

Berkeley Heights Public Schools
Berkeley Heights, Union County, New Jersey 07922
Columbia Middle School
345 Plainfield Avenue
Phone 908-464-1600 ~ Fax 908-464-0017
www.bhpsnj.org



2023-2024
COLUMBIA MIDDLE SCHOOL
STUDENT HANDBOOK



Parents and/or students whose primary language is other than English and who require assistance to fully understand this handbook are urged to contact the principal. The principal will arrange for an interpreting service.

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345 Plainfield Avenue
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2023-2024

Dear Students,

The Columbia Middle School Student and Parent Handbook is designed to inform the school community members of the policies and procedures established for the 2023-2024 school year.

As a school, we seek to develop academic skills, artistic exploration, life skills, and the social maturity of each student. We recognize the necessity to balance a rigorous academic program with an environment that is developmentally appropriate. Our staff has put into place a strong support system that fosters academic, social, and personal growth. We have established practices that define academic expectations, promote an improvement in the quality of student work, and provide the opportunity for students to learn in a variety of interesting and stimulating formats.

We are very fortunate to have a dedicated and professional faculty, which strives to create an outstanding learning community, committed to excellence. As in any partnership, parents, teachers, and administration work closely on a daily basis to provide our students with the most rewarding educational experience possible.

Please take your time reviewing this Student and Parent Handbook and maintain a copy for your easy reference throughout the school year. We look forward to working with your children and providing them with their best school year yet!

Sincerely,



Paul Kobliska
Principal
Columbia Middle School

COLUMBIA MIDDLE SCHOOL MISSION

THE MISSION AT COLUMBIA MIDDLE SCHOOL INCLUDES HIGH EXPECTATIONS.
THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AT COLUMBIA MIDDLE SCHOOL WILL PROVIDE FOR THE
SUCCESS OF ALL LEARNERS BY

- Providing opportunities for each student to be inspired
- Allowing students access to the latest in technology so as to contribute to a collaborative and creative environment
- Ensuring equitable opportunities for enrichment
- Promoting individuality and self-confidence through self-discipline, tolerance, integrity, positivity, empathy, and service
- Preparing students for college and careers through 21st Century Skills that include critical thinking, creative thinking, communicating, and collaborating

BELIEFS

- We believe that each child is an individual within the school community.
- We believe in high expectations, clearly defined boundaries, and the right of every student to learn in a safe and comfortable environment.
- We believe that school is a place where confidence and self-motivation are fostered.
- We believe in a varied curriculum and related activities that permit students to explore new ideas, interact positively with others, and develop self-esteem.
- We believe that the home, community, and school should work together to produce compassionate and responsible students who are accountable for their actions.
- We believe in having an environment of respect for self, respect for others, and respect for authority.

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ACADEMICS

Grading System

A	93 - 100	C	73 - 76
A-	90 - 92	C-	70 - 72
B+	87 - 89	D+	67 - 69
B	83 - 86	D	60 - 66
B-	80 - 82	F	59 and below
C+	77 - 79		

Report Cards

- Online access to student grades are available throughout the year using your PowerSchool account.
- A digital notice (email or e-blast from our webpage) is sent to alert parents about end-of-marking periods. Reports Cards are not printed.

Academic Integrity

- Academic integrity is founded upon the values of personal honesty and ethical behavior. It involves the honest presentation of one's own work and the responsible, cited use of the work, words, or ideas of others. Any attempt to obtain credit for work done by another constitutes academic dishonesty, is not honorable, and will not be tolerated at Columbia Middle School. Knowingly allowing another student to copy your work compromises academic integrity and is a violation equal to plagiarism.
- A discussion on plagiarism is held on an annual basis during your child's Language Arts/English class.
 - Students absent from this conversation are still obligated to the rules of Academic Integrity.
 - This includes, but is not limited to, cheating on tests (including midterm or final exams), copying the work of others, falsification of data, and failure to properly cite the works, words, or ideas of others. It is important that all Columbia Middle School students make a conscious effort not only to avoid intentional plagiarism, but also take steps to prevent accidental plagiarism. Any form of plagiarism is considered a violation and will be dealt with very seriously. Students should use extra care when making use of

internet sources and are encouraged to consult their teachers whenever they are in doubt.

When a teacher determines that a student may have plagiarized material

1. The principal, assistant principal, and content supervisor will be contacted
2. The principal, assistant principal, and/or the supervisor will conference with the teacher to determine next steps
3. If plagiarism is found, the student will receive a grade of zero for the material
 - a. (Upon first offense only, 6th graders will be given time by the teacher to redo the work for a maximum grade of 60%)
4. Parent/Guardian will be notified
5. After a student conference with the classroom teacher, a student may be offered an opportunity to correct the assignment for partial credit
6. The student may be subject to further disciplinary action

ATTENDANCE

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- To report your child's absence from school by contacting the main office prior to the start of the school day at 908-464-1600 x 1 or email CMSattendance@bhpsnj.org.
- To appreciate the correlation between regular attendance and academic achievement and to make your child's school attendance your first priority for all 180 days.
- To ensure your child arrives on time. A regular school day begins at 8:10 a.m.
- To provide a note explaining the reason for your child's absence immediately upon his/her return to school;
- To be aware of the dates of your child's absences;
- To know that class cutting will result in a zero for class participation and a zero for any test/quiz missed without the opportunity for make-up;
- To direct your child to meet with teachers about work missed during his/her absence;
- To schedule medical/dental appointments, and other non-school-sponsored matters outside of school hours whenever possible
-

Student Attendance

- [N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3](#) requires a child to attend school daily for 4 hours, a student will be counted as absent if they do not fulfill this requirement.
- Students who are sick and absent from school with parental notice are considered excused. ***Excused absences still constitute a day out of school and will be reflected in attendance as absent.*** Reasons for excused absences include personal illness, death in the family, religious observance, etc. School-sponsored activities or other activities approved by the principal, such as field trips do not count against attendance. The administration reserves the right to determine acceptable causes for excused absences.
- Excused absences do not excuse a student from any class work missed during their days out.
- If it is determined that excessive absences are due to truancy, this will result in a mandatory parent conference with the building principal or his/her designee.

- See Board of Education [Policy 5200 Attendance](#)

Student Absence

If a student is absent, a parent/guardian must call to notify the school. The number to call is (908) 464-1600 extension 1600. **Please note that this absence verifies the absence, but does not excuse it.** All absences are recorded.

5-9 Absences:

- Contact Parent/Guardian
- Parents will receive notice of the Board Policy and Regulations
- A plan may be developed if it appears that there is a pattern of absences

10 or more:

- There will be a required in person parent conference
- Outside agencies may need to get involved to assist the family
- The school will follow procedures to pursue the possibility of truancy

Make - Up Work for Absences

- Parents should not request make-up work until a student is out for the second consecutive day and should check the teacher's Google Classroom prior to making any request. On the second day out, **please email your child's teacher** to find out about work missed. Teachers will respond to those requests before the end of the school day so long as the request is made prior to noon. Teachers are not required to provide work for students out a single day.
Students are expected to meet with teachers upon their return in order to find out about missed assignments and work.
- A student who is absent from class for any reason is required to make arrangements with all teachers on the day of return to school for any work or assessments missed in order to receive credit for that work. The minimum period of time for makeup will be equal to the number of days absent plus one(i.e. two days out – three days to make up the work).
- Teacher discretion is provided regarding deadline extensions keeping in mind the student's needs, the particular impact of the rotate and drop schedule, and the amount of work to be made up.
- If the absence results in missing a classroom assessment, the student should be prepared to take the assessment upon return to school.

Tardiness

Students who arrive late to school miss valuable class time and can disrupt the learning of other students.

- If a student arrives late to school, they must come to the main entrance.
- Late students will be admitted to the vestibule one at a time and be given a pass to the classroom.
- A student who is tardy to school is required to make arrangements to make up work missed or lose credit for that work. Excessive tardiness will result in disciplinary action that may include a phone call home. See Board of Education [Policy 5240 Tardiness](#)
- A student who is tardy to school three times will receive a 30 minute office detention. Each subsequent additional 3 tardies will be issued additional office detentions.

BELL SCHEDULES

Students enter at 8:10

Bell Schedule			Advisory Day Schedule	
1	8:17-9:13		1	8:17 - 9:08
2	9:15-10:08		2	9:10 - 9:58
3	10:10-11:03		3	10:00 - 10:48
			Advisory	10:50 - 11:20
1st Lunch /EP	11:05-11:35		1st Lunch/ EP	11:22 - 11:52
2nd Lunch / EP	11:40-12:10		2nd Lunch/ EP	11:57 - 12:27
4	12:12-1:05		4	12:29 - 1:17
5	1:07-2:00		5	1:19 - 2:07
6	2:02-2:55		6	2:09 - 2:57

Students exit at 2:57

Students exit at 2:59

Early Dismissal			Delayed Opening	
1	8:17 - 9:02		1	10:17 - 10:53
2	9:04 - 9:46		2	10:55 - 11:28
3	9:48 - 10:30		3	11:30 - 12:03
4	10:32 - 11:14		1st Lunch /EP	12:05 - 12:35
5	11:16 - 11:58		2nd Lunch / EP	12:40 - 1:10
6	12:00 -12:42		4	1:12 - 1:45
			5	1:47 - 2:20
			6	2:22 - 2:55

Students exit at 12:44

Students exit at 2:57

Normal Day Schedule

(with expressions)

Students Enter at 8:10

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
8:17-9:13	A 1	B 5	C 7-9	D 10-12
9:15-10:08	B 4	C 7-9	D 10-12	A 3
10:10-11:03	C 7-9	D 10-12	A 2	B 6
11:05-11:35	EP 1/Lunch 25	EP 1/Lunch 26	EP 1/Lunch 27	EP 1/Lunch 28
11:40-12:10	EP 2/Lunch 29	EP 2/Lunch 30	EP 2/Lunch 31	EP 2/Lunch 32
12:12-1:05	E 13-15	F 16-18	G 19-21	H 22-24
1:07-2:00	F 16-18	G 19-21	H 22-24	E 13-15
2:02-2:55	G 19-21	H 22-24	E 13-15	F 16-18

Students Exit at 2:57

Student Arrival Procedures

For the safety of our students at Columbia Middle School, the Berkeley Heights Police Departments requires the following drop off or pick up locations:

- Along Plainfield Avenue
- Lower Columbia parking lot
- Roosevelt Avenue
- Hamilton Avenue

School doors open at 8:10 am. Based on your grade level, students are requested to enter the school building at their grade level designated location:

- Grade 8 will enter Exit Door 14 (near room B13, Lower CMS parking lot)
- Grade 7 will enter Exit Door 11 (near room C5, door located across the courtyard from our main entrance)
- Grade 6 will enter Exit Door 1 (regular main entrance)
- ALL late students will enter using the main entrance (beginning at 8:17 am). Students will need to have their Chromebooks available to complete the tardy Google form.
- Students meeting with a teacher before school must have received a pass from that teacher prior to that day and shall enter the school through the main entrance.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Statement of Philosophy

Assertive discipline creates a safe and structured academic environment for all students and staff. It is not an authoritarian approach that eliminates fun and student-free speech. It was developed by Lee Canter and is a proven model that ensures teacher and administrative control of the classroom and building by presenting a well-defined set of expectations. It does not focus on the mindless application of rules in order to punish students.

Rather, having established a firm set of expectations and consequences the goal is to recognize student misbehavior as a teachable moment. All students may break the rules or misbehave. When they do, it is critical to educate them about why certain rules exist, and why certain behaviors are unacceptable, and offer them strategies to make better choices moving forward. Whenever possible, proper student behavior should be recognized through positive feedback.

The best results are achieved through a combination of structure and kindness. The ultimate goal is to help students gain-self discipline, and grow as productive members of the school community.

Expected Behaviors

Pupils are required to conform to reasonable standards of socially acceptable behavior, respect the person, property, and the rights of others; obey constituted authority; and respond to school district teaching, support and administrative staff. Each school Principal will develop and provide a school-based program for appropriate recognition for positive reinforcement for good conduct, self-discipline, good citizenship, and academic success.

Student expectations include:

- Students are to show respect for themselves and all other members of the school community.
- Students should demonstrate consideration for the property of others, including school property.
- Students are expected to be in their assigned classes on time.
- Students may not leave school property during school hours.
- Students are not permitted to open locked outside doors during the school day.
- Students must have a hall pass if they are in the hallways during class time.
- Fighting or the use of obscene language will not be tolerated.
- Dangerous substances or inappropriate objects are not permitted on school property, during events, or on any bus.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is a tiered-system - if the infractions continue the consequences increase or move to the next type of consequence. However, all consequences depend on the severity of the

violation and are at the discretion of the building administration.

Classroom Discipline

Violations of the code of conduct or teacher rules within the classroom are subject to teacher-level consequences. These include warnings, student retention after class, remediation assignments, parent contact, teacher detention(s), and referral to building discipline.

Building Discipline

Violations of the code of conduct that occur within common spaces (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, bathrooms); referrals from teacher discipline; major or repeated violations of the code of conduct are subject to building level consequences. These include: verbal warning, remediation assignment, parent contact, office detention, administrative detention, out of school suspension.

Lunch Time Conduct

- Students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times.
- Students are to speak in conversational tones in the lunchroom.
- Students must clean up after themselves and place all garbage and recyclables in the proper containers.
- Students are prohibited from buying lunch for friends or others or from selling food/snacks to other students.
- Students considered disruptive or insubordinate during lunch will be subject to disciplinary action which can include lunch detention wherein a student will eat lunch away from the cafeteria. A lunch detention may be a spontaneous event which may or may not include a phone call home.
- Upon a student's third offense the student will have a student conference with the administration and a phone conference will follow with the parent to discuss the infractions. If a student continues to engage in behaviors that are not appropriate after the parent conference, the student will receive further disciplinary action which may include but not be limited to an administrative detention.

Bus Discipline

Students must obey all school rules while on a school bus. The following rules of conduct must be adhered to insure student safety:

- Wear seat belts and remain seated while the bus is in motion;
- Show respect for the driver and each other at all times;
- Refrain from eating and drinking on the bus;
- Extend no portion of the body or other object out a bus window; and
- Obey all school rules while at the bus stop

The following disciplinary measures may be applied as appropriate to the student's violation of the rules of conduct:

First offense: Warning to student; notification to parent/guardian

Second offense: Office Detention; notification to parent(s) of possible

suspension of riding privileges.

Third offense: Administrative Detention; Letter to parent/guardian and one to three-day suspension of riding privileges.

Fourth offense: Administrative Detention(s); Letter to parent/guardian and an additional suspension of riding privileges of up to ten days.

The building administration may immediately suspend riding privileges for serious infractions.

CMS Cell Phone Policy

The Board of Education believes students and/or school staff members should not be subject to having a video or audio recording taken of any student(s) or school staff member(s) for any purpose without the consent of the student, the student's parent, and/or the school staff member. In addition to protecting the privacy rights of students and school staff members, the Board recognizes such recordings can be disruptive to the educational program. See Board of Education [Policy 5516](#).

Pursuant to Policy 5516, it is recommended that students not bring cell phones to school. If a student chooses to bring a cell phone to school, CMS is not responsible for the loss or theft of the item. Cell phones are to be off and away during all academic-related activities. Cell phones (and other communicative devices) create class disruptions and potential issues concerning academic integrity.

- Unauthorized activation and/or use of cell phones may result in confiscation and/or search of the cell phone as such action is a direct violation of school rules.
- The extent of the confiscation and/or search of the cell phone depends on the circumstances present at that time and within the discretion of school authorities.
- Whether or not or when the cell phone is returned to the student or parent is also dependent upon the circumstances presented at the time of the violation.
- **Students are not permitted to use their cell phones to make phone calls unless given explicit permission from a staff member.**

Cell Phone Infraction Consequences

1st Offense: Warning - school contacts parent/guardian

2nd Offense: Confiscation of cell phone
Parent/guardian pick up phone from the Office

3rd Offense: Confiscation of cell phone
30-minute detention
Parent/guardian pick up phone from the Office
Parent conference

Code of Conduct Consequences

Violations of the Code of Conduct may result in any and all of the following, sometimes in combination.

Verbal Warnings: For initial minor violations of the code of conduct a verbal warning from staff and/or administration.

Remediation Assignment: Where reflection is deemed appropriate students may be assigned a short research and/or reflection assignment.

Parent Contact: While it is healthy for students to take personal responsibility for their actions, there are times when repeated or particularly concerning violations of the code of conduct will require involving the parents in the process.

Teacher Detention: Teachers may hold students for up to 15 minutes before school, during lunch, or after school at a mutually agreed upon time.

Office Detention: A building-level detention of 30 minutes held on Tuesday or Thursday afternoons: 3:05 - 3:35.

Administrative Detention: a building-level detention of 90 minutes held on Wednesday afternoons: 3:05- 4:35.

Suspension: For severe violations of the code of conduct students can be suspended from school for 1-10 days.

See Board of Education [Policy 5610 Suspension](#)

Loss of Specific Privileges: Building administration reserves the right to exclude students from specific events (i.e. field trips), buses, or areas of the building for a fixed period of time as a consequence of repeated or significant violations of the code of conduct.

Medical Examination: use, possession, and/or distribution of any substance (including electronic smoking devices) on school premises, at a school-sponsored event, or school transportation vehicle will result in a required medical examination as per Policy 5133 - Substance Abuses.

Law Enforcement: Students and parents should be aware that any law violations will result in the involvement of Law Enforcement.

Low-Level Discipline

Types of Actions	Types of Consequences
<p>Unprepared for class</p> <p>Cell phone use</p> <p>Class disruption</p> <p>Dress Code violation</p> <p>Horseplay</p> <p>Disrespectful behavior</p> <p>Running in building</p> <p>Abuse of bathroom privileges</p> <p>Inappropriate behavior</p> <p>Abuse of hall pass - minor offense</p> <p>Tardy to school or Tardy to class</p> <p>Improper use of device - minor offense</p> <p>Inappropriate Language - minor offense</p> <p>Academic Dishonesty - minor offense</p>	<p>Verbal Warning</p> <p>Remediation</p> <p>Parent Contact</p> <p>Teacher Detention(s) [15 mins]</p> <p>Office Detention(s) [30 mins]</p>

Mid-Level Discipline

Types of Actions	Types of Consequences
<p>Repeated Low-Level Violations</p> <p>Disrespect to a Staff Member</p> <p>Improper use of device - major -including photos and videos of students and staff.</p> <p>Academic Dishonesty - major offense</p> <p>Inappropriate Language - major offense</p> <p>Vandalism* - minor offense</p> <p>Cutting Class</p> <p>Inappropriate Physical Contact</p> <p>Insubordination</p> <p>Leaving School Grounds Without Permission</p>	<p>Remediation</p> <p>Parent Contact</p> <p>Administrative Detention(s) [90 mins]</p> <p>Loss of Specific Privilege</p> <p>Suspension</p> <p>*Consequence of Vandalism may include reimbursement to district</p>

High-Level Discipline

Types of Actions	Types of Consequences
<p>Repeated Mid Level Violations</p> <p>Disrespect to a Staff Member</p> <p>Improper use of device - significant violation of acceptable use policy.</p> <p>Academic Dishonesty - major offense</p> <p>Inappropriate Language - major offense</p> <p>Vandalism* - major offense</p> <p>Arson</p> <p>Fighting</p> <p>Theft</p> <p>Assault/battery - including adding and abetting</p> <p>Possession of weapons and explosives</p> <p>Under the influence / possession of controlled substances - including electronic cigarettes**</p> <p>Distribution of controlled substance**</p>	<p>Remediation</p> <p>Parent Contact</p> <p>Administrative Detention(s) [90 mins]</p> <p>Loss of Specific Privilege</p> <p>Suspension</p> <p>*Consequence of Vandalism may include reimbursement to district</p> <p>**Medical Examination</p> <p>**Any violations of the law will be reported to law enforcement</p>

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a student who commits one or more acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. The factors for determining consequences and remedial measures

and examples of consequences and remedial measures are listed in Policy 5512 – Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying.

Definition

“Harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any gesture, written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-14, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents that:

- 1) Is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability; or
- 2) By any other distinguishing characteristic; and
- 3) Takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds, as provided for in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15.3, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of the other pupils; and that
- 4) A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a pupil or damaging the pupil’s property, or placing a pupil in reasonable fear of harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property; or
- 5) Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any pupil or group of pupils;
- 6) Creates a hostile environment for the pupil by interfering with a pupil’s education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the pupil.

Consequences for a student who commits an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be varied and graded according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student and the student’s history of problem behaviors and performance, and shall be consistent with this Policy and the school district’s Student Discipline/Code of Conduct Policy pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1.

Pupils are expected to behave in a way that creates a supportive learning environment. The district prohibits active or passive support for acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Pupils are encouraged to support other pupils who:

- Walk away from acts of harassment, intimidation, and bullying when they see them;
- Constructively attempt to stop acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying;
- Provide support to pupils who have been subjected to harassment, intimidation, or bullying; and
- Report acts of harassment, intimidation, and bullying to the designated school staff member.

A student who believes that he/she is subject to harassment, intimidation, or bullying **should report it immediately** to an adult in authority and not respond in any way that will make the situation worse, either verbally or physically.

The Board believes the best discipline is self-imposed, and it is the responsibility of staff to use instances of violations of the Code of Pupil Conduct as opportunities to help pupils learn to assume and accept responsibility for their behavior and the consequences of their behavior. Staff members who interact with pupils shall apply best practices designed to prevent pupil conduct problems and foster pupils’ abilities to grow in self-discipline. The Board expects that pupils will act in accordance with the pupil behavior expectations and standards regarding harassment, intimidation, and bullying, including:

- Pupil responsibilities (e.g., requirements for pupils to conform to reasonable standards of socially accepted behavior; respect the person, property and rights of others; obey constituted authority; and respond to those who hold that authority);
- Appropriate recognition for positive reinforcement for good conduct, self-discipline, and good citizenship;
- Pupil rights; and
- Sanctions and due process for violations of the Code of Pupil Conduct.

District Anti-Bullying 6-12 Coordinator – Ms. Madison Rowohlt mrowohtl@bhpsnj.org

TECHNOLOGY

Berkeley Heights Board of Education recognizes that the use of technology in the educational process is an essential part of the schooling experience. Technology is to be viewed as a resource to enhance the learning process among other resources available to our students.

Internet access and the use of computer equipment and networks is a privilege. **Inappropriate use will result in suspension or revocation of those privileges.** All files saved to school servers are subject to view by the administration and subject to administrative action without prior notice. The same applies to items placed in a Google Drive owned and operated by the district.

At the beginning of each school year, (or when a new student is enrolled) parents/guardians, through InfoSnap, will be required to complete the [Student Technology Responsible Use Form](#).

Chromebook / Student Devices

- A broken screen or non-operating device must be reported to the tech center remotely - [see this link](#). Once you contact the “dojo” a response can be anticipated within a day’s notice. Look for an email from the technology team.
- Families are responsible for repair costs.

Audio or Video Devices

- Audio and Video devices include digital watches and air pods.
- If a student chooses to bring an audio and/or video device to school, which would include cell phones with similar capabilities, CMS is not responsible for the item if it is lost or stolen.
- Students are allowed to use the aforementioned devices during the school day only with the teacher’s permission.
- Use of these devices at inappropriate times will result in confiscation of the device.
- Digital watches are not restricted, **except will be collected during State Assessments.**
- The use of wireless listening devices (including air pods) is prohibited.

MISCELLANEOUS

Backpacks

- Students are permitted to bring a backpack or tote bag to and from school.
- Backpacks and tote bags **will NOT be permitted** to be carried throughout the school day.
 - Students may use a small drawstring sack to carry school supplies throughout the day.

Chain of Command

Direct communication between parents/guardians and the school is highly recommended and encouraged. Should a parent have an issue regarding their child(ren), they are requested to follow the “chain of command.” This means that the first communication is to be addressed to the child’s teacher, or person most closely related to the issue. Should a parent be dissatisfied at that level, the parent should contact the appropriate supervisor for academic concerns or the assistant principal for a behavioral concern. Communication with the principal is appropriate only if the resolution at the other levels is unsatisfactory. Only after all levels have been exhausted is it appropriate to relate your concerns to the Superintendent.

When a parent wishes to consult with a staff member, teacher, supervisor, assistant principal, or principal ; a phone call, note, or request for an appointment will be honored as quickly as possible at a mutually convenient time. Appointments with teachers are not possible during class instructional time. Conferences will be scheduled during the school year to promote parent/teacher communication of the students’ academic and social performance.

Dress and Grooming

In accordance with Board of Education [Policy 5511](#), the Board of Education recognizes that each pupil's mode of dress and grooming is a manifestation of the pupil's personal style and individual preferences. The board will impose its judgment on pupils and parents or legal guardians only when a pupil's dress and grooming affect the educational program of the schools.

Students are expected to dress in a neat, clean and appropriate manner. The following would be examples of apparel inappropriate to the school setting:

- Clothing that is excessively short, tight and/or too revealing of one's anatomy
- Exposed undergarments
- Clothing or accessories that create a safety risk
- T-shirts with inappropriate messages (for example: alcohol, language, symbols, drugs, etc.) or content offensive to others
- Headwear such as hats, hoods, or bandanas worn in the building
- Any other item of apparel that would materially or substantially interfere with the operation of the school.

Repeated violations of the dress code may result in disciplinary action. This list is not intended to be all inclusive. It is meant to provide a sense of appropriateness for school. Administration reserves the right to make the final decision regarding appropriate dress in school and at school-sponsored activities.

The wearing of hats inside the school building during school hours is prohibited. Exceptions will be made for religious purposes. [Board of Education Policy – 5511 Dress and Grooming](#)

The Board of Education prohibits pupils from wearing, while on school property, any type of clothing, apparel or accessory which indicates that the pupil has membership in, or affiliation with, any gang associated with criminal activities. The building principal shall determine whether the dress or grooming of pupils comes within these prohibitions. [Board of Education Policy – 5511 Dress and Grooming](#)

Enrichment Period (EP)

EP is similar to a “homeroom” period. For those who do not have a scheduled activity during EP, the following rules apply.

1. You must be in your EP on time.
2. All students moving between classes during EP **must** have a pass. Only one student per pass.
3. Any talking between students must be schoolwork related and then only with the classroom teachers approval to work in groups.
4. Projects and long term assignments may be worked on during EP if the content area teacher approves. That work is best done in that teacher's room who assigned the work.
5. The school is not responsible for any change in the schedule that eliminates or removes a student from his or her EP. For that reason, homework should be completed at home. However students may use EP to study or complete homework if time allows.
6. Students who wish to visit cycle classes during EP must receive a pass from the cycle teacher the day before.
7. Only two passes are issued at a time for the Library from each EP. Visiting the library or any classroom during EP is not guaranteed.
8. When scheduled by the music teacher, attending a performance group during the scheduled EP is NOT A STUDENT OPTION, but is considered a regular part of the student schedule.

Fees for Requests of Transcripts

- If a parent/guardian makes a formal request for transcripts to be prepared for application to an out-of-district school, the cost to fulfill each application is three dollars (\$3.00). Transcripts are sent from our office directly to the proposed school.

Lockers

- **The sharing of lockers or locker combinations is not permitted.**
- **Any loss of a school provided lock will incur a fine of \$8.00.**
- State law provides that student lockers or other storage areas provided for student use may be searched as long as students are informed in writing at the beginning of each school year and regular inspections occur. N.J.S.A. 18A:36-19.2
 - o Students should be aware that the postings of this handbook qualifies as notice that the Berkeley Heights Board of Education will exercise the right, through its designees, to search student lockers. School lockers remain the property of the district even when used by the pupils.
- A locker (or lockers) is assigned to each student. Students must keep locker combinations confidential in order to safeguard their personal property.
- Only school approved locks are permitted for use in the school.
- Students should occupy only the locker assigned to them by the administration. Appropriate, removable interior decorations are allowed.

- Disturbing another student's locker will be subject to disciplinary action.
- Decorating student lockers for birthdays is permitted afterschool (no balloons).

Lost and Found

- All found books (including agenda planners and notebooks) should be taken to the library, where they will be placed on a "lost books" shelf.
- All found jewelry and electronic devices should be taken to the main office.
- Found clothing should be deposited in the lost and found area located in the cafeteria.
- There is no insurance coverage for loss of personal items. At the end of every marking period, items remaining in the lost and found will be donated to a local charity.
 - **Thank you for assisting when finding an item** ☺

Study Hall

- Study hall is a scheduled block of time depending on individual schedules. Not every student is scheduled for Study hall.
- Study hall is a work period. Students are to work individually on school-related activities. All students should bring a "free reading" book to study hall.
- A quiet atmosphere must prevail. At teacher's discretion, students are allowed to use earbuds if needed.
- As is true with all scheduled time, students are expected to report on time with the materials they need. Students will not be permitted to go to their lockers
- No food or drink is permitted in the study hall.

Library Media Center

- The Library Media Center is open when school is in session. The media specialist is available to help all students with research assignments as well as a readers' advisory.
- Food and beverages are not permitted in the Library. Please confer with the school librarian/media specialist with any questions while using the library. Students are reminded that they are responsible for proper maintenance and timely return of all materials checked out of the Library.

Textbooks

- Textbooks are assigned to students for personal use and must be covered. Note: Book sox that are not sized appropriately have been known to damage books beyond normal wear.
- Each student is responsible for the care and protection of books and will be required to reimburse the school for loss or damage beyond normal wear. Beyond normal wear, including but not limited to doodling, is subject to a fine. Report cards and transcripts will be held until fines are paid.

Fines

- Fines are incurred for loss and/or damage of school property such as locks, library books, and textbooks. You will be notified by the teacher as to the fine itself, but payments are made to the main office. If you have any questions about the fine, please contact the main office.

- Please note that undersized “book sox” will break a book’s binding that will incur a fine.

ATHLETIC & CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

Academic Performance Standards for Participating in Athletic and Other Co-curricular Activities

It is the responsibility of local school districts to ensure that students participating in athletics and other co-curricular activities maintain a standard of academic performance that is consistent with the primary mission of the schools. This mission is to provide an effective and appropriate education for all pupils and to establish acceptable standards of pupil performance.

Students who are absent from school may not participate in any extra-curricular activities that day without the approval of the principal.

Spectator Conduct

- Cheer for your team in a positive manner
- Display good sportsmanship
- Smoking on school grounds is prohibited
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited
- Liquid refreshments (other than water) in the gym are prohibited
- Mechanical noise makers are prohibited
- Whistling is prohibited
- Inappropriate signs or banners are prohibited

Clubs and Activities

Columbia Middle School invites and encourages active student participation in its co-curricular program.

Art Club	Golf Club	Robotics Club	Yearbook
Writing Club	Guitar Club	Newspaper Club	Math Club
Cross Country Runners Club	Future FilMakers Club	Science Club	Volleyball Club
Drummers Club	Photography Club	Spanish Club	Table Tennis Club
Prism Club	E-Sports Club	Student Council	TWIST - Teen Women with Interest in Science and Technology
French Club	Jazz Band	School Store	

A variety of clubs and sports activities are available at the middle school. Students can participate in interscholastic sports along with other clubs and activities offered during the same season. If a student misses an activity due to a conflict with another school-based activity, any coach or advisor may limit a student's play time or participation.

Except where specific auditions may be required, all students are allowed to participate in clubs, activities, and intramurals. Seventh and eighth grade students are permitted to engage in interscholastic sports. Making the interscholastic sports team is solely based on ability level. The coach or club advisor has the discretion to suspend and/or dismiss a student for inappropriate conduct in school or during the activity.

Physical Education

Physical Education is required of all students for each year they are in attendance. On gym days, other than the required sneakers (i.e., no flip flops, UGGs, or work boots), students should wear clothing to school that will be comfortable for PE. Locker rooms will **not** be available for changing.

- Documented illness will excuse the student from participation on a gym day.
- In case of long-term illness, only a physician's written statement will excuse the child from participating in class.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

School Counseling

The Board of Education provides school counseling facilities and access to specialized counseling staff to all students. At the middle school, school counselors are assigned by grade level. Counselors help students with educational planning, personal/social concerns, and character education. The counseling staff maintains close contact with both students and faculty and welcomes open parental communications to better assist and meet student needs.

Home Instruction Services

When a student is absent from school for ten consecutive days or more for health reasons, the student will receive home instruction. Home instruction is scheduled through the school counselor. If you believe that a recent event or illness will require home instruction, please contact your child's school counselor.

Intervention and Referral Services

Each school has an Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) Committee designed to support general education students experiencing academic, behavioral, and/or social-emotional difficulties that impact educational progress. The responsibilities of the I&RS Committee are as follows:

- Identifies students in need and plans to provide appropriate interventions and/or services to address the student's needs;
- Identifies the school personnel who will participate in providing interventions and services;
- Provides support and guidance to the school staff working with the student;
- Involves parents and/or guardians in the development and implementation of the plan;
- Coordinates with outside service providers, when appropriate;
- Reviews and assesses the effectiveness of the plan and modifies or terminates the plan as needed; and
- Refers the student to the Child Study Team (CST) for evaluation, when appropriate.

A written I&RS plan is developed by the committee, which lists suggestions that can be implemented in school and/or at home to support the student. The parents and all of the student's teachers receive a copy of the plan.

Referral to Child Study Team

A parent may request a Child Study Team (CST) or speech evaluation for their son/daughter by putting their request in writing to the Director of Special Services. This written request is considered a referral. Requests must be made in writing. Please note that email and/or other facsimiles are not considered valid means for a referral. A CST member will contact the parent to schedule an Identification and Referral Meeting within 20 days of the receipt of the referral. The purpose of the Identification and Referral Meeting is to discuss whether or not the district will proceed with a speech or a CST evaluation. Except in certain circumstances, pre-referral interventions through the I&RS should be considered and implemented prior to a referral to the CST.

Student Information Requests

If a parent/guardian requests for information to be completed by staff/faculty, there are several guidelines to facilitate this process. Information requests can consist of but are not limited to, teacher reports of progress for private tutors and educational services/ agencies and checklists/ surveys for private doctors and/or counselors. When requesting such information to be completed, the parent should be directed to the appropriate grade-level school counselor. The school counselor, or faculty designee, will request written consent to release records, circulate feedback forms to the appropriate staff, collect the completed forms and mail the information directly to the professional, specialist and/or doctor requesting such information. These procedures should be followed for all requests.

CORE Team

The CORE team works in conjunction with the district Substance Awareness Coordinator (SAC). The purpose of the Core Team is to identify students who are at risk for substance abuse or who are having difficulty with peer/staff relationships. Staff members make referrals and will be notified if the CORE team feels that the student may be at-risk. The team will recommend strategies to assist the child and parents.

HEALTH OFFICE

All Information related to the Health Office and Health Services at Columbia Middle School can be found on the school website under the [Health Office tab](#).

- Health Related Policies
- Health Services
- Immunization Requirements and Form
- Medication Policy and Forms
- New Student Requirements and Forms
- Sports Registration and Instructions

POLICY & REGULATIONS

Affirmative Action/Section 504 Officer/A.D.A. Compliance

The Assistant Superintendent is designated as the compliance officer who coordinates and oversees all Affirmative Action policies dealing with equality in education. In addition, the Assistant Superintendent is in charge of activities related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the district's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; and Federal and State Statutes concerning equality in educational programs. Students, parents, residents of the district, or staff members who have concerns about Affirmative Action or any other matter dealing with equality in education should contact Dr. David Greer, Assistant Superintendent. A copy of the district's Affirmative Action plans and self-evaluation of Affirmative Action achievement is available for review in Dr. Greer's office. The CMS principal or designee oversees all procedures dealing with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If there are any questions or concerns, please contact the principal's office.

No Child Left Behind Act (2415)

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (a federal law) requires school districts, if asked, to disclose the name, address, and telephone listing of every Governor Livingston High School student to military recruiters and institutions of higher learning for the purpose of military recruitment. If families do not want this information revealed, parents of minors and students 18 years and older must request that Governor Livingston High School not disclose this information in writing.

Pupil Records (8330)

The Board of Education believes that information about individual pupils must be compiled and maintained in the interest of the pupil's educational welfare and advancement. The Board will strive to balance the pupil's right to privacy against the district's need to collect, retain, and use information about individual pupils and groups of pupils. The Board authorizes the establishment and maintenance of pupil files that include only those records mandated by law, rules of the State Board of Education, and authorized administrative directives and those records permitted by this Board. No liability shall be attached to any member, officer, or employee of this Board of Education for the furnishing of pupil records in accordance with law and rules.

Drugs and Alcohol (5133)

The Board of Education recognizes that the misuse of drugs by any pupil seriously impedes that pupil's education and threatens the welfare of the entire school community. The Board is committed to the prevention of drug abuse and the rehabilitation of drug users by educational means, but will take necessary and appropriate steps to protect the school community from harm and from exposure to drugs.

"Drugs" means alcoholic beverages, controlled dangerous substances as defined at N.J.S.A. 24:21-2, anabolic steroids, or any chemical or chemical compound that releases vapors or fumes causing a condition of intoxication, inebriation, excitement, stupefaction, or dulling of the brain or nervous system, including, but not limited to, glue containing a solvent having the property of releasing toxic vapors or fumes as defined at N.J.S.A. 2A:170-25.9.

"Drug Abuse" means the consumption or use of any drug for purposes other than for the treatment of sickness or injury as prescribed or administered by a person duly authorized by law to treat sick and injured human beings.

The Board prohibits the use, possession, and/or distribution of any drug on school premises, at any event away from the school premises that is sponsored by this Board, and on any transportation vehicle provided by the Board. Pupils suspected of being under the influence of drugs will be identified, evaluated, and reported in accordance with law. A pupil who uses, possesses, distributes or is under the influence of a drug, on or off school premises, will be subject to discipline, which will be graded to the severity of the offense and shall include suspension, expulsion and/or exclusion from school activities. The pupil will be reported to appropriate law enforcement personnel and the CORE Team. Incidents of drug involvement will also be reported to the Commissioner on the state-approved form.

Any student suspected of involvement with drugs and/or alcohol may be required to undergo a medical examination. The medical examination shall include the following:

- examination by a physician
- monitored urine screening and chain of custody
- any additional medical test deemed necessary by the physician
- a note indicating the student is/is not physically and mentally able to return to school.

Results of a urine screen are considered positive when:

- a positive diagnosis is obtained;
- a negative diagnosis indicating an atypical specimen resulting from water dilution or other tampering is received from the laboratory;
- student refuses to give a urine sample;
- student does not give a urine sample within the two-hour time allotment following the report of possible substance use.

The consequences for positive results/ or possession of drug/alcohol use are outlined below:

Any student for whom there is a positive diagnosis from the medical examination indicating that the student was under the influence of, or in possession of drugs and/or alcohol in school or at a school function will be subject to the following:

1 st offense	- parent/guardian meeting with administration
	- a five (5) day out-of-school suspension
	- followed by 5 school days exclusion from extra-curricular activities
2 nd offense	- parent/guardian meeting with administration
	- a ten (10) day out-of-school suspension followed by 20 school days exclusion from participation in extracurricular activities
3 rd offense	- parent/guardian meeting with administration
	- a ten (10) day out-of school suspension and recommendation by the principal to the superintendent for a hearing for expulsion
	- followed by 35 school days exclusion from participation in extracurricular activities

NOTE: Exclusion from extra-curricular activities will carry over, if necessary, to the following school year. A pupil's exclusion from participation in extracurricular activities include all sports, student clubs or organizations, musical groups, dances, class activities, proms, trips and graduation.

Identification and Remediation of Pupils Who Distribute Drugs

A pupil found to have distributed drugs in violation of law and Board policy will be reported to the principal or his/her designee, the CORE team/Child Study Team, student assistance counselor, and appropriate law enforcement officers, and is subject to discipline in accordance with this policy.

The determination whether a student who possesses small amounts of a drug has intentions of distributing it will be made following the guidelines used by law enforcement officials.

Penalties for distribution of drugs

1 st offense	- parent/guardian meeting with administration
	- a ten (10) day out-of school suspension
	- followed by 35 school days exclusion from participation in extracurricular activities
2 nd offense	- parent/guardian meeting with administration
	- out-of-school suspension and a hearing for expulsion consideration

NOTE: Exclusion from extra-curricular activities will carry over, if necessary, to the following school year. A pupil's exclusion from participation in extracurricular activities include all sports, student clubs or organizations, musical groups, dances, class activities, proms, trips and graduation.

Voluntary Student Request for Assistance

Whenever a student voluntarily seeks help for a drug or alcohol use pattern through a staff member, the staff member shall:

1. Reinforce the student's actions by expressing approval of a decision to seek help and indicate concern for the student.
2. Indicate at the beginning of the conference that what is told to the student assistance counselor which relates to the request for assistance shall be kept confidential consistent with the law (42 C.F.R.2; N.J.A.C. 6:3-6.6; N.J.A.C. 6:29-9.3 (b) 2).
3. Offer immediate help to the student through the office of the Student Assistance Counselor.
4. If the student is reluctant to go to the student assistance counselor alone, the staff member shall offer to go with the student to the student assistance counselor's office and attend the initial conference with the individual and the student assistance counselor, if possible and appropriate. All students are eligible for services through the student assistance program.

Legal Liability of School and Medical Personnel

School personnel are held safe-harmless when reporting drug abuse incidents under the following:
N.J.S.A 2A:62a-4, 18A:40A-13, 18A:40A-14.