

STEPHEN DECATUR MIDDLE SCHOOL



Productive

Responsible Involved Determined

EVERYDAY

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Stephen Decatur Middle School
9815 Seahawk Road
Berlin, MD 21811
410-632-3400

Dear Students and Parents:

We would like to welcome you to an exciting learning and positive experience at Stephen Decatur Middle School. We hope you find this educational journey an interesting one. Very soon you will be making more friends, meeting new teachers, participating in interesting activities such as student government, clubs, sports, service organizations, team events and team projects. More importantly, you will be developing your academic skills and learning to be an effective problem solver.

As a National Blue Ribbon School, academics are extremely important at Stephen Decatur Middle School. We expect every student to maintain a serious attitude about all school work, including homework. If you were not satisfied with your performance or progress last year, if you thought you could have done better, or are sorry you didn't, you have a fresh start. Now is the time to set new goals.

The faculty and staff of Stephen Decatur Middle School are committed to helping students succeed, academically and otherwise. Necessary to that success is good communication. We believe parents must be well informed about their child's progress and development in school. Only then can parents and teachers work cooperatively. Expect to hear from us often.

Stephen Decatur Middle School enjoys the commitment and involvement of parents. We expect parents to support their child's enthusiasm for school success. Please do not hesitate to contact teachers when you think there is a problem or to review your child's progress. Participate in your child's education and you'll find it amazingly rewarding.

Finally, please remember that learning is fun, and you can't learn everything to be successful in life from books. You must learn about the world of work, setting goals for success, how to get along with others, and how to become more independent by solving problems by yourself. In short, we are here to help you learn to become a successful adult, one who will enjoy learning throughout your lifetime.

Sincerely,

The Faculty and Staff of Stephen Decatur Middle School

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Worcester County Northern Schools, a diverse and growing community, is to provide a rigorous, sequential, and balanced curriculum for all students to become lifelong learners. This will be accomplished through instructional excellence in partnership with family and community in a safe, caring, and well maintained environment. We will recognize the uniqueness of each student's role as a productive citizen in an ever changing world.

We believe that:

our students are unique in their needs, thought processes, learning styles and are motivated in different ways.

the student, family, educators, and community must be involved in the educational process.

every child wants to succeed, can succeed, and is accountable for his or her success.

all students are entitled to a socially, emotionally, and physically safe learning environment.

consistent rules and discipline, positive values and social skills are necessary for all individuals.

self-respect and a positive self-image are critical for a successful transition to adulthood.

an integrated curriculum, using a team approach, best meets the needs of the whole child.

it is important to accept and respect each student and teacher as an individual of worth and dignity, and to celebrate differences and encourage creativity and freedom of expression.

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People to Help You

There are many people at SDMS to help you through your daily routine and to help you solve problems when they arise. Below is a list of those persons available to help. Do not hesitate to ask any teacher for help when you need it.

Mrs. Woodley - The school nurse. Mrs. Woodley is always available to give aid and comfort to sick or injured students. If necessary, she will contact parents. She will also help administer special medications. You will find her in the health suite off the main hall. When Mrs. Woodley is not available, students with health related problems should report to the main office.

Ms. Davis and Mrs. Bosche - The school secretary and bookkeeper. These ladies work in the main office and are usually the first school personnel to greet visitors. They help with everything from attendance to lost-and-found items to issuing late passes. If you have any questions about school, please see one of them as they are extremely helpful.

Mrs. Zanowic and Mrs. Townsend - The school counselors. Ms. Cress and Mrs. Townsend can help you with special problems. They are trained to help you deal with personal problems, such as trouble with a friend, as well as school problems, like getting along with teachers or learning how to budget your study time. Counselors can help you with any academic problems you may be having as well. Their offices are located in the guidance suite behind the main office. You may make an appointment to see a counselor with the guidance secretary.

Mrs. Brown - The media specialist. The media center is located in the heart of the building adjacent to the courtyard. Mrs. Brown will be glad to help you find an interesting book, do research on a particular topic, help you prepare for a book conference, or find information for a project. The media center is open after school, or you may visit during your lunch shift.

Mrs. Crosariol – The technology coach and coordinator. Mrs. Crosariol coordinates all the technology in the school, especially computer usage. She spends the majority of her time working with and helping teachers and students in the media center or in computer labs. Her office is located in the media center.

Mr. Daye - The head custodian. Mr. Daye and the other custodians keep our school neat and clean. You will see him everywhere. He can help with a jammed locker door or lost-and-found items. You can help Mr. Daye and all custodians by picking up trash and keeping your locker neat.

Ms. Fenoglietto - The curriculum planner. Mrs. Fenoglietto helps teachers and students with curricula and the extensive state and county testing program. She is also responsible for helping teachers and staff implement the annual school improvement plan. Ms. Fenoglietto maintains contact with students by assuming responsibility for many special student activities. She will be glad to help you with any school problem.

Mr. Stidman - The school psychologist. Mr. Stidman visits our school several days a week to help students through psychological counseling and testing. Parents who wish to contact Mr. Stidman may do so by calling the school office at 410-632-3400.

Mrs. Westbrook - The ELL or English language learners teacher. Mrs. Westbrook's job is to assist students whose primary language is other than English. Her office is located in room M3. However, she spends most of her day in academic classrooms helping the included ELL students.

Mrs. Perella - The speech pathologist. She assists students having difficulty with speech. Parents who have questions about speech therapy may contact her by calling the school office at 410-632-3400.

Educational Assistants - SDMS is fortunate to have several educational assistants assigned to each team. Their job is to assist students and teachers in the classroom. They will be introduced to you early in the school year. Please do not hesitate to ask them for assistance. You will find them to be most helpful.

Mr. Shockley - The educational assistant in charge of in-school suspension. Mr. Shockley works very closely with those students assigned to in-school suspension. He monitors their attendance and makes sure they follow all the rules associated with in-school suspension.

Mrs. Torpey - An assistant principal. Mrs. Torpey is the assistant principal primarily responsible for developing and coordinating the extensive after school academy, summer classes and other activities for students. She is always available to discuss these opportunities with parents and students, and remains in the building until 5:30 p.m. when the after school academy/program is operating.

Mr. Shipley - An assistant principal. Mr. Shipley helps many people. He is primarily responsible for helping students adjust to SDMS by helping them to get along with teachers and fellow students. He is also responsible for building maintenance, fire/security drills, lockers, and school buses. Mr. Shipley is always in the main lobby or cafeteria before school and dismisses the busses in the afternoon. You may speak with Mr. Shipley at anytime or set up an appointment with one of the secretaries in the main office.

Ms. Barton - The principal. Ms. Barton is always available to help students solve problems. Ms. Barton, Mr. Shipley, and Mrs. Torpey subscribe to an open door policy. This means their doors are always open if you need to see them. If they are busy at the time, tell one of the secretaries and you will be called from class when they become available. Ms. Barton is always in the cafetorium before school, on bus duty immediately after school, and present during most lunch shifts.

Traveling To and From SDMS

If you ride a bus to school please note the following.

1. In the morning, make sure you are at the proper location in plenty of time to be picked up.
2. Know your bus number and your bus driver's name.
3. Occasionally your bus driver will tell you in the morning to ride a different bus in the afternoon.
Make a note of that bus number!
4. Your bus will arrive at SDMS between 7:25 a.m. and 7:40 a.m.
5. The school day will end with a bell at 2:45 p.m. You will have approximately eight minutes to visit your locker and meet your bus. Know the location of your bus on the parking lot. It will be in the same location every day. For safety concerns, we ask that you go directly to your bus!
6. If you wish to ride a different bus in the afternoon, you must bring a signed note from a parent giving you permission. The note must be signed by the principal or assistant principal. Verbal permission over the telephone is not acceptable. Be advised, not all busses allow extra riders.
7. Students **MAY NOT** voluntarily ride home with the parent of a friend or **MAY NOT** leave school grounds without written permission from a parent. SDMS cannot be responsible for the safety of a child who leaves school grounds without written parental permission or the knowledge of the school.
8. Students **MUST** follow the bus rules.

Bus Rules

1. ALWAYS follow directions given by the driver who is responsible for your safety. If a street **MUST BE CROSSED**, stand 10 feet in front of the school bus and wait until the driver indicates by P.A. System that it is safe to cross! Students must **NOT** cross divided highways!!
2. **PLEASE BE AT YOUR BUS STOP FIVE (5) MINUTES EARLY. The bus cannot & will not wait for late students.**
3. All riders will be **ASSIGNED** a bus. Stops are designated by the **SUPERVISOR OF TRANSPORTATION.**
4. Riders must get on/off at their assigned stop. If you wish to get on/off at any other stop, a request in writing from a parent must be approved by a school administrator.
5. During bus evacuation drills or emergency evacuations, **FOLLOW DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY THE BUS DRIVERS AND STUDENT HELPERS.**
6. **DO NOT STAND OR PLAY IN ROADWAY WHILE WAITING FOR THE BUS.**
7. **REMAIN SEATED AT ALL TIMES. DO NOT EXTEND ARMS AND/OR HEADS FROM WINDOWS**

8. No objects shall be thrown out the windows.
9. For your safety, eating or drinking is not allowed on the bus. Food and drinks should be kept in a lunchbox and/or brown bag. Pencils, crayons and any other pointed objects needed for school must be kept in book bags or notebooks.
10. Large items, such as band instruments, cannot be put in aisles or under seats. They must be held.
11. All riders will be assigned a seat by the bus driver. Students will be responsible for maintaining the assigned seat. Students who intentionally damage the bus will be subject to disciplinary action and will be required to pay for any and all damages.
12. **THE PRIVILEGE OF RIDING THE BUS WILL BE DENIED TO THOSE WHOSE BEHAVIOR JEOPARDIZES THE SAFE OPERATION OF THE BUS OR INFRINGES ON THE RIGHTS OF OTHER STUDENTS ON THE BUS.**

If you do not ride a bus to school, **PLEASE DO NOT ARRIVE BEFORE 7:20 a.m.** The school cannot be responsible for the safety and welfare of students dropped off before 7:20 a.m., as sufficient staff to supervise students before 7:20 a.m. is not present.

If you are picking your child up after dismissal, please be waiting or arrive as close to dismissal time as possible. **Students waiting outside for a ride after school are not supervised.** If you know you are going to be late, call school ahead of time and have your child wait for you in the main office.

If the opening of school is delayed, for any reason, **DO NOT DROP YOUR CHILD OFF AT THE USUAL TIME EXPECTING ADEQUATE SUPERVISION.** Staff will not be present to do so. Also, depending on the arrival time of custodians when opening is delayed, the front doors may be locked. Follow your local news channels for information and make sure your phone number is current and updated for the board of education automated phone calls.

Arrival/Departure

1. All students must enter the building upon arrival to school.
2. Upon entering the main doors, all students are to proceed directly to the cafetorium and remain there until the 7:30 bell. If your bus arrives after the 7:30 bell, report directly to homeroom.
3. Students are **not** permitted to go anywhere on school grounds except the main building while waiting for school to begin.
4. Students are **never** permitted to leave school property after arrival. Once a student sets foot on school property she or he becomes the responsibility of school authorities. The school cannot assume responsibility if the student chooses to leave school grounds.
5. The school day will end with a bell at 2:45 p.m. Exit the building as soon as possible unless you are remaining for an after school activity. Do not run between parked or moving buses.
6. During inclement weather students riding late buses may wait in the main entrance hall for their bus to arrive.
7. If you miss your bus ride home tell an administrator, a secretary, or any teacher **immediately**. They will help you make arrangements to get home. **Do not make arrangements by yourself.**

Late Arrival or Early Departure

Upon late arrival, go directly to the main office and sign in to avoid being marked absent for the day. If you are late from a visit to a physician or dentist, present a note to the school secretary. To leave school early, you must bring a note that morning written and signed by a parent or guardian stating the reason and time of your early departure. Present the note to the school secretary. When it is time for you to leave, **you must sign out in the main office.** In addition, the person picking you up **must sign the early departure register.** Under no circumstances should you leave school without informing the main office. Students will not be released into the custody of siblings or non-custodial relatives without written permission of the custodial parent or guardian. Students will not be released into the custody of non-custodial parents, friends, or neighbors.

If a student remains after school for tutoring, or for any approved activity, he or she may use the office telephones to call for transportation. Students may wait in the office or in the main foyer. Students without a way home should tell an adult immediately.

On extremely rare occasions, a student may leave the campus without school or parental permission. When this occurs the school attempts to notify a parent or guardian and notifies local police agencies and the Maryland State Police. Clearly, the school cannot be responsible for the safety or welfare of an AWOL student, but will make every effort to assist those persons involved in the search.

Late to School

Students are expected to arrive at school on time. That's between the time of **7:20 a.m. and 7:40 a.m.** We do have a lateness policy to make students accountable, to teach them responsibility and punctuality, and to deter lateness.

If a bus arrives late, a general announcement will be issued over the public address system. This is an automatic excused lateness. Notes or passes will not be issued.

If a student is late to homeroom because he or she was eating breakfast, the breakfast monitor will issue a special pass. This is an excused lateness.

If a student is late to school for any other reason except medical, e.g., overslept, missed the bus, family problem, car mechanical problem, that lateness is unexcused. The office will issue an unexcused late pass. The only acceptable excuses for being late to school are medical or dental appointments, with a note from the doctor or dentist, and bus delays. **Riding the school bus every day guarantees arriving on time.**

Late to Class

If a student is late to class for any reason, he or she must produce a note from the releasing personnel. It is the student's responsibility to request a note. If the student is late because of a locker problem, the student must find the nearest teacher or administrator for assistance and a note. Late arrivals without a note are unexcused.

Resolution of Lateness

Students are given warnings for the first two unexcused latenesses to school or class per teacher per quarter. Upon the **third** unexcused lateness, the student may be assigned a lunch detention. Should the student be late without an excuse a fourth time, an after school detention may be assigned. Please be on time so these consequences are not necessary.

Absence from School

Success in school depends on regular attendance. Therefore, we expect students to come to school every day. We understand that occasionally it might not be possible due to illness, or some other extenuating circumstance beyond the student's control. On those occasions, upon returning to school students must bring a note to their homeroom teacher explaining the absence and signed by a parent or guardian. Additionally, school personnel will attempt to telephone, on a daily basis, the homes of students who are absent that day. After repeated absence, a letter will be sent to the home notifying parents of state law regarding responsibility for attendance and the possible fine. Chronic absenteeism may result in a visit to Truancy Court. Do not miss school for frivolous reasons like shopping or attending a sporting event. Regular attendance and punctuality are very important.

What to Bring Everyday

Successful students are prepared students. This means bringing the necessary supplies to school every day. All students receive a list of school supplies from their team teachers in a letter mailed during August or open enrollment. Students are not required to wear a gym uniform for physical education, but they may want to bring a change of clothes. These extra clothes can be kept in their gym locker.

What Not to Bring

Some items do not belong in a school for obvious reasons and may be confiscated. Moreover, school personnel may not make an effort, depending on the circumstances; to recover any of these items should they be lost or stolen. The following are examples of what not to bring:

- * expensive watches or jewelry
- * toys or sports gear of any kind, including electronic games or laser pointers
- * a pocketknife or weapon of any kind
- * valuable card, sports cards, coin or stamp collections
- * candy or chewing gum
- * large sums of money
- * cologne, perfume, hair coloring/dye, body spray, etc.

Electronic Devices

It is best not to bring electronic devices to school. However, students who choose to do so may use them (except cell phones) before school, after school. Be advised that the school will not attempt to recover any lost or stolen personal electronic device. Students may use them at their own risk. Students are not to bring digital files, videos, or any electronic device that contains inappropriate content. In addition, students may not record (video or audio) any subject/person without specific permission (preferably written) of that subject or person.

What Not To Send

Parents, relatives, and friends are eager to celebrate birthdays, Valentine's Day, and other holidays, by sending children gifts and other special items to them at school. This creates distraction and would better be left for home. Please do not send flowers or balloons to celebrate special days/events, and please do not send pizza for a pizza party with friends at lunch.

Where to Place the Items You Bring

All students will be issued two lockers: one for the storage of books, supplies, lunches, and clothing, the other for storage of extra gym clothes. **Students MUST purchase special combination locks for their hall locker and gym locker from the school. These locks permit access to lockers by school personnel. Students may not use any other type of lock on their lockers. Padlocks or other non-standard locks will be removed.** Locks will be sold the first weeks of school. **For security purposes, do not tell other students your combination or share your locker with another student or write your combination where others can see it. Keep your combination a secret!** Your team teachers will establish locker visitation times. Remember, locker visitation is not an excuse for lateness.

Students choosing not to place a lock on their locker(s) are responsible for the security of items in the locker. **Do not expect the school to investigate the theft of unsecured items.**

Maryland law permits school administrators to search lockers, based upon a reasonable belief or suspicion. Students should not assume the expectation of privacy regarding the contents of their lockers. Therefore, students should not place anything illegal in their lockers.

Backpacks (including drawstring backpacks) or tote bags may be used to carry books and supplies from home to school but are not permitted in classrooms because they are bulky and there is no satisfactory storage. They create a safety hazard on the floor. Keep your backpack in your locker!

Student Dress Code

The dress code is designed to allow for individual expression within reasonable limits. The dress code is not intended to infringe upon the constitutional or statutory rights of any student. School clothing and/or hair styles/coloring should not create distractions or issues of decorum that detract from learning.

Students are expected to wear clothing that is neat and clean. Simple, modest, and durable clothing is the most suitable. Clothing, hair arrangements, or other personal adornments or embellishments that create distraction or interfere with normal school operations are prohibited.

Please observe the following:

1. Winter coats, hats, visors, and sunglasses may not be worn in the building.
2. Clothing may not be torn or cut off.
3. Any clothing with inappropriate slogans or sayings is unacceptable. Clothing that advertises alcoholic beverages, bars, cigarettes, or drugs is unacceptable.
4. All clothing must be size-appropriate. No oversized, excessively baggy, or exceptionally tight-fitting apparel is acceptable. Wearing apparel that causes underwear or cleavage to be exposed is unacceptable. **Pants may not sag below the waist and must be worn with a belt.**
5. Tank tops, tube tops, spaghetti strap tops or dresses, men's sleeveless shirts, bare midriffs, pajamas are not acceptable, nor is any clothing of mesh, transparent, or fishnet material.
6. **Skirts, dresses, and shorts must be worn knee-length or longer.** Athletic shorts are acceptable only

- if they are knee length or longer. Short shorts and mini-skirts are not acceptable!
7. A shirt or top must be thigh length or longer when only wearing leggings or yoga pants underneath.
 8. Heavy chains may not be worn as jewelry or to secure a wallet.
 9. Headbands, sweatbands, bandannas, or headgear of any sort, may not be worn in school.
 10. Clothing with gang related symbols or colors are unacceptable.

*****Students who continue to violate the dress code will be disciplined accordingly which may result in an afterschool detention, a one day of in-school suspension or Saturday School.*****

Health Services

The school nurse, Mrs. Darlah Woodley assumes all health related duties in our school, including the primary role of medical emergencies. If a child becomes ill or injured during the day, Mrs. Woodley will call for the parent/guardian to have the child picked up, if needed. A student is **NOT** to call home directly without the knowledge of school personnel. If your child has a special health problem, Mrs. Woodley must be informed of the particulars.

Mrs. Woodley, or any school personnel, cannot provide medication, even aspirin, to students. Prescription medication can be administered only if the medicine is brought to school in the original container with the student's name and dosage appearing on the container. A physician's order must accompany the medicine and be signed by the physician. All medicine must be stored in the health suite with the exception of inhalers. Mrs. Woodley maintains health emergency information for every student in the form of a pink form completed by parents. Please make sure the information on this form is accurate and updated when necessary. If you have any questions about student health services, Family Life Education, or health related problems, please call Mrs. Woodley at 410.641.2846.

School Organization and Schedule

SDMS is organized into eight teaching teams, four per grade. Students are randomly assigned to a team and all students on that team share the same teachers. Each team is comprised of approximately 80 students, four teachers (math, ILA, science, social studies), and one educational assistant. All teams share four special education (resource) teachers. All teams enjoy a block of academic time. There is no master schedule, except for lunch and specials classes, which are based on an eight period day.

Team teachers have a common planning period every other day during which they discuss their students' group and individual needs, meet with parents or students, determine schedules, decide how to involve special staff/faculty, plan field trips and projects, plan for remediation and enrichment, and generally help students with academics and adjustment to middle school.

Classes and Subjects

All students receive the same academic program per year: mathematics, integrated language arts or ILA, social studies, and science. In addition, every student also takes physical education and special classes every other day, according to an "A" day, "B" day schedule. Students are assigned to teams heterogeneously and randomly by computer. Throughout their experience, students are exposed to a variety of specials classes such as band, chorus, drama, digital media, technology education, art, exploratory foreign language, and consumer science. **Students who have failed to demonstrate**

satisfactory progress in reading may be assigned to a reading remediation class or program as one of their specials classes. This means a student will take three specials classes a year plus physical education. All special classes, with the exception of band, chorus, digital media, and musical drama are assigned randomly by computer.

Band, chorus and musical drama are performing arts. As such, students in these classes are **required** to attend rehearsals and performances. Failure to attend performances may result in a failing grade! If you know you will not be able to attend these after school hours and/or evening performances, or if religion places some restriction on performing, notify your instructor when the school year begins. As a result, your schedule may be changed. Slots in digital media and musical drama classes are limited and available to eighth graders only. Therefore, students may be required to audition or be interviewed for these classes. **Please do not request a schedule change based on class, teacher, or team preference. It will not be granted. Schedule changes are rarely granted by the principal and for compelling reasons only.**

Students are grouped heterogeneously throughout the day in all subjects. Teams frequently engage in flexible grouping which enables them to temporarily group students for specific instruction such as enrichment, remediation, test preparation, projects, etc.

All school curricula are prescribed by the Maryland State Department of Education and known as the State Curricula or SC. They are very detailed and too comprehensive for review in this document. However, copies may be reviewed online or by contacting the curriculum planner, Mrs. Billings, at 410.641.2846.

To learn more about the curricula and teacher/team expectations, parents should attend Open House that is schedule in August.

State and Local Testing

All students are required to take state accountability tests in mathematics, reading, and science. These tests are administered throughout the year. SDMS also requires all students to take a end of course exams in math, ILA, science, and social studies. Exams are administered the last two days of school and not before. **It is very important to be present the last two days of the school! Be advised that the last two days of school may not be determined until after missed school days due to the weather have been added or removed from the school calendar.**

Students absent on the last day of school or the last two days of school may be given the option by the principal of returning the first day of summer vacation to take one or more of the exams. Complying with state testing policy, students in possession of an electronic device, such as a cell phone, during the administration of a state test will be removed from the testing room and their test will be considered invalid. They will not be given the opportunity to retake the test. The same is true for students causing a disruption during testing or those refusing to be tested.

Textbooks/Library Books

Students are issued textbooks in most academic classes and in some specials classes. Students are also entitled to borrow books from the media center. It is the responsibility of the student to safeguard his/her textbooks and library books. Lost, stolen or damaged textbooks and/or library books must be paid for by the student or report cards will not be issued and records may not be forwarded.

Enrichment/Remediation Opportunities

In order to best meet the needs of all students, SDMS do not establish permanent groups for enrichment and/or remediation. Instead, team teachers are charged with creating these groups as needed. Additionally, students may take advantage of the many enrichment opportunities offered through our After School Academy. See Mrs. Torpey for details. Additionally, SDMS offers very specific remedial reading opportunities in both grades. Contact the curriculum planner, Mrs. Billings, for more information regarding special reading programs.

Special Education Services

Complying with special education law, SDMS subscribes to the policy of least restrictive environment for students with special needs. To that end, SDMS embraces a full inclusion policy; there are no permanent special education classes or classrooms. Each team is assigned a special education teacher and an educational assistant who works under the supervision of the special education teacher. Together, and working with the rest of the teaching team, they provide special services to all children on the team through individual tutoring and regrouping on an “as needed” basis in compliance with a student’s IEP.

Homework Hotline

SDMS subscribes to a homework hotline service. The hotline is accessed by a telephone number and a four number code for each team. Anytime after 4 p.m. a student or parent may call the hotline and listen to the homework assignments for their team. The homework hotline is an excellent way for parents to monitor home assignments. Homework hotline numbers are published in the September newsletter and posted throughout the school.

Grades and Grade Reports

SDMS issues report cards at the end of every quarter. Mid-term reports are issued mid-quarter. Parents with internet service can access the student information management system, known as PowerSchool, and view student course grades anytime, including graded assignments. To gain access, parents must bring photo identification to the guidance office to receive their password and login instructions. This password is valid for a child's entire Worcester County education. In addition, teachers and counselors also issue informal reports and/or periodic computerized grade slips. Parents are encouraged to contact teachers or a counselor whenever they wish more information about their child's progress.

Honor Roll

Students who have distinguished themselves academically by earning top grades are considered honor students and are listed on the quarterly honor roll. To be included on the honor roll a student must have a grade point average of 3.5 or better and no C's on report cards. To calculate a grade point average, count each A as a 4.0, each B as a 3.0, each C as a 2.0, and each D as a 1.0. **Students must have a satisfactory attendance rate of 94%.**

Principal's List

Very special honor students are listed separately and join the principal's list. These students receive perfect grades - all A's. **Students must have a satisfactory attendance rate of 94%.**

Student Government Association

The SGA is an organization run by, and for, the students of Stephen Decatur Middle School. The purpose of SGA is to give students an opportunity to participate in the decision and policy making process, and learn about the workings of a democratic government. In early fall, SGA holds elections for its offices. Any student in good standing may run for an SGA office or homeroom representative. The student government meets several times a month to discuss school matters, plan special events, and hold workshops. If you think you are interested in serving student government, see one of the faculty advisors.

National Junior Honor Society

Membership in the NJHS is an honor bestowed upon a seventh or eighth grader by the faculty based on outstanding scholarship, character, service to school, leadership, and citizenship. Students do not apply for membership. Interested students are required to complete a Student Activity Information Form. These forms usually become available in early February and are to be completed by the student, not a parent. Availability of forms is advertised on the morning announcements and on the cafetorium videos. Flyers advertising NJHS **will not** be sent home. **It is the student's responsibility to obtain and complete this form by the advertised deadline. Exceptions will not be granted.** Before being considered a candidate for NJHS, a student must have a cumulative scholastic average of 3.5 (on a four point scale), and a clean disciplinary record. Every student submitting a form is then evaluated by his or her teachers in the areas of service, leadership, character and citizenship. These teacher evaluations are an integral part of the selection process. Membership is bestowed by a majority vote of the Faculty Council. Students and parents interested in additional information about the NJHS and the NHS, including the goals and purpose, should consult the Parent Zone on the NHS/NJHS website, [nhs.us/parent zone](http://nhs.us/parent%20zone). Again,

it is the student's responsibility to observe all notices and due dates associated with the selection process. The date of the NJHS Induction Ceremony (usually mid-February) is published in September and placed on the master calendar.

Specific information regarding the selection of individual students is strictly confidential and will not be shared with parents or students.

The following criteria (guidelines) are used by the faculty to determine candidates for the NJHS.

The student who **exercises leadership**:

- is resourceful in proposing new problems, applying principles, and making suggestions
- demonstrates leadership in promoting school activities
- exercises influence on peers in upholding school ideals
- contributes ideas that improve the school
- is able to delegate responsibilities
- exemplifies positive attitudes
- inspires positive behavior in others
- demonstrates academic initiative
- successfully holds school offices or positions of responsibility
- demonstrates reliability and dependability
- demonstrates leadership in the classroom, at work, in school, or community

The student who **serves**:

- is willing to uphold scholarship and maintain a loyal school attitude
- participates in some outside activity
- volunteers dependable and well-organized assistance
- is gladly available to sacrifice and render assistance
- works well with others and is willing to take on difficult or inconspicuous responsibilities
- performs committee and staff work without complaining
- shows courtesy by assisting visitors, teachers, and other students

The student of **character**:

- takes criticism willingly and accepts recommendations graciously
- consistently exemplifies desirable qualities of behavior
- upholds principles of morality and ethics
- cooperates by complying with school regulations concerning property, programs, office, halls, etc.
- demonstrates the highest standards of honesty and reliability
- shows courtesy, concern, and respect for others
- observes instructions and rules, punctuality, and faithfulness outside and inside the classroom
- has powers of concentration and sustained attention as shown by perseverance to studies
- manifests truthfulness in acknowledging obedience to rules and avoiding cheating
- shows an unwillingness to profit by the mistakes of others
- actively helps rid the school of bad influences or environment

The student who demonstrates **citizenship**:

- understands the importance of civic involvement
- has a high regard for freedom, justice, and respect of the American form of government
- demonstrates mature participation and responsibility through involvement in civic organizations

Counseling Services

Stephen Decatur Middle School has two full-time counselors and a secretary to help students with a wide range of problems including academics, social adjustment, abuse, family relationships, and thoughts about suicide. Expect your child to meet with his or her counselor at least once a year. Additionally, the Worcester County Health Department assigns mental health workers to our school to see clients on a regular basis. Typically, our counselors work closely with, and refer students and parents to, Youth and Family Counseling, Seaside Wellness Counseling and other social agencies. Students may schedule an appointment with a counselor by visiting the counseling secretary.

Lunchtime

All students eat lunch with their team. There are approximately 160 students per each of the four lunch shifts, beginning at 10:11 a.m. Students have approximately 30 minutes for lunch; this includes travel time, obtaining lunch, and clean up. We encourage you to socialize and enjoy the company of your friends while eating lunch. We also expect you to exhibit good manners. You may bring lunch from home, or buy lunch in the cafeteria.

Cafeteria Rules and Procedures

Students are assigned to a cafeteria table. They may sit anywhere at their assigned table. This is their permanent table. Students must remain seated at that table for the entire lunch shift. Students are not permitted to table hop because students who table hop tend to leave their trash behind. The students at each table are responsible for the cleanliness of their table and surrounding area. Seating may be reassigned by the cafeteria monitor or an administrator at anytime.

Upon arrival, students are to go to their table and wait for the cafeteria monitor to release those students purchasing lunch by rows. This permits fair and quick access to food lines. During lunch, if a student wants to return to the food line, purchase a drink from a vending machine, or visit the restroom, he or she must raise their hand and be recognized by the monitor before leaving their seat.

At the end of the lunch shift, students will be dismissed by table and instructed to take their trays to the wash window or cart. Disposable trays and other trash should be discarded in trash cans provided at the front and rear of the cafeteria. Do not discard trash or trays before being told to do so. After discarding trash and/or returning trays, students should leave the cafeteria. Students are not to leave the cafeteria before being dismissed by the cafeteria monitor and may not leave while eating.

When visiting the cafeteria for lunch or breakfast, students should:

- **know their numeric code if purchasing cafeteria food**
- **refrain from running to the food line**
- **fall in line at the rear of the line, never break into the line**
- **be courteous to the food servers**
- **pick up anything dropped, e.g., food, napkins, wrappers, etc.**
- **not play with food or drink or their containers or build food/trash sculptures**
- **never touch or take another student's food or drink**
- **refrain from throwing food or flicking food bits or trash**

- refrain from pounding on the tables, popping containers, or creating a distraction
- refrain from horseplay and/or touching other students
- talk using normal conversational volume, not yell or scream
- leave their table and surrounding floor free of trash
- not take food or drink to other areas of the building that includes hallways
- raise hand and be recognized to obtain a snack, drink, or use the restroom
- remain at their table throughout lunch

Students who violate any of the above will be assigned lunch detention or one day of in-school suspension. **There will be no warnings!** This may seem a harsh consequence, but is necessary for a calm, orderly, and enjoyable lunchtime.

Telephone Usage

Occasionally a student may have to call home or a parent's place of work. Students may use the office telephone on these occasions, but must obtain permission from school personnel. Unnecessary or frivolous use of the phones is prohibited. Students may not use telephones located in the classrooms without permission. Be assured that students will be given permission to use phones when warranted. Students are not to use a cell phone to contact parents during the school day.

Cell Phones

As soon as you enter the school building,

Phones must be powered off by 7:40 am and be stored in your locker for the entire school day!

- * Cell phones may **NOT** be used during lunch or in a bathroom.
- * Cell phones may not be used in the classroom.
- * They must be kept in a locker – **NOT IN YOUR POCKET.**
- * They may not be used on a school bus or chartered bus without authorization.
- * If causing a disruption, or used at an inappropriate time, cell phones may be confiscated and **students may be disciplined.** Confiscated phones will be returned to **parents** only.
- * The school will not be responsible for the theft or damage of cell phones.
- * The school will not attempt to recover cell phones if lost or stolen.

These rules may seem harsh, however with all the controversy that can be caused by social media, we feel it is necessary to enforce these strict rules so students can concentrate on learning and achieve academic success in the classroom.

Parents, please do not attempt to contact your child via cell phone. In case of an emergency, please call the main office @ 410.641.2846.

Lost and Found

The lost and found bin is located in the main office. See one of the office secretaries to recover lost items or to turn in a found item.

Hallway Traffic Routine

Hallway traffic should flow smoothly during change of classes. This routine is simple: all traffic must keep to the right side of the hallway; students must go around hall monitors (teachers) instead of cutting corners; students must take the shortest path to their next class; running, horseplay, pushing or shoving is strictly forbidden; conversational noise must be kept to acceptable levels. Violators may be assigned to in-school suspension without a warning, depending on the nature of the behavior. Do not disturb classes that are in session. Don't slam locker doors. Wait patiently at congested intersections.

Most students have three minutes to get to their next class. There is not always a late bell. Students late to class must have a valid written pass or the lateness will be unexcused. Occasionally it will be necessary for you to travel the halls during class time, e.g., to go to the lavatory or visit your locker. On these occasions you will be issued a hall pass by your classroom teacher. Hall passes are issued on an "as needed" basis. Please do not abuse this privilege.

Student Behavior

In order for our school to run smoothly, it is necessary for everyone to follow some simple rules and exhibit courteous behavior. These expectations are designed to reinforce mutual respect and understanding. Please.....

1. Be in class on time. This means being in your seat and prepared for instruction before class begins. There may not always be a late bell. It is the student's responsibility to be punctual.
2. Treat everyone, teachers, staff members, and classmates, with respect.
3. Be polite at all times. Do not speak while others are speaking, and raise your hand to be recognized before speaking.
4. Refrain from touching your classmates. Do not push, poke, trip, slap or in any way make physical contact with another student, even if "only playing." Physical contact and/or horseplay may result in In-School Suspension or suspension from school.
5. Do not chew gum anywhere in the building.

Student Misbehavior

Occasionally students misbehave. When that happens, SDMS initiates a positive discipline policy, i.e., one that attempts to permanently change negative behaviors through education and counseling. After all, "to discipline" means "to teach," not punish. Our goal is to teach students lasting self-discipline. Offenses that disrupt the orderly educational progress of others will be dealt with according to Worcester County Board of Education Policy. Students who refuse to behave, to the extent that they infringe on the rights of others to learn, will be instructed to call home or workplace and ask a parent to remove them from school for the rest of the day. If a parent is unable to pick up their child, school personnel or taxi service may take the child home or transport the child to the parent's workplace.

Students should realize that any inappropriate language, gestures, or writing (**including e-mail and postings/messages on social networking websites such as Facebook, Snapchat YouTube, etc.**), directed toward a school employee, volunteer, or student intern, during school hours or after school hours, on campus or off campus, will result in severe disciplinary action.

Students who must be referred to the main office or who are assigned to the alternative education

classroom for disciplinary action, may be denied certain privileges such as, but not limited to, participation in performances and/or special events.

Students who cheat, including plagiarism, may suffer a wide range of consequences including, but not limited to, loss of membership in school organizations, loss of credit, loss of special privileges, and severe disciplinary action. Students who permit others to copy from them will also be disciplined.

In the winter months, there may be snow on the ground during the school day. This presents a temptation for some students to throw snowballs, etc. Be advised that students are NOT to touch snow as they travel between classes or wait for buses. Students who do so, will be assigned a day of ISS. There will be a general warning/reminder in the morning announcement. However, there will not be individual warnings.

Referral Process

Teachers are expected to make every effort to keep students in the classroom engaged in activities and in classroom instruction. If a student is off task or disrupts the learning process of others, the teacher will give the student a warning. If the warning does not help the student get back on task, a timeout will be given within the classroom. If the timeout does not improve the student's classroom behavior, the student will be sent to the office with an office discipline referral. A copy of the referral will be sent home for the parents to sign. If your child receives an office referral, please take time to discuss proper school behavior with your child. Please feel free to communicate with your child's teacher so we can together help eliminate poor classroom behavior.

Consequences for Discipline Referrals

Consequences for discipline referrals can result in lunch detention, after school detention, all day In School Suspension (ISS) or Saturday School. We have high expectations for student behavior at Stephen Decatur Middle School and when those high expectations are not met, consequences will be administered. Consequences are only given to students in hopes to change the student's behavior. Our goal is to work together with the parents. With this partnership, we feel we can bring the best out of "our" students. Please feel free to stop by school or call Mark Shipley if you should have any questions or concerns with student discipline.

Harassment/Bullying/Intimidation

State law requires that each county establish a policy prohibiting bullying, harassment, or intimidation at school. The Worcester County Board of Education is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, respectful educational environment where the worth and dignity of all individuals are protected. Behaviors that compromise such an environment, interfere with school operations, or are otherwise contrary to the mission of WCPS, will not be tolerated.

Harassment exists when there is sufficiently severe action or a persistent pattern of actions or statements over time, directed at an identifiable individual or group, which a reasonable person would perceive as ridiculing, demeaning, or threatening. Harassment is defined as inappropriate verbal, written, or physical

conduct directed toward persons based upon sex, age, religion, race, national origin, physical characteristics or disability, that occurs under any of the following circumstances:

1. when submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of educational development, academic status or participation in other school activities; or
2. when such conduct has the effect of unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning environment.

Forms of harassment may include, but are not limited to the following:

1. derogatory or offensive comments, jokes, slurs or gossip;
2. inappropriate touching, impeding or blocking movement;
3. offensive writing, posters, pictures, objects, cards, cartoons, graffiti, drawings, gestures, or prolonged staring or leering;
4. hazing, bullying, and/or teasing.

Harassment committed by students against students constitutes inappropriate behavior. All allegations will be investigated by the principal or designee. Depending on the severity of the offense, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

The principal or designee will conduct an investigation of an alleged incident in a timely manner. The principal or designee will determine whether the allegations have been substantiated and the complainant informed of the finding.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. The identity of the complainant, the subject, and witnesses will be protected to the extent possible.

Students who think they are victims of any form of harassment, bullying or intimidation are urged to report the behaviors to their counselor, a teacher, or an administrator. It is not the victim's responsibility to prove they have been harassed. It is the school's responsibility to investigate all reports. **Parents who suspect their child is being harassed, bullied or intimidated are urged to contact school immediately.** Do not wait; hoping the problem will go away.

Internet Harassment

Some students have been known to engage in online/electronic harassment or cyberbullying, most of which does not occur during school hours. The school will make every attempt to halt this form of harassment if and when it occurs during school hours. An example would be harassing via illegal text messaging – illegal because cell phones cannot be used by students during school hours. However, the school will not investigate online harassment that occurs outside of school. These incidents should be reported to the local police department for investigation.

In School Suspension

Students who require removal from the classroom for inappropriate behavior may be assigned a day or more of in school suspension (ISS). This means the student will spend the day, including lunchtime, in the ISS classroom monitored by Mr. Shockley. During their stay, the student will complete school work assigned by their team teachers. While the ISS student will not benefit from normal classroom interaction, the student will complete the same class work in all major subjects as their peers, preventing them from falling behind. In the event an assessment is scheduled for the assigned day, the student may be released to take the assessment, or the student will be entitled to take a make-up

assessment without penalty.

****A student who has been assigned to the ISS classroom three times in one quarter, will attend Saturday school, if ISS is warranted a fourth time in the same quarter.****

Help Sessions/Make-Up Work

Teachers are usually available immediately after school to help students. In addition, most teams hold special remediation classes during the after school program sessions, affording students bus transportation. All students are given an opportunity to make up missed work/assignments due to absenteeism, lateness, suspension, rehearsal, vacation, or a special event, regardless of when the assignment or project due date was announced. **Upon returning to school/class, it is the student's responsibility to determine missed assignments and complete them in a timely fashion.**

Computer Usage

Students have many opportunities to use the computers found throughout the building. Early in the school year, students will be asked to sign a computer use agreement which stipulates the rules for using any computer in the school. Students who fail to follow these rules may be denied the privilege.

Photocopying Service

Students may use the copy machine in the media center to copy materials for academic purposes only. Students are not to use any other copy machines in the building for any reason.

After School Activities

Many after school activities occur at SDMS throughout the school year. Meeting times vary so pay close attention to the morning announcements to hear about activities of interest to you. The following is a list of those offered in the past and may continue to be offered in the future: wrestling, yearbook, earth club, math club, flag football, drama club, MESA, newspaper club, volleyball, softball, basketball, field hockey, art club, and more.

In addition, SDMS offers an extended school day program for students in the After School Academy. These after school classes have a strong reading and math component in challenging and enriching courses of interest to students. Classes operate for six weeks per quarter and then off for three weeks. Transportation is offered for academy attendees. Read your newsletter and listen for announcements about ASA class offerings.

While we encourage students to take advantage of these many opportunities, students are not permitted to remain after school unsupervised, e.g., simply loitering, hanging out, or waiting for a friend. For safety and liability reasons, we cannot permit unsupervised youngsters roaming the building or grounds after school hours. Students who persist in this behavior may be subject to disciplinary action.

After School Academy Dismissal Procedures

The after school academy dismisses when all busses arrive or at 4:30 p.m., whichever occurs first. At that time, an all-call is made over the public address system announcing dismissal. All students then exit through the front doors. It is not necessary for parents to enter the building to pick up students who are not riding the bus, unless it is prior to dismissal time. Any parent wishing to pick up students prior to 4:30 must first report to the main office to sign out their child. The secretary will call for that child. **DO NOT** bypass the office and remove your child from class. For safety reasons, all visitors **MUST** report to the main office. Additionally, under no circumstances will a student be permitted to leave because they received a text message or cell phone call from someone in the parking lot telling them someone is waiting for them. Students will only be permitted to leave with the person(s) designated on the after school academy registration form. A note or phone call from a parent is required for an individual not listed on the form to pick up a student.

Visiting Stephen Decatur High School

SDMS shares a campus with Stephen Decatur High School. This makes it very convenient for students to travel to the high school for programs and various events. However, SDMS students are not permitted to simply visit SDHS, either after school or otherwise, as they cannot be supervised. SDMS students who do so may be disciplined.

Field Trips

Field trips are educational experiences that occur away from the school campus. Teaching teams, clubs, service organizations, and the physical education and music departments sponsor many field trips in a typical school year. School Board policy requires students to obtain parental permission, usually a standard form signed by a parent or guardian and returned to school, before they may attend. The exception to this policy is a trip to Stephen Decatur High School, as students never leave Board of Education property. Occasionally there is a fee associated with a field trip to pay for, or defray, the cost of transportation. In the event of late cancellation, due to weather or some other factor beyond school control, there will be no refund if the transportation company does not refund the school. In addition, if a student elects not to go on the trip after paying, or is not able to attend for any reason, a refund may not be issued because of shared cost, i.e., the group depends on funds from those who reserved a slot. Students will not be denied attendance on a field trip because of inability to pay. Usually parents volunteer to serve as additional chaperons on field trips. Students who lack self-discipline, and/or who have a record of inappropriate behavior, may be required to provide personal chaperons, i.e., a parent, grandparent, or other responsible adult, to accompany that child on the trip. This ensures appropriate behavior without denying the child the educational experience. Parents are reminded to be at school at the specified time to pick up their child after a field trip. Students will not be taken home by teachers, nor will students be left alone to wait. Instead, after a reasonable waiting period, students may be taken to the safe confines of the Berlin Police Department to await a parent.

SDMS Expectations

Everyone develops certain expectations when encountering new situations. School is no exception. You expect SDMS to provide a safe and orderly learning environment; a place where you can learn and develop your talents and special skills. You expect the faculty to deliver quality education with a caring and responsible attitude. You expect school work to become more rigorous, but you know you will enjoy the challenge. It is not unusual to expect everyone at SDMS to be friendly and helpful. Expect to make lots of new friends and enjoy much socialization.

Likewise, we expect certain behaviors from our students. We expect students to come to school every day, prepared and on time. Students should be courteous, friendly, and helpful. When problems develop, as they surely will, we expect students to solve them in a constructive manner, and to get help from teachers and staff when necessary. Students displaying any aggressive behaviors can expect severe discipline. We expect students to be very serious about their schooling because education is a very serious business. There are no excuses for carelessness, foolishness, or a lackadaisical attitude.

We expect parents to be involved in their child's education. Because the spectrum of involvement is very broad, we have suggested some ways parents can support their children and the school.

1. Maintain channels of communication. Please call school when you feel there is a problem. SDMS takes pride in maintaining excellent parent-school communications, but we're not perfect. At times, it may be necessary for you to initiate contact. Counselors are an excellent point of contact.
2. Read our monthly newsletter that is posted on our school's website. www.sdms.middle.com This will inform you about important upcoming dates and events such as when to expect progress reports
3. Frequently talk with your child about what happens in school. To learn details, ask specific questions: "What book are you reading in ILA? Did you do any experiments in science? What sport are you playing in gym? Who did you sit with during lunch? How do you like your math class?"
4. Show an interest in home assignments and tests. Review completed home assignments. Offer to help with assignments or projects when appropriate. When your child has an upcoming test, make sure she or he gets plenty of rest. Review graded tests and assignments. Discuss strategies for improvement if necessary.
5. Discuss progress reports with your child. When a report card or interim report comes home, spend some time discussing the results. Find out why your child received certain grades. If you and your child are not satisfied, discuss ways of improving progress. Get the necessary people involved, especially your child's counselor.
6. Celebrate successes! As the most important adult in your child's life, your evaluation is critical. When your child does well, let her or him know you are proud. A simple, "That's great," goes a long way toward building self-esteem and confidence. Don't dwell on the not-so-successful performances. Try not to celebrate a "B" performance by asking why they didn't get an "A." A "B" or "C" performance does not make a student a failure if they are maximizing their potential.
7. Plan educational goals with your child. Convince him or her that a good education is the key to future options. Discuss career interests and the prerequisites. If you think your child may want to attend college after high school, plant the seed now. Help your child develop a serious attitude about school.

Conferences

Parent-teacher conference days are scheduled throughout the school year. Conference times are from 4:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. Please check the school's website and monthly newsletter for a list of these important dates. The first date is in mid-October. Parents may schedule individual or team conferences by calling school and asking for a member of their child's teaching team or a counselor.

Volunteer Program

Stephen Decatur Middle School has a permanent volunteer coordinator responsible for coordinating the activities of parent and community volunteers. Volunteers perform many valuable functions and services such as photocopying, other clerical duties, assisting with school pictures, tutoring individual students, assisting in the media center, helping teams with special events, etc. If you would like to volunteer, either on a regular or whenever possible basis, or know of someone who might, you may contact Mrs. Vessey by calling school at 410.641.3029.

Insurance

School accident insurance brochures and applications are distributed to students at the beginning of the school year. When considering to purchase this insurance parents should be advised that schools and/or the Board of Education do **not** carry insurance to cover/pay for school related injuries. Given the high cost of treating accidental injuries, parents are strongly encouraged to purchase this insurance. If you do not receive this material, contact the school nurse, Mrs. Woodley.

Fundraising

Teams, various school organizations, and clubs conduct fundraising programs throughout the school year. These funds are used to supplement or defray the costs of special projects such as a field trip. Students are prohibited from door-to-door selling and will never be asked to do so. Be advised that your child is **not** required to participate in any fundraising venture. Participation is strictly voluntary.

General Information

School Day: 7:40 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

School Delay/Closure: 410.632.5399 ext 6600

Principal's email: hlbarton@mail.worcester.k12.md.us

Worcester County Public Schools website: www.worcesterk12.com

Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline Number: 1-800-422-0009



We appreciate your support in helping our students uphold the policies and procedures that are in place to ensure an enriching educational experience while at Stephen Decatur Middle School.