each teacher as soon as possible**. Teachers are the best source for catching students up on classwork after an absence.
- **Use Phoenix MAP**. Early in the year, students will have access at school (and hopefully, at home) to their progress. This is like having the teacher’s gradebook accessible at any time. Missing, progressing (P) and $\sqrt{-}$ work should be taken care of immediately.

Addressing Student Concerns

The phrase “Student voice - Student choice” is a cornerstone of the Phoenix Middle School philosophy. To that end, Phoenix teachers welcome and encourage students to communicate any concerns they may have about the program; this can include academic issues, social concerns, questions about the schedule, teacher concerns, etc.

For one reason or another, everyone complains; it’s human nature. However, the Phoenix staff firmly believes that our students must learn how to effectively communicate their concerns in order to resolve the issues at hand. We will encourage our students to use a variety of tools to communicate concerns they may have. These tools include (but are not limited to) speaking with their advisory teacher, bringing up an issue at Forum, or a committee meeting, etc.

Parent Forums

Parent Forums are usually held one evening a month at each grade level. Unless otherwise noted, the parent forums begin at 7:30 pm; we try to keep the meetings to an hour. Students sometimes attend if they are part of a presentation; typically, these meetings are planned for parents. (Please note that PTSA meetings are often scheduled on Wednesday evenings at 6:30, just before the Parent Forum. All are encouraged to attend.)

What Parent Forums ***are***:

...a time for parents to hear information from teachers about curriculum, upcoming events, procedures, etc.; a time for parents to share conversation with other Phoenix parents (often in a small group setting); a time for parents to ask questions and express thoughts / opinions about the Phoenix program.

What Parent Forums ***are not***:

...a time to have a “mini-conference” with your child’s teacher(s); a time “just to chat” (we cover important information and have meaningful discussions); a time to express individual concerns to the group about your child’s experience that would be better-suited for a parent / teacher conference.

Parent Forums are very important to your child’s success at Phoenix Middle School; parents need to know what’s going on in order to fully support their Phoenix student at home. Please make attendance a priority. Meeting dates and times can be found on the Phoenix website calendar.

Student Behavior and Travel

Both 7th and 8th grade students have the opportunity to participate in school-day and extended field trips during the school year. Out of necessity, teachers and staff expect excellent behavior from students on such trips, including following Phoenix Middle School and Worthington City Schools district regulations; our goal is to make the excursions safe and enjoyable for all participants. **Please note: there will be no student cell phones or electronic devices permitted on Phoenix Middle School trips, unless otherwise specified.** Should a student decide to behave outside of school / school district expectations, it is possible that his or her parent / guardian would be required to remove the student from the trip at their own expense and take them home.

Note: If a student has received an out-of-school suspension for a minimum of three (3) days at any time during the school year, that student may be ineligible from attending any field trips / travel opportunities outside of school. Ineligibility for the trip will be at staff discretion. This includes school-day trips and overnight trips, as well as regional and international travel. If a student has to be pulled from a trip for disciplinary reasons, his or her family will bear responsibility for cancelling the trip with the tour company (if necessary), as well as any expenses incurred therein. Phoenix Middle School and the Worthington City Schools are not responsible for refunding travel payments lost as a result of student disciplinary action.

Applying for 7th grade at Phoenix – PHOENIX SIBLINGS

The application process for 6th grade families in the Worthington School District begins after the beginning of January. As admission to Phoenix in 7th grade is lottery-based, we cannot automatically accept students from previous Phoenix families due to the large numbers of applicants this would create (thus taking lottery spots away from the general public). However, if a Phoenix family has a 7th grader that will be moving into 8th grade at Phoenix, their rising 7th grader (current 6th grader) is automatically part of the new 7th grade class should the family so desire. (This is so that families with middle school students in consecutive grades have the option of keeping them in the same school.) **PLEASE NOTE: 6th graders from current Phoenix families must complete the application and submit it by the spring deadline with all other district applicants. Failure to complete the application process will forfeit the reserved spot for that Phoenix family 6th grader.**

Leaving Phoenix Middle School between grades 7 and 8

By accepting a student into Phoenix Middle School, we are expecting the student to stay for the full two-year program. We always have had at least twice as many students applying as we can accept, so there has been a waiting list. As excited as we are to work with our students, it is important for everyone to remember that for every Phoenix 7th grader, there are at least 1-2 students really wanting a spot in the class that didn't make it through the lottery.

Though it does not happen often, sometimes families determine that Phoenix may not be the best fit for their student. We expect this to be a decision very carefully considered; to that end, there is a protocol that must be followed before a transfer is possible. (The protocol has also been communicated and agreed to by the other Worthington middle school principals.)

1. The student's 7th grade advisor at Phoenix must be contacted, and a meeting set up with at least one parent, the student, and the advisor. At that time, preliminary discussion will be held about intentions to transfer, and what factors may be at play in the decision.
2. At the initial meeting, a range of decisions and / or plans could be made by those in attendance, ranging from adjustments made at Phoenix to help the student remain, to a timeline for the transfer. Each case is considered independently and personally, based on student needs.
3. If needed, a second meeting should be held to finalize the decision. The student must be present, as well as the parent(s), and at least two Phoenix staff members.
4. If a transfer is agreed upon, **Phoenix staff members will contact the principal** of the neighborhood middle school. The goal of contacting the principal is to discuss reasons for the transfer, and to share any pertinent information that would help make the transition a smooth one for the student and family.
5. **Only after the principal and Phoenix staff have spoken will the family be able to contact the neighborhood middle school and request to transfer to that building.** Please understand that the principal is not required to take the Phoenix student; sometimes a large student population, discipline concerns, and/or academic needs may affect the principal's decision to accept a new student. Hopefully all parties concerned can work together to make the best decision possible.

Electronic Devices at School

In schools around the country, the use of electronic devices continues to evolve; it is no different at Phoenix Middle School. Our goal is to balance the curriculum, 21st century skills, availability of technology, appropriate – and safe – student behavior, with the development of respectful, responsible digital citizenship. This is proving to be a challenging road to navigate, but certainly one we are committed to travel along with our students and families.

As part of the Worthington School district, we follow district guidelines for student electronic use as outlined in the student handbook that all families in Worthington receive at the beginning of the year. We also recognize that students often need access to their devices for curricular purposes as well. Please be advised that, although we welcome and encourage the student use of electronic devices, we will be vigilant that the use is for classroom work, as well as for purposes connected to positive behavior and school-appropriate communication. Should a student decide to deviate from these expectations, or disobey a staff request to stow / turn off the electronic device, students and parents should expect the behavior to be dealt with as would any other discipline issue:

- 1) **Students will be asked to keep their handheld or wearable devices (ie. Smartphone, game systems, Apple watch, etc) in their lockers during the school day.** Students will be able to bring personal laptops, Chromebooks, or E-readers to the classroom. If students need to communicate with their parents during the school day, they should come to the office. Parents can call our office line at 614-450-4100 and our building secretaries will connect you with your student. Our staff is committed to supporting your student and we understand that issues arise (such as forgetting lunch or homework). Our staff will work with your student to make sure his or her needs are met and they are able to communicate with you.
- 2) Students who choose to bring handheld devices to class may receive a warning (note: “warnings” can also include an explicit reminder / announcement given to a group of students prior to class). If the student continues to disregard electronic device policy, there will be progressive consequences (including, but not limited to, parents picking up the device from the school office, face-to-face meeting with student / parents / staff, plans for individual students, etc.)
- 3) We encourage students to take precautions to keep their electronic devices safe at school. Phoenix staff members are not liable for student electronic devices brought to school. We do not have the space or ability to store them safely at school outside of the student lockers. Please talk with your student about the importance of caring for their equipment, which might sometimes include the decision to leave the device safely at home if it will be a problem at school. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact your student’s advisor.
- 4) There will be staff in the office during Learning Extensions that can deliver phone messages to students when needed. Students can call home from the office, if necessary. Our office line is 614-450-4100.
- 5) **Please note: there will be no student cell phones or electronic devices permitted on Phoenix Middle School trips, unless otherwise specified.**