

Middle School Handbook

2009–2010 / 5770



Welcome to the AJA Middle School! In Middle School, you will have many new and challenging opportunities to explore who you are and where the future can take you. Along with these privileges comes an additional level of responsibility. As you reach the age of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the expectations for respect for others and commitment to your own education increase. This handbook is designed to help you achieve your very best and prepare you for the leadership opportunities that come with being an AJA Middle School student. Please read its contents carefully, and return the signature page when you are finished.

ATTENDANCE

Due to the importance of class work, discussions, and teacher guidance and support, regular attendance is required. Each school day is filled with learning experiences designed for your active participation. Because of the nature of an education program, make-up assignments for absent students can cover only a portion of what you would have gained from the learning environment in the classroom. Attendance becomes part of your permanent record.

School begins promptly at 8:00 a.m. You may enter the classrooms anytime after 7:50. Should you arrive before 7:50, you will report to the MPR where you will wait until dismissed to your classroom. You need to be in school on time to fully benefit from the educational program. **You will be considered tardy if you are not in the ASSIGNED CLASSROOM by 8:00 a.m.** Please be aware that when you are consistently late for school or class, you create a disruption in the learning process for all students. Prompt arrival to all classes is an important responsibility of each Middle School student.

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING ABSENCES

While it is important that you are in school every day, we realize that there will be times when you will be absent. For times when an absence is necessary, you will be responsible for obtaining assignments and completing all missed material (class work and homework). You will have one day to make up the work for every day you are absent. It is your responsibility to get the work from your teacher.

ORGANIZATION

Your work should be filed in a master binder. In the master binder, you will have sections for each subject, a zipper supply bag, and a homework folder. Other needed supplies will be discussed at the beginning of the year. You are expected to care for all materials and come prepared to each class.

You will also be given an assignment planner that must be taken to each class. Teachers will write assignments in a prominent place in their rooms every day.

You will be responsible for recording these assignments in your AJA planner each class period.

Parents can review assignments and make sure they are complete by using the planner as a reference. Teachers will contact parents if assignments are repeatedly missing or of poor quality. The Middle School expectation is that all assignments will be completed well and on time.

HOMWORK

The standard nightly homework includes all subject areas. Assignments are designed to reinforce and extend the concepts and material covered during the school day. It may also involve preparation for an upcoming lesson such as reading a book to be discussed in class or a long-term project.

- Homework assignments are given daily
 - In 6th Grade students can expect to spend an average of
 - 30 minutes reading/day (reading can be oral or silent)
 - 45-60 minutes additional homework
 - In 7th Grade students can expect to spend an average of
 - 30 minutes reading/day (reading can be oral or silent)
 - 60 - 75 minutes additional homework
 - In 8th Grade students can expect to spend an average of
 - 30 minutes reading/day (reading can be oral or silent)
 - 75 -90 minutes additional homework
- Instructions, rubrics, and deadlines for long-term projects will be given in written form. You should plan your time wisely for long-term assignments in order to avoid a last-minute rush.
- Late work will be accepted under the following guidelines:
 - You may earn full credit for assignments submitted by the deadline.
 - Up to one day late, students may earn up to 85% on the late assignment.
 - Up to two days late, students may earn up to 70% on the late assignment.
 - Beginning on the third day, students may only earn up to 50% and all assignments must still be turned in.

DRESS CODE

The Austin Jewish Academy is an environment in which respect is paramount. It is a place of learning and a place of prayer, and therefore it is essential to maintain an appearance that reflects respect for one's self, one's classmates, and for the Jewish values upon which the school is founded. The dress code for AJA is intended to enable the students and teachers to maintain focus on learning and to set a tone of dignity, propriety, and comfort for all members of the school community.

The following guidelines apply to students while they are on campus or attending school-sponsored activities:

- Clothing should be comfortable, washable, and suitable for a daily routine including both messy and active projects.
- Sleeveless shirts must have shoulder straps of at least two inches in width (no spaghetti strap shirts).
- Halter-tops or backless shirts are not allowed.
- Shirts/blouses must not reveal the bare midriff.
- Shorts, dresses, and skirts must extend to the end of the student's fingertips when arms are held down at the student's side.
- Shorts and jeans (no sagging, no underwear seen)
- Sleeveless sports jerseys may be worn over a short-sleeve t-shirt.
- Clothing must not contain pictures or slogans which show disrespect to others or depict alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or profanity.
- Tennis shoes must be worn to P.E.
- Boys are required to wear kippot during Judaics, Hebrew, T'filla, and lunch.
- Students are not allowed to wear caps/hats inside the building.
- Sunglasses may not be worn in class unless there is a documented vision issue. Sunglasses may be worn on the playground.
- **Monday:** AJA Spirit Day – students are encouraged to wear an AJA shirt.
- **Friday:** In preparation for Shabbat, students are encouraged to wear a white shirt.

ELECTRONICS

Students may not use cell phones or other personal electronic devices during the school day unless specified otherwise by a teacher. **Unauthorized use of the above items may result in confiscation.**

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

LaBriut (To your health)

At the Middle School level, you will move from a homeroom model to an academic advisory system. You will have time to check in with your advisor during your regular classes and on Fridays during the homeroom period. P.E. is another component to the LaBriut schedule. P.E. will be twice a week for all middle school students. Eighth graders will also take Health for High School credit. Torah services on Monday and Thursday round out the weekly rotation. You will be assigned a Torah reading at least once throughout the year and will be given the opportunity to help lead T'fillah on a regular basis.

Speakers Bureau

Exposing you to interesting people and topics is a great way to expand your goals and dreams. So, once or twice a month on Fridays, the Middle School will gather for a learning lunch where some of Austin's most creative and accomplished will be invited to AJA for an informal discussion. Some of our guest speakers could include professors, writers, artists, musicians, rabbis, etc. You will be asked for input on topics and speakers from whom you would like to hear.

Mini-Units

Mini-Units are just that: short seminars on a variety of topics. 6th graders will participate in Model UN and Zionism mini-units. Mini-units for 7th graders include Zionism and Holocaust and 8th graders focus is on Senior Projects where an area of personal interest is explored in depth.

Fine Arts

The fine arts program is an opportunity for students to explore the creative and performing arts on a higher level. Offering classes in Drama, Art, and Music, you will learn new techniques, encounter the masters, and discover your own sense of creative expression.

Athletics Program

In addition to P.E., you will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of sports teams and compete against other Austin area private schools. Practices will be held before and/or after school, and games will be held after school.

Knesset

The Knesset is lead by a group of dedicated Middle School students with representation from our 3rd-8th grades. This unique group focuses not only on social activities and fun, but also on ways our school can make a difference in helping the world. Each year, you will have the opportunity to run for a leadership position on this council.

Field Trips

As part of the Middle School, you may attend a variety of field trips throughout the school year. These trips are designed to enhance classroom learning. In addition, each grade will have the opportunity to go on an extended trip. In order for you to attend an out-of-town field trip, you must be in good academic standing and without any serious behavioral infractions.

AJA Middle School Student Code of Conduct

The Purpose of the Student Code of Conduct

Education requires the investment of time, human resources, and finances. Your attitude towards learning and adherence to behavior standards directly impacts the degree of success you can achieve. The AJA Middle School provides a specific Student Code of Conduct in order to provide parents and students alike with information regarding standards of behavior as well as disciplinary consequences.

General Information

Standards for Student Conduct

You, the student, are expected to:

- Demonstrate courtesy and respect for others
- Behave in a responsible manner
- Attend all classes, regularly and on time
- Prepare for each class including taking the appropriate materials and assignments to class
- Be well-groomed and dress appropriately
- Obey all campus and classroom rules
- Respect the rights and privileges of other students, teachers, and administrators
- Respect the property of others, including school property and facilities
- Cooperate with or assist the school staff in maintaining safety, order, and discipline

Each classroom has the AJA Ethical Covenant posted. You are expected to adhere to the tenets of Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, and Caring. Teachers will review these rules and what they mean in his/her own classroom.

A student whose behavior shows disrespect for others, including interference with the ability to learn or teach in a safe environment, will be subject to

disciplinary action.

AJA has disciplinary authority over a student whenever the student's action disrupts the educational process regardless of time or location.

In general, disciplinary actions will be designed to correct the misconduct and to encourage all students to adhere to their responsibilities as citizens of the school community. Disciplinary action will draw on the professional judgment of teachers and administrators and on a range of discipline management techniques.

Disciplinary action will be correlated to the seriousness of the offense, the frequency of misbehavior, the student's attitude, and the effect of the misconduct on the school or classroom environment. Because of these factors, discipline for a particular offense may bring into consideration varying techniques and responses.

Offenses and Consequences

I. Minor Offenses

- a. Minor offenses shall be handled directly by the classroom teacher and documented according to teacher discretion.
- b. Minor offenses include, but are not limited to:
 - i. General disrespect towards a fellow student or teacher
 - ii. Talking or disruption of classroom environment
 - iii. Not following directions
 - iv. Being off-task
 - v. Failure to follow dress code
- c. Consequences, may include but are not limited to:
 - i. Oral correction
 - ii. Cooling-off time or "time-out"
 - iii. Seating changes in the classroom
 - iv. Discussions with teachers or administrative personnel
 - v. Parent-teacher conferences
 - vi. Phone call home

- vii. Temporary confiscation of items that disrupt the educational process
- viii. Behavioral contracts
- ix. Withdrawal of privileges
- x. Detention, including lunch, before/after school

The following guidelines have been developed to further explain consequences:

Inappropriate Language/ Behavior

- 1st infraction during a class period – redirection by teacher
- 2nd infraction during a class period – another redirection by teacher
- 3rd infraction during a class period - detention

Late to class

- Teachers will allow students to begin packing up 5 minutes before the end of class period
- Students will have 2 minutes to get from one classroom to another (when coming from PE/Athletics students will have 5 minutes)
- Detention will be given if student is late without excuse from previous teacher

Detention

- 1st detention looked at as a chance to improve and learn from mistake (in order to get detention, student will have already had two warnings/redirections)
- Teacher who has detention duty will keep track of student’s detentions
- After a 2nd detention, an email is sent to parents and a meeting will be scheduled with student, parent, teacher and administrator
- While in detention, students will be required to complete a Detention Reflection Form, which will be copied and sent to parents

Repeated patterns of misbehavior will result in more serious consequences and may include loss of participation in special school functions and/or off-site trips.

II. Major Offenses

- a. Major offenses by a student will result in an automatic referral to an administrator.
- b. Major Offenses include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Actions that can cause bodily injury or property damage
 - ii. Leaving school grounds or school-sponsored events without permission
 - iii. Using profanity, vulgar language or obscene gestures
 - iv. Physical violence or fighting

- v. Stealing from students, staff or the school
- vi. Damaging or vandalizing property owned by others
- vii. Counterfeiting/forgery of document of any type
- viii. Failing to comply with directives given by school personnel
- ix. Bullying including intimidation by name-calling, use of ethnic or racial slurs, or derogatory statements that could disrupt the school program/environment or incite violence
- x. Engaging in any behavior that gives school officials reasonable cause to believe that such conduct will disrupt the school program or incite violence
- xi. Possessing, smoking, or using tobacco products
- xii. Possessing or selling drugs, look-alike drugs or items represented to be drugs and contraband or drug paraphernalia
- xiii. Using a computer or other school equipment without consent and supervision of faculty; using another person's computer without his/her consent. Accessing, uploading, downloading, transmitting, displaying or distributing obscene, profane, threatening, disrespectful, false or fraudulent material.

Downloading any material without specific approval from a staff member.

Damaging or attempting to damage computer or network hardware or software. This includes, but is not limited to: spreading viruses, using hacking software, breaching security or otherwise causing malfunction, violating copyrights, plagiarism, trespassing in another person's data or electronic workspace; illegal or unsafe activity.

- xiv. Continuous violation of dress and grooming standards
- xv. Defacing or damaging school property--including textbooks, furniture, and other equipment--with graffiti or by other means
- xvi. Possessing razors, knives, box cutters, chains, or any other object which could be used in a way that threatens or inflicts bodily injury to another person; Possessing any type of gun, including air, pellet or BB guns
- xvii. Possessing or using articles not generally considered to be weapons, including school supplies, when an administrator determines that the use or threatened use of the article could harm someone

- xviii. Inappropriate or indecent exposure of a student's private body parts
 - xix. Plagiarism of any kind
 - xx. Forgery of an adult's signature
 - xxi. Intentional falsification of information
 - xxii. Cheating on assignments, tests or other classroom assignments including sharing information with a student who has not yet completed the assignment
- c. The administrator will determine the proper consequence for the offense, including but not limited to the following:
- i. Out-of-School suspension
 - ii. Expulsion
 - iii. Notification of Law Enforcement
 - iv. Immediate removal from campus
- d. The administrator and/or teacher will contact parents if such an offense occurs.

Student Chosen Rewards/Privileges

Monthly:

- 45 minute recess/social period on the last school day of each month
 - For students who have not had any detentions during the month
 - Each month students begin with a clean slate

At Teacher's Discretion- activities such as:

- Eating lunch in classroom
- Listen to music while working

The above Student Code of conduct is to be reviewed thoroughly by the student and parent. It is understood that continued enrollment at Austin Jewish Academy is dependent upon acceptance of and adherence to the Student Code of Conduct.

**Austin Jewish Academy
Middle School Student Handbook
2009-2010**

Code of Conduct

*****Return to Advisor*****

I have read the Middle School Handbook and Student Code of Conduct. I agree to follow the rules and guidelines set forth in this document. I agree to review the AJA Parent Handbook and understand I will be required to comply with its contents as well.

Please return this form to the advisor by Tuesday, August 25, 2009.

Student Name: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

For School Use Only:

Date Returned: _____

Advisor's Name: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____

Date filed in Student's cumulative file: _____

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Middle School Dismissal

*****Return to Advisor*****

In order to ensure that our dismissal procedure runs smoothly and safely throughout the year, the following form must be filled out for each MS student.

If there is an exception to the dismissal choice you select, please write it on this form. **No child will be dismissed differently from the selected choice without a note or phone call from a parent.** It is important to be aware that once a student is dismissed from school, the school is no longer responsible for him/her.

Please return this form to the advisor by Tuesday, August 25, 2009.

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- My child should be dismissed only if signed out by an adult. (regular dismissal procedure)
- My child should be dismissed without an adult signature.
- My child is allowed to pick up his/her sibling (Name: _____ Grade: _____)

Student Name: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

For School Use Only:

Date Returned: _____

Advisor's Name: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____

Date filed in Student's cumulative file: _____

**Austin Jewish Academy
2009-2010**

**8th Grade Off-campus Lunch
Permission Form**

*****Return to Advisor*****

As a special privilege, with parent permission AJA 8th grade students will be allowed to leave the campus during the lunch period on Friday (11:45am - 12:45pm). This privilege will take place twice a month on weeks without Speaker's Bureau or a Knesset meeting.

For safety reasons, the following guidelines will apply:

1. Students must be in groups of 3 or more at all times.
2. At least one student in the group must have a cell phone (charged and turned on) with them at all times.
3. Students must be on time for their next class which begins promptly at 12:45 pm.
4. Students must sign out with the Administrative Assistant before leaving and will need to provide the following information: 1) where having lunch 2) names of all students in group and 3) cell phone number.

It is important to remember that leaving campus for lunch is a special privilege and that each student is responsible for his or her own choices. The guidelines must be followed at all times or the privilege may be revoked.

Please return this form to the advisor by Tuesday, August 25, 2009.

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I have read the guidelines and agree to follow them. I understand that if I do not follow all guidelines every time I leave campus that I will no longer have this privilege.

Student Name: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

I have read the guidelines and give permission for my child to leave the AJA campus during lunch on Fridays. I understand that if my child does not follow the guidelines, he/she will no longer have this privilege.

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

For School Use Only:

Date Returned: _____

Advisor's Name: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____

Date filed in Student's cumulative file: _____