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A PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOK FOR  
THE HOWARD M. PHIFER MIDDLE SCHOOL

by  
Valerie Anne O'Brien

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division  
of Rowan University  
1997

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved May, 1997

## ABSTRACT

Valerie Anne O'Brien

A Parent and Student Handbook for the Howard M. Phifer  
Middle School

1997

Dr. Louis Molinari

Elementary School Teaching

This study was undertaken to determine if there was any significant difference in the expressed needs of the parents and students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and the expressed information in various districts middle school handbooks.

The sample in this study was one hundred thirty-five, randomly selected sixth graders in the Howard M. Phifer Middle School, Pennsauken, New Jersey and their parents.

The sixth grade students and their parents responded to a twenty-five question needs assessment. A comparison of other districts middle school handbooks was also used to compile information for a middle school handbook for Howard M. Phifer Middle School parents and students.

The hypothesis stated there would be no significant difference in the need of the parents and students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and the information in other districts handbooks. There were not significant differences found. Suggestions for a future study were made.

## MINI - ABSTRACT

Valerie Anne O'Brien

A Parent and Student Handbook for the Howard M. Phifer  
Middle School.

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Dr. Louis Molinari

Elementary School Teaching

The purpose of this study was to develop a middle school handbook for the parents and students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School. Needs of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School parents and students were assessed along with information contained in other districts middle school handbooks. Significant differences were not confirmed. Suggestions for future study were made.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The middle school years are a time of change for students. "These are times when it is most important to bond students to the school level where they will spend the next few years." (Odegaard and Heath 1992) The middle school experience for many children is very different when compared to what they were accustomed to in the elementary school setting. Students know this and become afraid of attending a middle school.

"Counselors, teachers parents and administrators have always observed that students become anxious, express school related fears and suffer academic difficulties in the transition from elementary to middle school." (Sichl and Gentry 1990) One reason that some students suffer anxiety is that they will no longer have one main teacher all day. "Students frequently must give up the security of one selfcontained classroom. They must now negotiate several changes of teachers and classes without the group support of a stable classroom." (Monson 1989) This is upsetting to some students because there is no sense of security. They do not know who will help them open their locker or even find their way to the lunch room.

In an elementary school the child knew who to go to for assistance. In the middle school there are usually more teachers than in the elementary school and it is not clear who can be asked for assistance. "Young adolescents are ready for the challenge of a

new experience, but at the same time, have a sense of nostalgia for the familiar routine of an elementary school. They also have an unease about the relationships and structures awaiting them." (Siehl and Gentry 1990)

"As students make the move from the small, family-like atmosphere of their elementary school to the larger middle school, they experience feelings of insecurity and anxiety about the physical layout of the building itself." (Odegaard and Heath 1990) The middle school building is much larger than the elementary school building. The students are expected to move from one class to the next. Many may be unfamiliar with the new setting and finding the assigned classrooms may be frustrating. Since many students are unfamiliar with the new school layout it is reported that many students do get lost on their way to classes. This uncertainty can cause a feeling of panic, for they may not know who to ask for directions. Many times students who are late for classes are penalized causing even more frustration.

All students should know what is expected of them while attending a school. They should be aware of established routines and practices. This is especially true in a middle school setting, instead however confusion often prevails. "In the United States, entry into a middle level school is considered a rite of passage by some. It is viewed as an event marking the exit from childhood and entrance into the adolescent culture." (Monson 1989) The middle school places more expectations on each student and new limits are placed on their behavior. Many of the middle school's procedures and rules are not the same as the elementary school's procedures and rules.

"Academic concerns such as having more demanding school work is another



challenge of transition. In most middle schools there is a more serious emphasis on academic accomplishments than in the elementary grades. Students have considerably more responsibility for self monitoring of assignments than at the elementary level." (Monson 1989) In a middle level school stress may be placed on a student to perform well academically. "Whenever students change schools or programs within schools, they need orientation and a period of adjustment to the new situation in which they often face different philosophies, procedures, requirements, expectations and rewards. (Brazee 1987) The dress code in a middle school may be different compared to the elementary school. The procedures for handling lateness are different from the elementary school's procedures. In a middle school a student must be responsible for informing the office when they arrive late to school. If the student does not notify the office when entering the building late, the school will make phone inquiries regarding the child's absence thus causing a new set of unexpected problems.

The middle school has additional after school buses unlike most elementary schools. These buses can be used if a child stays for extra help or an extracurricular activity. There are special rules and regulations for riding these buses. "While school transition is a time of great excitement and anticipation for youth, it has also been identified as a time of anxiety and fear, a major stressful event in their lives." (Monson 1989)

The students in a middle school are exposed to change in many areas. They experience, physical as well as emotional change. It is true that many middle school children have access to guidance counselors but again a whole new set of issues arise and

the students may not know how to handle them or take advantage of the offerings available from the school.

The grading procedures in the middle school are probably different compared to the elementary school's grading system. This could create more stress for a student in this new school situation.

The expectations that each middle school has for the students may vary when compared to the elementary school. An uneasiness may be felt by the new middle school student because of the new set of school expectations. A middle school teacher usually places more responsibility upon the student. The student is responsible for monitoring projects, homework and tests. "Certainly, young adolescents need to take on more responsibility for managing their lives as they get older, but they are not ready to be on their own." (Berla, Henderson, and Kerewsky 1989)

The bell schedule within a middle school forces a student to leave a class after forty-five to fifty minutes. Unlike an elementary school where the child may stay in one place for more than an hour. This can be an unsettling experience for a middle school age child. Changing classes in a middle school can be a challenge for some students. Most middle school's hallways are very crowded and the crowds may take some getting used to. Some students may feel overwhelmed by the amount of students in a middle school because almost always they are extremely large compared to an elementary school population.

Since the middle school years presents unprecedented problems for each individual child, and since the student was not prepared for this situation it seems that action to

relieve or somewhat ease the tensions and anxieties created must be implemented.

One way in which many schools have lessened the anxiety experienced by new students is to develop a program which will address the specific factors that cause tension and anxiety. Many factors discussed above could be lessened if not eliminated entirely.

One way in which schools have worked toward the goal is to establish some type of handbook that can be used to better prepare students for new experiences and to help them establish the protocols of the new situation.

A new student handbook or guide can help students and parents become aware of what is expected at the middle school. A student needs a handbook, and it should always be accessible to him or her. If school procedures and classroom routines are to be understood then students and parents alike should be able to consult the handbook on a need to know basis which may imply different times during the day, week or school year. In order to make them accessible it should be readily available.

John A. Pohl, a principal at the Holman Middle School in Saint Ann, Missouri states that students need a wealth of information about a new school. "Before students walk through the front door of the middle school for the first time, they and their parents must have as much information as possible about the school, the programs, the faculty and staff members, the administration and the school's expectations." (Pohl 1991)

Berla, Henderson and Kerewsky developed a parent guide called The Middle School Years: A Parents' Handbook. In it they state that, "Schools that understand young adolescents work actively to keep their parents informed and involved." (Berla, Henderson and Kerewsky 1989) This book was written and published by the National

Committee for the Citizens in Education (NCCE). It covers areas that parents might be concerned about when their child is entering the middle school age. Some topics discussed this guide are:

The normal behavior for this age group of children.

How to prepare your child for the future.

Descriptions of a middle school atmosphere.

How a parent can improve and evaluate their child's middle school.

These areas give parents a starting point when preparing their children for the middle school years.

Usually there is little transition provided when moving from the elementary to the middle school. Some of these problems encountered may be lessened if children and parents are given time to understand what is expected in the new setting of a middle school. A student and parent handbook may help alleviate the stress and anxiety that is often felt in a new school situation.

Since the need to inform the parent and child about middle school practices and procedures is overwhelming, and since the Howard M. Phifer Middle School does not have a compiled set of guidelines for the parent and child it is the purpose of this study to develop such a guide and to explore ways in which this needed information can be made and kept accessible by the parent and student alike. In order to gather information regarding the kind of information that should be included in a guide, a compilation of materials from various districts and a comparison of those materials were made.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In order to develop a comprehensive handbook a number of questions had to be answered.

1. What information is essential for the parent of an entering middle school child.
2. What information is essential for the student entering the Howard M. Phifer Middle School.

In order to answer these questions a research of the literature was conducted. Suggestions from the experts in the field were compiled. Handbooks from various middle schools were examined. A needs assessment was conducted in the Howard M. Phifer Middle School which polled parents and students. From these various sources a handbook was developed that seemed to fill the needs of the public surveyed.

## STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

In order to better understand the salient features that belong in a handbook the following hypotheses were generated. There will be no significant difference of the needs expressed by the parents of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and the expressed information in various handbooks from other districts.

In order to better understand the salient features that belong in a handbook the following hypotheses were generated. There will be no significant difference of the needs expressed by the students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and the expressed information in various handbooks from other districts.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study attempted to analyze the contents of various middle school handbooks. This study also surveyed the needs of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School students and parents. This study then used those findings to design a new student/parent handbook for the Howard M. Phifer Middle School. This will, if approved by the school board, be placed in every middle schoolers assignment book in the Howard M. Phifer Middle School. This convenient access to the handbook will allow all school information to be visible to the students and parents.

## METHOD OF THE STUDY

One hundred thirty-five sixth graders and their parents from the Howard M. Phifer Middle School in Pennauken, New Jersey were surveyed in this study. Various middle school handbooks from other districts were examined to compare their contents. A review of the research on the positive aspects of school handbooks was also conducted.

## LIMITATIONS

This study has two areas of limitations. School handbooks are designed individually for each school according to the school's needs. In the same way, school needs vary according to the school population and school location.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

1. School handbook A book or pamphlet designed by a school to inform the students and parents about the school policies.
2. Middle school A school following the elementary grades, but before high school. Usually set up with three grade levels, sixth,

seventh and eighth. However, some middle schools contain fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

3. Assignment books A paperback book outlined with the various school subjects listed and room to write the homework for each subject.
4. Transescents A synonym for a pre-adolescent or young teenager.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE PROJECT

This study has been done to design a school handbook to meet the needs of the Howard M. Phifer School parents and students.

CHAPTER ONE identified the problem and stated the hypotheses. The significance of the study and the purpose of the study were outlined. The method of the study, limitations of the study and the terms used in the study were also explained in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO contained the review of the literature.

CHAPTER THREE explained the design of the study, the setting and the description of the population. This chapter also presented the instrument used in gathering data and the procedures for collecting this information.

CHAPTER FOUR analyzed the data.

CHAPTER FIVE contained a summary of the study.

Appendix B presents the Howard M. Phifer Middle School's parent and student handbook.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The transition to a middle school may affect students in various ways. Some students become afraid of school, others may experience nausea or headaches because of the fear of school. "Problems in making transitions from one level to another are inherent in the academic and social structure of any school system. Counselors, teachers, parents, and administrators have always observed that students become anxious, express school related fears and suffer academic difficulties in the transition from elementary to middle school." (Siehl and Gentry 1990) Students may experience unexplained emotional outbursts such as crying. These students know they are crying but cannot explain the reasons why. In most instances these behaviors are attributed to entering middle school and having the feeling of being threatened. Students for the most part are not threatened by other students. Students are threatened by the middle school experience itself.

In the United States, entry into a middle level school is considered a rite of passage by some. It is viewed as an event marking the exit from childhood and entrance into the adolescent culture. For transescent students the transition goes beyond movement to a new building. There are several issues which require student adjustment. This transition represents a change in school organization. Students frequently must give up the security of one selfcontained classroom. They must now negotiate several changes of teachers and classes without the group support of a stable classroom. The difficulty of the situation may be compounded by the fact that the entire class is having the same experience. All of the students are confronted by a new physical environment and a larger set of peers and school personnel. (Monson 1989)



Monson, Odegaard and Heath agree that the middle school years are a time of transition for the students entering middle school and for their parents.

Beginning kindergarten, moving into middle school, and starting high school are major transitions within the school experience of youth as well as for their parents. These are times when it is most important to bond students to the school level where they will spend the next few years.

Young adolescents are ready for the challenge of a new experience but, at the same time, have a sense of nostalgia for the familiar routine of an elementary school. They also often have a sense of unease about the relationships and structures awaiting them. (Odegaard and Heath 1992)

Odegaard and Heath researched that a student new to the middle school will be presented with many changes in all areas of their life.

Along with the other changes, differences in programs, practices, and activities are noticeably present in middle school. Instead of staying in the same classroom for the majority of the day, students may be changing classes multiple times a day. They will also have more varied choices concerning extracurricular activities and there will be new procedures to learn such as tardy and absence policies, discipline programs, purchasing lunch tickets, and leaving school for appointments. (Odegaard and Heath 1992)

Smith concurs with Odegaard and Heath's findings.

Obviously, the middle school is an exciting yet curious place. But students are not the only ones curious about life in the middle school. Parents also have concerns. In some ways there is as much parental apprehension as student apprehension, and in fact, the parents have many of the same concerns as their children. (Smith 1991)

A good resource for parents of middle school age children would be The Middle Years: A Parents' Handbook which was written by Berla, Henderson and Kerewsky in 1989. This parent handbook covers areas such as the typical behavior for a middle school age child and descriptions of a middle school.

A school handbook can help a child and a parent with the transition from an

elementary school to a middle school. It can provide information about the new school which will help ease the child's and the parent's worries.

Odegaard and Heath did a review of the literature on transitions and a study of 225 students about to enter middle school, the following concerns were identified:

1. Space concerns centered around a new and larger building, especially getting lost and being late to class.
2. Being in contact with older and possibly rougher students.
3. Heavy homework assignments.

Young adolescents have both anxieties and keen anticipation regarding their impending move from elementary to middle school. (Odegaard and Heath 1992)

As students make the move from the small, family-like atmosphere of their elementary school to the larger middle school, they experience feelings of insecurity and anxiety about the physical layout of the building itself. About half of the students were concerned about finding their way around what they perceived as being a large and imposing structure. This is a reaction that might be expected when students are coming from smaller elementary schools and moving into larger middle schools. Many middle schools have been modified over the years with multiple additions. Often they are two or more stories in height and spread out over a large area. The fear of becoming lost in the maze of halls while trying to find their locker and next class all in three minutes of passing time is very real to young people beginning their middle school careers. (Odegaard and Heath 1992)

A tour of the building before the new year may alleviate some fear that the middle school child experiences. If a map was in the school handbook it would allow the student to review the school's layout whenever they need to refresh their memory.

Dr. Monson agrees that many students experience physical concerns before entering a middle school as Odegaard and Heath identified. Dr. Monson also identified some academic concerns that students may experience during a transition to a middle

level school setting. Students must become more responsible for their assignments. More focus is placed on a student's academic performance in a middle school than was placed on a student in an elementary school. Often in a middle level school the student's feelings are forgotten and an emphasis to excel academically replaces everything.

Along with the academic concerns of a transescent student, there are also changes in their social roles as Dr. Monson explained. The student's peer relationships are very important at this stage of development. Transescent student's often oppose schedule changes that separate them from their childhood friends, because they lose their sense of security.

Another social element affected by transition is the status of the individual in the eyes of adults. Adults tend to expect students to suddenly exhibit more mature behavior and emotional independence in keeping with their more mature appearance and advanced grade placement. This expectation is not necessarily realistic. (Monson 1989)

The middle level school is somewhat like being in "limbo" for students, they are not elementary "babies" anymore and they are not high school "adults" yet. Therefore, a transition program is most important at the middle school level. Brazee supports a transition program for a middle level school.

The middle level school has been characterized as a transitional school - a link between elementary and high school. Whenever students change schools or programs within schools, they need orientations in which they often face different philosophies, procedures, requirements, expectations, and rewards.

Most important, responsibility for planning and implementing a transition program should begin at the middle level because the middle level has the most to gain and the most to lose from such a program. Generally, most people know the goals, objectives, and purposes of elementary schools and high schools. That is not true for the middle level school. (Brazee 1987)

Dr. Monson along with Brazee emphasizes the importance of transition programs for middle schools.

While school transition is a time of great excitement and anticipation for youth, it has also been identified as a time of anxiety and fear, a major stressful event in their lives. It is essential that all adults working with transescents be aware of the potential for adjustment problems associated with the move from elementary to middle level. Awareness should stimulate planning of programs and activities that will increase students' probability of success in a new school setting. Our goal should be a smooth transition for each student. (Monson 1989)

Each middle level school usually has some type of transition program. Some middle schools have visitations to the school with tour guides, other schools visit the elementary schools to bring information about the middle school. The type of program is not important, but having a transition program is of great importance as suggested by Mr. Smith, the principal of a middle school in Massachusetts. This middle school holds parent and student information nights in the spring for those students who will be entering the middle school in the fall. This informational session presents students and parents with the programs that the middle school offers. This program also addresses the academic, social and physical needs of the students. This middle school uses interdisciplinary teams to help provide students with a sense of security. Each student receives a folder of information to aid the students in locating their classes and all the specialists before school actually begins. During the information nights the administrators and guidance counselors provided the students and parents with a question and answer session.

Cooke, like Smith supports the need for information programs for the transescent students. "Parent/student information programs must also focus on the mission of the

school. How can parents and students understand the role of various programs when they don't know the philosophy of the school?" (Cooke 1995)

The teachers and parents of this Massachusetts middle school decided to add to their already existing transition program. They continued the information nights and added the following:

1. Visits: The elementary school would visit the middle school for a day while school was in session.
2. Information: With teacher input, parents developed a small booklet that explained programs, schedules, and items students would need at the middle school. The booklet gave the students a lot of "nuts and bolts" information for the next year and became an invaluable tool and reference guide for the new students.
3. Orientation Programs: The schools continued the daytime and night visits. In addition, with funds from a Horace Mann grant, teachers developed a comprehensive transitional information program that was held during the summer. The program was presented during four days and covered every imaginable aspect of the middle school. (Smith 1991)

The transition to a middle school will eventually take place for each student, and Dr. Monson suggested the following methods to help the students make a smooth transition.

1. Elementary and the middle school work together. Each school understands the other school's programs, especially the fifth and the sixth grade.
2. Visits to the middle school. The elementary (fifth grade) visits the middle school. Then the middle school visits the elementary school.
3. An orientation for the parents of the sixth graders to be. All parents of the fifth graders are invited to a middle school night at the middle school. Parents are given an

introduction to the administrators and various procedures. A tour of the building is also provided.

4. Peer Advisors. Use volunteers from the seventh grade to help inform the sixth graders. The seventh graders can reassure the sixth graders that they too had the same concerns and they survived.

5. Contact with the elementary school. The new sixth graders have a few activities that will allow them to keep in touch with students and teachers in the elementary school.

6. Mentors. The students will have one adult that they know they can count on. This mentor helps to create a secure place for the student to turn to if needed.

7. Team teaching. The students have fewer teachers with this method of teaching. A student will have one particular teacher more than one time in the day.

Gwendolyn J. Cooke, like Mr. Smith, helped the students of her middle school by having a transition program for the students and parents. She also had various articulation activities. The activities began with the sixth grade counselor and current middle school students visiting all the elementary schools. This visit provided the elementary students with a slide presentation about the middle school. It also presented the fifth graders with the middle school handbook.

A night program and a tour of the middle school was presented in the spring for the parents and students who would be entering the middle school in September.

In August, teachers, counselors, and administrators organized an orientation program for the upcoming middle school students and their parents. The students and parents toured the school and attended short classes. Important information about school

rules and a list of the supplies needed were given to the students and parents.

The beginning of school was staggered for each grade level to relieve some stress for the transescent students. The new class entered school alone on the first day, the other grade levels began school one or two days later. This type of school opening produced a smoother transition, especially for those students and parents who missed the orientation program in August.

The guidance counselors, in September, visited all the classrooms for one period to present the school year activities and to explain how to visit the counselors office.

In addition to attending the orientation meeting (e.g., in the elementary schools and in the middle school in August and September) one special session for parents was held in May. The agenda for this meeting consisted of a review of the following items:

- \* critical differences in elementary and middle school
- \* personal responsibility
- \* increased number of teachers and subjects
- \* riding the bus
- \* peer relationships
- \* advisory
- \* RINGO (Reading Is Now Going On, e.g., sustained reading)
- \* Each parent was given a copy of the middle school's student handbook and the parent handbook. (Cooke 1995)

## SUMMARY

It is important that students preparing to enter a middle school be informed of the procedures and policies of the school. The research presented many worthy transitional activities for a child's adjustment at the middle level school. A school handbook is a very good method to help a child make the transition from the elementary to the middle school. A school handbook will help the parent and student become familiar with the procedures and policies of the school because this handbook is easily accessible to the parent and student.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### INTRODUCTION

This study examined the contents of various middle school handbooks and surveyed the needs of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School students and parents in order to design a student/parent handbook for the Howard M. Phifer Middle School.

#### SETTING

The Howard M. Phifer Middle School is the school being used for this study. This school is located in Pennsauken, New Jersey which is in Camden County. The school consists of three grade levels; sixth grade, seventh grade and eighth grade. It is the only public middle school in the town of Pennsauken. The total population of students in the school is currently fourteen hundred. The sixth grade contains four hundred seventy-one students, the seventh grade contains five hundred one students, and the eighth grade contains four hundred twenty-eight students. The ethnic makeup of the student population is 48% white, 34.5% black, 13.3% Hispanic, .6% American Indian and 3.6% Asian.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION

For this study, one third of the sixth grade Howard M. Phifer Middle School's population was surveyed. The students and parents surveyed in this study were randomly chosen.



## DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTRUMENT

The needs assessment used was designed by the author after a review of previously implemented needs assessments. It was designed with twenty-four statements and one open-ended question which allowed for a written response. The statements were based on particular areas of importance according to the handbooks that were examined from other school districts. The open area allowed parents and students to write information that they felt should also appear in the handbook for their school but was not mentioned on the survey.

## PROCEDURE

The study began with a need being established. That need being a student/parent handbook for the Howard M. Phifer Middle School. The examination of various school handbooks began with middle schools that had a comparable student population and eventually branched out to include most middle schools in the local area. The schools were contacted and asked to send a copy of their school's handbook so it could be examined. As school handbooks were being received the research began.

The review of the literature was done to show the importance of school handbooks especially for a middle school. The literature reviewed showed many middle schools did use handbooks. The information also explained why handbooks are important to middle school students and parents.

One hundred thirty-five needs assessments were distributed to the students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School. The students were also asked to take home a survey for their parents to complete. The needs assessments were returned and analyzed. The

information from the students' survey and parents' survey allowed the researcher to design a handbook in accordance with the needs of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School's students and parents.

The needs assessments were collected and analyzed. The handbooks from various middle schools were also collected and analyzed. Similarities and differences between the handbooks and the identified needs from the assessments were compiled. With this analysis completed a handbook, which hopefully meets the needs of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School's students and parents along with the expressed needs identified in the literature, was developed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### INTRODUCTION

This study gathered information from the parents and students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School in order to determine what information should be included in a parent/student handbook for the Howard M. Phifer Middle School.

This study also compiled information from other school districts that utilize a middle school handbook.

The hypotheses tested were:

1. There will be no significant difference of the needs expressed by the parents of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and the expressed information in the various handbooks from other districts.
2. There will be no significant difference of the needs expressed by the students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and the expressed information in the various handbooks from other districts.

#### Analysis of Data Related to Null Hypotheses

The hypotheses stated that there would be no significant difference in the other districts handbooks and the needs of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School's students and parents.

Presented here are the results of the students and parents surveyed from the Howard M. Phifer Middle School.

**Question One** - It is necessary to know the school's phone number.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	0	4%	34%	61%

**Question Two** - The school calendar should be printed and given to each family.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
2%	2%	12%	34%	50%

**Question Three** - The discipline code should be written for all to see.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
4%	5%	11%	36%	44%

**Question Four** - The school's dress code should be included in the information sent home.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
8%	6%	13%	36%	37%

**Question Five** - It is necessary for the parent and student to know when the marking period begins and ends.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
2%	2%	9%	33%	54%

**Question Six** - A map of the school should be given to the students and parents.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
6%	9%	19%	40%	26%

**Question Seven** - Information such as the procedures for absences are important for parents and students to know.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
3%	2%	11%	36%	48%

**Question Eight** - A schedule of particular classes and teachers a student has should be included in with other important information.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	5%	15%	38%	41%

**Question Nine** - The homework hotline phone number should be easily accessible for parents and students.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	5%	7%	35%	52%

**Question Ten** - The procedures for staying after school should be given to all parents and students.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
3%	3%	10%	35%	49%

**Question Eleven** - The daily time schedule of the school day is important to both students and their parents.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	5%	11%	39%	44%

**Question Twelve** - Knowledge of the bus rules are significant pieces of information.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
5%	4%	14%	49%	28%

**Question Thirteen** - A student as well as their parents have to know the procedures for lateness to school.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	1%	11%	50%	37%

**Question Fourteen** - The procedure for early dismissal from school is an area of concern for a student and parent.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	3%	8%	35%	53%

**Question Fifteen** - A student and parent have to know the procedure for an emergency school closing.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	0	3%	26%	71%

**Question Sixteen** - What to do when there is a delayed school opening is an area that a parent and student need to know.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	1%	10%	33%	55%

**Question Seventeen** - It is necessary to know the grading scale for the school.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
3%	5%	10%	36%	46%

**Question Eighteen** - Guidance department information is important for all.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
4%	4%	16%	39%	37%

**Question Nineteen** - When a guest is visiting the school it is important for them to know the school's visitors policy.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	1%	14%	46%	38%

**Question Twenty** - The method for a fire drill is necessary for all.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
0	3%	6%	25%	66%

**Question Twenty-One** - Students need to know when and how to use the lockers.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
2%	2%	9%	42%	45%

**Question Twenty-Two** - Valuable information about the school should be accessible at all times by the students and parents.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
2%	4%	12%	35%	47%

**Question Twenty-Three** - Information about the extracurricular programs and the advisors should be presented.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
1%	1%	14%	46%	38%

**Question Twenty-Four** - The various honors associated with the school should be explained.

Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
2%	3%	14%	46%	35%

The following information was collected from the Howard M. Phifer Middle School students and parents surveyed (Question Twenty-Five). The students and parents conveyed their own ideas for the contents of a middle school handbook.

I would like to receive more information from school.

What is required of parents when medicine is to be given at school?

Any after school programs should be made know to parents.

I think a student handbook is very important for information, reference and clears up any gray areas. Everything is stated in black and white to refer to whenever needed by everyone.

We need to know safety rules so in the hallways people do not hit and bump into each other.

Should parents know about internal suspension?

What does external suspension mean?

What are the school closing numbers?

List the school rules.

List the lunch rules.

What are the principals names, etc...

The discipline should be written down.

The teachers' names and room numbers.

A calendar listing monthly events, PTA meetings, school concerts, dances, skating parties, and sports activities.



I feel that school information is essential for students as well as parents. I like to know what goes on at school both academically and in terms of school policy.

How much does lunch cost and what to do at lunch time?

The cost of dances and lunch.

May you borrow money if you forget your lunch?

It is necessary for teachers and parents to communicate through the assignment book.

In order to design a middle school handbook various middle school handbooks from other districts were examined. In this study these ten, New Jersey middle school handbooks were examined: Beck Middle School in Cherry Hill; Chestnut Ridge Middle School in Washington Township; Cinnaminson Middle School in Cinnaminson; D'Ippolito Intermediate School in Vineland; Edgewood Junior in Sicklerville; Evesham Township; John A. Carusi Junior School in Cherry Hill; Medford Memorial School in Medford; Pemberton Borough School in Pemberton; William W. Allen, III Middle School in Moorestown.

	Did Contain	Did Not Contain
School phone number	100%	
School calendar	90%	10%
Discipline code	100%	
Dress code	100%	
Beginning and ending of a marking period	90%	10%
School map	50%	50%
Procedures for absences	100%	
Homework procedures or homework hotline number	40%	60%
After school procedures	50%	50%

Bell schedule	60%	40%
Bus rules	100%	
Lateness procedures	90%	10%
Early dismissal procedures	60%	40%
School closing number/delayed school opening	100%	
Grading scale	70%	30%
Guidance department information	80%	20%
Visitors' policy	80%	20%
Fire drill procedures	80%	20%
Locker use and search	80%	20%
Extracurricular programs	80%	20%
School honors	50%	50%
Attendance laws	100%	
Welcome from principal	100%	
School's philosophy	70%	30%
Medicine procedures	100%	

### SUMMARY

The results of the data from the Howard M. Phifer Middle School parents and students needs for a school handbook did not demonstrate a significant difference between various districts middle school handbooks.

However, the data demonstrates a need for the Howard M. Phifer Middle School parents and students to be informed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### SUMMARY

This study was initiated to inform Pennsauken, New Jersey parents and students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School's practices and procedures. A middle school handbook helps inform parents and students of the school's offerings.

The methods used to test the hypotheses within the study were needs assessments given to students and parents of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and a comparison of other districts middle school handbooks.

The review of the literature presented many middle schools that use transition programs. The research indicated that a transition program in the middle school is of great importance to parents and students. These programs help to familiarize the parents and students with the middle school's procedures. One aspect of a transition program for a middle school, according to research, is a middle school handbook.

The purpose of this study was to develop a middle school parent and student handbook for the Howard M. Phifer Middle School in Pennsauken, New Jersey. In order to develop the handbook the needs of the parents and students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School had to be identified. This was accomplished using a needs assessment. Two specific hypotheses were then formulated. The first specific hypothesis states: there will be no significant difference of the needs expressed by the parents of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and the expressed information in various

handbooks from other districts. The second specific hypothesis states: there will be no significant difference of the needs expressed by the parents of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and the expressed information in various handbooks from other districts.

The two specific hypotheses are confirmed in the information contained in chapter four's needs assessments results. There is no significant difference in the needs expressed by the parents and the students of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School and the expressed information in various handbooks from other districts.

The conclusion one must draw from the hypotheses are that middle school students and parents have a definite need for the information contained in a handbook. There is no significant difference between the expressed needs of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School parents and students and the expressed information from other districts handbooks.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent that most parents and students have a need for information about the middle school. A school handbook will provide the information for the parents and students according to their needs. The middle school years are a stressful time for parents and students adjusting to a new school. A school handbook alleviates some stress by printing valuable information about the middle school specifically for parents and students.

The needs of the Howard M. Phifer Middle School parents and students do not have a significant difference when compared to other districts handbooks. However, each handbook was unique in layout design or the choice of wording.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

After completing this study these recommendations were generated for further investigation into this topic.

1. A larger sample of various middle school handbooks should be used. The small size of other districts middle school handbooks examined may have affected the results of this study.

2. A similar study should be undertaken. This study should evaluate the handbook and update its contents after a few years.

3. A study should evaluate the information in the middle school handbook and delete any outdated information.

4. A study should be conducted to examine what other methods could be implemented to aid a child's middle school transition.

5. Develop a middle school web page using the internet that would give information about the middle school.

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## APPENDIX A

January 20, 1997

Dear Students and Parents:

The middle school years are a time of change for all involved. In order to make this time of change smooth, it is important for all to be informed.

I am Valerie O'Brien a sixth grade teacher at Howard M. Phifer Middle School. I am attempting to identify if there is a need for a student/parent handbook to help keep students and parents informed about their school.

Please take a few moments to read the following needs assessment carefully. It may be returned to me by January 29, 1997. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Valerie O'Brien



## STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Please circle the number which best describes how strongly you feel about each item.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. No Opinion
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

1. It is necessary to know the school's phone number.

1      2      3      4      5

2. The school calendar should be printed and given to each family.

1      2      3      4      5

3. The discipline code should be written for all to see.

1      2      3      4      5

4. The school's dress code should be included in the information sent home.

1 2 3 4 5

5. It is necessary for the parent and student to know when the marking period begins and ends.

1 2 3 4 5

6. A map of the school should be given to the students and parents.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Information such as the procedures for absences are important for parents and students to know.

1 2 3 4 5

8. A schedule of particular classes and teachers a student has should be included in with other important information.

1 2 3 4 5

9. The homework hotline phone number should be easily accessible for parents and students.

1 2 3 4 5

10. The procedures for staying after school should be given to all parents and students.

1 2 3 4 5

11. The daily time schedule of the school day is important to both students and their parents.

1 2 3 4 5

12. Knowledge of the bus rules are significant pieces of information.

1 2 3 4 5

13. A student as well as their parents have to know the procedures for lateness to school.

1 2 3 4 5

14. The procedure for early dismissal from school is an area of concern for a student and parent.

1 2 3 4 5

15. A student and parent have to know the procedure for an emergency school closing.

1 2 3 4 5

16. What to do when there is a delayed school opening is an area that a parent and student need to know.

1      2      3      4      5

17. It is necessary to know the grading scale for the school.

1      2      3      4      5

18. Guidance department information is important for all.

1      2      3      4      5

19. When a guest is visiting the school it is important for them to know the school's visitors policy.

1      2      3      4      5

20. The method for a fire drill is necessary for all.

1      2      3      4      5

21. Students need to know when and how to use the lockers.

1      2      3      4      5

22. Valuable information about the school should be accessible at all times by the students and parents.

1      2      3      4      5

23. Information about the extracurricular programs and the advisors should be presented.

1      2      3      4      5

24. The various honors associated with the school should be explained.

1      2      3      4      5

25. Other

## APPENDIX B

HOWARD M. PHIFER  
MIDDLE SCHOOL

PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOK

HOWARD M. PHIFER MIDDLE SCHOOL  
8201 PARK AVENUE  
PENNSAUKEN, NEW JERSEY 08109  
609-662-8511

SCHOOL CLOSING NUMBER 558

## WELCOME TO THE HOWARD M. PHIFER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Dear Parents and Students:

Howard M. Phifer Middle School has been recognized by the United States Department of Education as one of the finest schools in New Jersey. It offers an educational program which is challenging and exciting and a teaching staff that is dedicated to the students of Pennsauken. The most important element in the success of our school, however is the student body of Howard M. Phifer Middle School. Your desire to learn and your enthusiasm bring life to this building.

The purpose of this book is to keep parents and students informed about the programs, people, policies and procedures of Howard M. Phifer Middle School.

On behalf of the administration, the teachers and the support staff, I welcome you to the 1997-1998 school year. We encourage you to work hard to attain your goals and to become actively involved in the co-curricular activities of your school. Welcome all parents to visit our school at any time and to feel free and comfortable in calling the school for any problem or concern that needs our attention. We are looking forward to an enjoyable and rewarding school.

Sincerely,

John Oliver

Principal



### CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Harold Kurtz, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. James F. Chapman, Director of Secondary Education

### MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Dr. John Oliver, Principal

Alan R. Makowski, 6th grade, Assistant Principal

Luther T. Arline, 7th grade, Assistant Principal

William J. Mansmann, 8th grade, Assistant Principal

### PHONE NUMBERS

Main Office	662-8511
6th Grade Office	662-8511 ext. 106
7th Grade Office	662-8511 ext. 107
8th Grade Office	662-8511 ext. 108

PENNSAUKEN BOARD OF EDUCATION

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The Board of Education meets at the High School on the third Thursday of each month at 8:00 P.M. The public is cordially invited to attend.

PTA

General PTA meetings are held once a marking period at the middle school.

Executive PTA meetings are held once a month at the middle school.

For more PTA information, please contact the school.

Upon approval the 1997-1998 calendar, marking period schedule and conference dates will appear here:

### DAILY SCHOOL HOURS

Students are arriving between 7:35 and 8:00. After going to their lockers, students are to report directly to their homerooms. The schedule is as follows:

PERIOD	8th Grade	7th Grade	6th Grade
1	8:07-8:50	8:07-8:50	8:07-8:50
2	8:52-9:35	8:52-9:35	8:52-9:35
3	9:37-10:20	9:37-10:20	9:37-10:20
4	10:22-11:05	10:22-11:05	10:22-11:05
5 LUNCH	11:07-11:42	11:07-11:50	11:07-11:50
6	11:44-12:27	11:52-12:35	11:52-12:27 LUNCH
7	12:29-1:12	12:37-1:12	12:29-1:12
		LUNCH	
8	1:14-1:57	1:14-1:57	1:14-1:57
9	1:59-2:45-2:49	1:59-2:45-2:49	1:59-2:45-2:49

Dismissal is staggered, the students get out at 2:45 one day and 2:49 the other day.

All students are to leave the building upon dismissal at the end of the day, unless they are involved in a teacher-sponsored activity.

### TRANSPORTATION

Students who ride the bus are to ride the bus assigned to them. They may not change buses without special permission from the main office. If a student wishes to take a bus other than the one that is assigned, the student must present a note from his/her guardian stating the reason. (at least one day before the requested change) Good conduct is a must for the safety of each person on the bus. Students who disobey or are disrespectful to the bus driver will be disciplined by the school. Disturbances on a school bus will receive disciplinary action which could include exclusion from the bus. Problems relative to bus stops are to be reported to the main office.

### NURSE

A registered nurse is on duty during regular school hours. A pass from the teacher is required for a pupil to visit the nurse except in an emergency. If an accident or sudden illness occurs, first aid will be administered and the child's parent notified. No care beyond first aid (defined as the immediate temporary care given in case of accident or illness) will be given by the school physician or nurse. In the nurse's office an emergency card is kept for each student. This includes the home telephone number, work number of parents/guardians and phone numbers of two neighbors or relatives who would assume temporary care of the student if necessary. If a card is not on file, we will send one home to be completed and returned to school. The nurse will not send an ill student home unless there is adult supervision at home. The student must be picked up at the nurse's office by a parent.

### EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

In the event that snow and inclement weather make walking and driving too hazardous, schools may be closed. An announcement of the closing will be made between 6:00 and 8:00 A.M. by all major radio stations. The Pennsauken Public School closing number is 558. If our code number 558 is not announced, school will be open. Please do not call the school as the switchboard is needed for emergency arrangements.

### GUIDANCE

The guidance department is concerned with helping the individual student meet his/her unique needs. A counselor is assigned to each student and works with parents, teachers and other professional personnel to help students realize their abilities and aid them to proceed toward a useful and respected place in society. Students are assigned a guidance counselor according to their grade level: Grade Six - Mr. Hoover, Grade Seven - Mrs. Cochrane, Grade Eight - Mr. Cavanaugh, Special Education - Mr. Butler.

### FIRE DRILLS

Fire drills are scheduled regularly in accordance with the law for the safety of all students and personnel. Students are to be absolutely quiet and orderly during fire drills. Each room has a fire exit sign giving the proper routes to be followed. Single file lines are to be formed for all fire drills.

### HOMEWORK

Homework is an essential part of the educational experience. It extends time available for learning, encourages students to work independently, and gives parents an insight into the school's curriculum. Although the type and length of homework assignments will vary

according to the subject matter and the teacher's purpose, homework will be given on a regular basis. Assignments are to be completed in their entirety and on schedule. All students will be provided with a homework assignment notebook. Parents are encouraged to check the assignment notebook and review all homework assignments for completeness and accuracy each night.

### HOMEWORK HOTLINE

The PTA of the middle school in cooperation with the school faculty provides the services of a homework hotline for parents and students. Parents and students may call 662-8511 between 6:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. Monday - Thursday to be informed of the evening's assignments.

### LOCKERS

#### A. Hall Lockers

Students will be assigned their own hall locker at the beginning of the school year. Students may go to their lockers:

1. Upon entering school in the morning
2. Before lunch
3. With special permission from a teacher
4. After dismissal

Lockers should be kept locked at all times. It is very important NOT to give your combination to anyone. Locker thefts should be reported to the assistant principal as soon as discovered. If a student has trouble with a locker or lock, a change should be requested at the assistant principal's office.

## B. Gym Lockers

Gym Lockers are provided for students' use while they are in physical education classes. Students are to bring their locks and gym clothing to class each day and remove the locks and gym clothing as they leave gym class. Under no circumstances can students leave their belongings in the locker room area after the close of their class.

## SCHOOL VISITORS

All visitors must report to the main office upon entering the building and obtain a visitor's pass. Students are not to bring guests to school. Trespassers are in violation of state law and can be prosecuted.

Parents always have access to the school to discuss, without delay, problems needing immediate attention. Forgotten money, lunches, books, etc. should be left at the office. These items will be delivered to the classroom.

## MEDICATIONS

The administration of medications in the school should be avoided whenever possible. However, medications prescribed by a licensed physician may be given at the written request of a parent. The medicine should be brought to the school in the original container, labeled according to standards. Such medication is to be kept in a locked closet and administered by the school nurse.

If the student has a medical condition requiring an excuse from physical education classes for an extended period of time, a note from a doctor must be submitted to the nurse.

Policy	<u>JECA</u>
Adopted	<u>9/15/83</u>
Amended	<u>2/18/88</u>

## PENNSAUKEN TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### STUDENT DRESS CODE

The Pennsauken Township Board of Education firmly believe that good grooming and appropriate dress enhance the educational environment and promote good conduct in the schools.

During the school day, clothing of students should be neat, clean, inoffensive and appropriate. The following instructions are applicable to the Middle and Senior High Schools.

- \* Students may not go bare footed.
- \* Recreational attire is not suitable during the school day in the education environment.
- \* Jogging suits, sweat suits, halter tops, tank tops, sleeveless undershirts, midriff tops, half-shirts, and tops without straps are not permitted.
- \* Length of shorts, culottes, skirts, or dresses must be in proximity of the knee or longer.
- \* Obscene or profane language or symbols of the same on clothing are also prohibited.
- \* The wearing of hats in class is not permitted.
- \* Students may not wear clothing that could endanger themselves or other students.
- \* Students are not to wear winter coats or similar outdoor clothing in school.

Students not in conformance with the dress code will be sent home and not permitted to return to school until properly attired. (Parents or guardians will be notified.)



Repeated violations of this policy will result in more drastic disciplinary action by school administrators.

#### ACTIVITY BUSES (after school)

Students are encouraged to seek additional assistance from their teachers, use the school library, participate in school clubs and join athletic teams. It is the policy of the school to provide perimeter buses for students taking part in these activities. These buses are usually scheduled to leave school at 3:15 for activities and later for athletics. Since these buses are scheduled to cover area larger than the regular school buses, it may necessitate a greater walking distance for the student. Any inquiries concerning transportation after 4:00 P.M. should be made to 662-8502.

#### A GUIDE FOR GRADING

A = 93 - 100

B = 85 - 92

C = 77 - 84

D = 69 - 76

#### HONORS

Students who receive all A's on their report card are presented with a certificate after each marking period. Students who receive A's and B's or all B's are also presented with a certificate after each marking period. The students who have had honors for the entire school year are invited to the honor roll dinner at the end of the year.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Pennsauken Township Board of Education recognizes and accepts its responsibilities to provide a thorough and efficient education for every student within the district, in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey. The board cannot successfully fulfill its responsibility to the student unless the student is present for regularly scheduled classes. It is essential, therefore, that every student and every parent or guardian accept the responsibility for the student's attendance at school as scheduled.

The Pennsauken Township Board of Education will neither condone nor allow absences from school for any reason not specified by law or policy and will not grant credit if student minimum attendance is not accomplished.

NJSA 18a:11-1, 36-14,15, 38-25-26-31; NJAC 6:8-4.2(d)(2)

The Board concurs with the Commissioner of Education who wrote:

"Frequent absences of pupils from regular classroom learning experiences disrupt the continuity of the instructional process. The benefit of regular classroom instruction is lost and cannot be entirely regained, even by extra after-school instruction. Consequently, many pupils who miss school frequently experience great difficulty in achieving the maximum benefits of schooling. Indeed, many pupils in these circumstances are able to achieve only mediocre success in their academic programs. The school cannot teach pupils who are not present. The entire process of education requires a regular continuity of instruction, classroom participation, and study in order to reach the goal of maximum educational benefits for each child. The regular contact of the pupils with one another in the classroom and their participation in well-planned instructional activity under the tutelage of a competent teacher are vital to this purpose. This is the well-established principle of education which underlies and gives purpose to the requirement of compulsory schooling in this and every other state in the nation."

Wheatley et al v. BOE, City of Burlington  
Burlington County, N.J., Sept. 23, 1974

**I. Absences**

The State of New Jersey recognized the following reasons for absence:

- A. Due to personal illness
- B. Due to death in the family
- C. Due to religious holiday

Please have a parent note explaining A, B or C on the student's return to school.

All other absences are considered unexcused unless otherwise determined by the principal or his designee.

(Sponsored Activities)

Pupils will not be considered absent while participating in school sponsored activities.

**ii. Frequency of Absences**

**A. Consecutive Absences**

Any pupil who misses 10 consecutive school days, and does not appear on home instruction, and/or is not medically verified as incapacitated will be issued a written notification to report back to school within 5 school days. Failure to so respond will result in the following:

1. Pupils under the compulsory school age (below 16 years of age) shall have presented to their parents a formal written notice (Certified Letter/Return Receipt Requested) to cause the child to attend school. (NJSA 18A: 38-29) Failure to comply with the provisions of the law may cause the parent to be deemed a disorderly person and the parent be subject to a fine (NJSA 18A:38-31)
2. Pupils above the compulsory age, not complying with the notice to return to school, will be notified that within 20 school days they may present to the school principal an explanation of their absence. Failing to do so, they will be dropped from the rolls of the school and may present a written petition to the school principal for readmittance. Each case will be reviewed upon the merits of the petition by the principal.

**B. Non-Consecutive Absences**

Pupils who during a school year miss excessive days of school, in a non-consecutive fashion, will be notified along with their parent/guardian that a conference will be required with the school principal within 5 school days of such notification to determine the reasons for the absences. Pupils above the compulsory school age who during a school year miss excessive days of school, in a non-consecutive fashion, will have notification mailed to them and the parent/guardian that failing adequate explanation of absences in such conference, such pupil may be brought to the Board of

Education for a hearing to consider exclusion from school, if such recommendation is made by the principal to the Superintendent of Schools. Pupils below the compulsory school age shall have presented to their parents a formal written notice (Certified Letter/Return Receipt Requested) to cause the child to return to school. (NJSA 18A:39-29) Failure to comply with the provisions of the law may cause the parent to be deemed a disorderly person and the parent be subject to a fine. (NJSA 18A:38-31) Such pupils may also be brought to the Board of Education for a hearing if such recommendation is made by the principal to the Superintendent of Schools.

### **III. Non-Credit Status**

- A. In order to receive credit for a course, a student must maintain a 92% attendance for that course. Students absent 14 school days or more for a year course and 7 school days or more for a semester course will not have completed the course of study as prescribed and will be subject to be placed on non-credit status for that course.
- B. Students who have attained non-credit status may be reinstated for credit by adhering to a program to be determined by the school administration.
- C. Students who have attained non-credit status and are not reinstated for credit will be retained.

### **IV. Incomplete School Day**

#### **A. Tardiness**

- 1. Pupils who are late to school will be counted absent for the classes missed that day. If they are late to school, but do not miss more than 20 minutes of a class, they shall make up the lost time in detention.
- 2. Pupils arriving late to school who had a verified approved appointment will not be marked tardy for the purpose of this policy.

#### **B. Early Release**

- 1. The school recognizes three legitimate needs for release from school:
  - a. Illness which manifested itself after having reported to school.
  - b. Verified approved appointment, such as physician, dentist, etc.
  - c. In the first case, the school nurse will review and verify the conditions, after which the pupil may be released from school, pursuant to prescribed procedures. Any appointment which cannot be verified by the nurse shall be referred to the building administration. When verification has occurred, the pupil shall be permitted to make up all work missed and will not be counted as a day's absence.

2. Pupils leaving school prior to completion of their regularly scheduled day, except as provided under IV.V.I., will have reason reviewed by the Administration. Releases for vacation, work, auto repairs, hair dresser appointment, baby sitting, job/school interviews, etc. are not acceptable excuses.

**V. Making Up Work Missed Because of Absence**

Pupils are provided an opportunity to complete assignments missed because of their absences. However, it would be unwise to believe that one can make up the learning activity of a total class session.

- A. Time allowed to make up work missed is equal to the amount of time absent. The responsibility for making arrangements to make up work lies with the pupil.
- B. Pupils choosing to cut classes, or otherwise found to be truant, may not make up work missed during these infractions.

**VI. Home Instruction**

Home instruction shall be assigned to pupils meeting current regulations pertaining to such assignment. Home instruction status shall be instituted through procedures currently operable. Such regulations are prescribed by the State board of Education which considers such pupils in school attendance. This procedure is accomplished through the office of the Guidance Director.

**VII. Appeals**

The Board is cognizant of possible unforeseen factors which may create hardships relating to the operation of the attendance policy. Therefore, the following procedure has been instituted.

**A. Petition for Hearing**

A written petition for a hearing must be presented to the principal of the pupil's school by the parent/guardian no later than 5 school days after the receipt of notification of no-credit status. The principal will respond in writing within 5 school days of receipt.

**B. Appeals Procedure for Referral to Higher Authorities**

1. Appeals to the Superintendent of Schools relating to the decisions of the school principal must be made in writing to the superintendent of Schools within 7 school days of receipt of the principal's decision. the superintendent shall respond in writing within 7 school days.
2. Appeals to the board of Education relating to the decision of the Superintendent of Schools must be made in writing within 10 school days of receipt of the Superintendent's decision. The Board of Education shall respond in writing within 10 school days.
3. Board of Education decisions may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education.

### **VIII. Record Keeping**

- A. Reporting pupil absences is a primary responsibility of the school and shall be accomplished in the following manner:
1. Absences from school shall be recorded in an appropriate manner on report cards issued four times a year.
  2. Tardiness to school shall likewise be recorded on report cards.
  3. A letter of notification will be mailed to parents or guardians alerting same of the danger of noncompliance with attendance requirements. The building administration will have the responsibility of keeping records for each student. However, it is the student's guidance counselor who will communicate with the home on the occasion of the 7th absence from school/class for full year courses and 4th absence for semester courses.
  4. Notification will be mailed indicating pupil's impending non-credit status on the occasion of the 12th absence for full year courses and the 6th for semester courses by the office Principal.
- B. **Other Procedures**
1. A daily absentee list by grade will be maintained, indicating year to date absences for all absentees on a given day.
  2. It will be the responsibility of the pupil's assigned guidance counselor to notify the pupil's teachers of those who are in a non-credit status. Such notification is to be provided one week prior to the completion of each marking period. Teachers, therefore, will NOT submit official grades for such students.
  3. Pupils entering school after the opening day in September will be given the same time periods for attendance as though they entered the first day of school.

### **IX. Family Vacation Exception**

The procedure for the implementation of the exception is as follows:

- A. Parents will notify the school principal in writing at least two weeks in advance of a planned vacation.
- B. A maximum of 10 successive school days will be excused for the purpose of the policy if the vacation is reported two weeks in advance.
- C. The pupil will arrange to receive school assignments for the period of the vacation in order that the student may keep abreast of the class.
- D. Assigned written work will be given to the respective teachers immediately upon the return of the pupil to school.

### LATENESS

Students are expected to be on time for school. When students are late to school, they must report to the Assistant Principal's Office to obtain a late pass. If the Assistant Principal's Office is closed the student must report to the Main Office.

Missing the bus or oversleeping will not be acceptable excuses for being late to school. Unexcused lateness will result in the assignment of points or a detention assignment. Excessive lateness may result in the assignment of non-credit status. A student who remains on non-credit status for an individual class at the conclusion of the school year will fail the course.

### DISCIPLINE POLICY

All students have basic rights that are guaranteed to them by law and it is the school's obligation to see that those rights are protected. Students must realize that along with their rights they have responsibilities. One important responsibility is to respect legitimate rules and those persons who have legal authority to enforce them. Another responsibility the student has is to seriously pursue an education. Thus, the school must have sensible rules to provide an atmosphere in which students can learn. Any student who insists on interfering with the orderly conduct of the school or the classroom will be subject to disciplinary action.

To help you understand your responsibilities regarding pupil conduct, the following information is provided.

### CUTTING CLASSES

#### (UNEXCUSED ABSENCE)

Students are expected to attend their scheduled classes. The cutting of classes will not be tolerated. Those students who cut class will be issued points and parents/guardians will be

notified. Continued cutting will lead to a suspension from school. (See Attendance Policy)

### DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY

Any student who purposely or through improper behavior damages or defaces school property or bus property will be subject to disciplinary action and required to pay for the damages.

### DETENTION

Any student who receives a detention from a teacher must serve that detention with the teacher who made the assignment. Any student who fails to attend a detention will be subject to further disciplinary action.

### LATENESS TO CLASS

Students who are late to class will be disciplined by the teacher. Continued lateness will be handled by the assistant principal.

### SYSTEM OF DISCIPLINE

Violations of school rules may result in students being given discipline points which may lead to detention or suspension. When students accumulate points, their parents will be notified of the problem. Listed below are offenses for which students will be disciplined:

Offenses	Discipline
A. Excessive lateness to class	
B. Misconduct in halls	
C. Misconduct in Food Service Area*	
D. Misconduct during Fire Drill	
E. Misconduct on school bus+	
F. Taking food outside Food Service Area	
G. Class disruption	
H. Failure to report to teacher detention	
I. Misconduct during assembly	Determined By Administrator



- J. Failure to report to office  
when late to school
- K. Leaving class without permission
- L. Willful disobedience or open defiance
- M. Abusive language
- N. Any unlisted offense
- O. Unexcused absence from class (cut) 10 points and parent(s) notified
- P. Truancy 20 points and parent(s) notified

\*May be deprived of eating in cafeteria for an assigned period of time

+ May not be allowed to use the bus for a given number of days.

### ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION

Administrative detention will be held on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 7:15 a.m. until 7:50 a.m. Administrative detention will be assigned by the assistant principals or the principal. Students who accumulate ten (10) discipline points will be required to attend detention. Students who acquire more than ten (10) discipline points will be subject to additional detentions.

### SUSPENSION

The following may result in a suspension:

- A. Any student who accumulates a total of 25 points.
- B. Fighting - is not permitted on the way to or from school, on school buses, during school or during any after-school activities. Any student who participates in a fight is subject to immediate external suspension.
- C. Smoking - smoking is not permitted in the school, on school grounds or on the school buses at any time. Students who violate this rule will be subject to suspension from school.
- D. Possession and/or consumption of an alcoholic beverage or an illegal drug - students who use and/or possess alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs on the way to school, on school property or on the way home from school will be subject to suspension from school. Parents of the students and proper legal authorities will be notified.
- E. Leaving school grounds - students may not leave the school grounds unless they are accompanied by their parent, guardian, or school employee and has received the permission of the school administration.

- F. Any offense committed by a student that is deemed serious enough by the school administration may result in that student being suspended from school.

### CAFETERIA SERVICES

Our School cafeteria offers a balanced lunch at a minimum cost to all students. Hot platters, soups, sandwiches, milk and desserts are served daily. Pupils bringing their own lunches may purchase any of the items they desire. Students are not permitted off the grounds or out of the cafeteria during lunch period. If a student forgets their lunch money they should see the assistant principal.

### SEARCH/SEIZURE

The administration reserves the right to Search/Seizure when there is a reasonable belief that some material or matter which is detrimental to health, safety and welfare of the student or students exist.

Search/Seizure by law enforcement officials should occur only when a warrant exists authorizing such Search/Seizure.

When Search/Seizure involving school property (locker, desk) is initiated there should be a reason based upon the premise that the illegal possession of an item endangers the individual's health and safety of others.

Emergency situations may necessitate a Search/Seizure with or without the student's knowledge or consent. Whenever possible the student should be aware of and involved in a search of property assigned to him. In the absence of a student a second party shall witness any search.

## ATHLETICS

### INTRAMURAL SPORTS PROGRAM

#### Fall

Soccer (boys/girls)

Field Hockey (girls)

Volleyball (girls)

#### Winter

Basketball (girls)

Basketball (boys)

#### Spring

Baseball (boys)

Softball (girls)

Volleyball (boys)

### INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS PROGRAMS

#### Fall

Soccer (boys)

Field Hockey (girls)

#### Winter

Basketball (boys)

Basketball (girls)

Cheerleading

Wrestling (boys)

Spring

Baseball (boys)

Softball (girls)

Track and Field (boys/girls)

## STUDENT'S SCHEDULE

RED DAY			BLUE DAY		
PERIOD	TEACHER	ROOM #	PERIOD	TEACHER	ROOM #
Homeroom			Homeroom		
First			First		
Second			Second		
Third			Third		
Fourth			Fourth		
Fifth			Fifth		
Sixth			Sixth		
Seventh			Seventh		
Eighth			Eighth		
Ninth			Ninth		

## EQUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

1. **"The Pennsauken Board of Education is an equal Opportunity Employer"...**and will not discriminate against any person because of race, color, creed, religion, sex, age, ancestry, national origin, handicap, or social or economic status in its education programs or activities and employment policies as required by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and N.J.A.C. 67:41.1 et. seq.

The Pennsauken School District provides equal opportunity in regard to educational programs/activities. All students are provided access to educational programs/activities in a non-discriminatory manner.

The Pennsauken Board of Education has an Affirmative Action Program including an Affirmative Action Classroom Practices Plan and an **Affirmative Action Employment Practices Plan**. Copies of these plans are on file in the principal's office and/or library and are available to all interested parties.

2. The Pennsauken Board of Education recognized the right of its employees/students to work and study in an environment which is free from sexual harassment. Immediate and appropriate action will be taken against any person found liable for sexually harassing another person within the school environment. Reference: Board Policy JBA - Sexual Harassment of Employees and Students.

Board Policy JB/GBA outlines Grievance/Complaint Procedures to be used when reporting incidents of discrimination and/or sexual harassment. Any person who has a complaint with regard to discrimination and/or sexual harassment should contact the appropriate Affirmative Action Officer.

**Affirmative Action Officer Designees for the district are:**

Harold Kurtz	District Affirmative Action Officer	662-8505 Ext. 200
John Ritchie	Affirmative Action Officer for Employment Practices	662-8505 Ext. 208
James Chapman	Affirmative Action Officer for School/Classroom Practices	662-8505 Ext. 202
Edwin Ragone	Affirmative Action Officer Bids and Contracts	662-8505 Ext. 209
John Oliver	Affirmative Action Officer for Phifer Middle School	662-8511
Drew Dornelly	Section 504	662-8505 Ext. 133
Betty Mahaney	Food Services	662-8500 Ext. 259
Rose Coghill	Transportation	662-8502
Martin Slater	Building & Grounds	662-8505 Ext. 218

