

Black River Middle School Guide 2011-2012



A Year of Change and Discovery

Black River Middle School

Dear Parents and Students:

Welcome to the 2011-2012 school year. For many of you the summer may have gone all too quickly, but fall is in the air and we are back to school. This summer has been a busy one here at school. In addition to our expanded use of the Community Center for events, we will soon have a new band room, located in the Ludlow Elementary School building. The Life Skills class has been moved to the former band room, which some of you may know as Gill Hall.

The Middle School Team has been busy, too. We have been studying the new Core Curriculum Standards which will influence the curriculum in all grades nationwide. You will be hearing more about this in the coming years, and the Middle School is working hard to be at the forefront of the changes and improvements. To this end, we have new Smart Boards which allow students to interact with material in all subject areas.

The Middle School Team strives to provide the best Middle School experience possible, both academically and socially. To this end, we have an Advisory Program to help build community and strengthen interpersonal skills. We have interest groups that meet on a regular basis, many of them started at the request of the students (notably the reading group, which meets twice a month). There are students working to prevent bullying and harassment, enjoying common interests, and planning activity nights. We encourage students to participate in extra-curricular activities, including the many sports teams. This is a time of growth and change, and all of these activities contribute to a well-rounded experience.

Your student will receive an academic planner which the student must take to class to record homework and upcoming assignments, activities, and events. Your student will also receive a weekly calendar of major assignments for the upcoming week. This is sent home with the student every Friday. It is for your reference to aid in planning study time into a schedule of extra-curricular and family commitments. It is also available at www.brhmsms.org under the Middle School Team heading. We also provide a homework hotline for nightly assignments (228-5184). These are all tools to help in planning what may prove to be a busy schedule. However, it is ultimately the task and responsibility of the student to complete assignments. Homework is designed to reinforce the skills students must develop in order to have success at high school and beyond. Students are expected to do homework nightly. Students are responsible for the care of textbooks issued by the school and library books. They are also responsible for providing their own paper, pencils, and other materials needed for class.

If you need to contact us, there is a link on our website (see above) to our emails. Please feel free to leave a telephone message (228-4721). Our schedules are full during the school day, but please be assured that we will return your call as soon as possible. If you have a question about scheduling or need the assistance of the Counseling Department, please call 228-3132.

We look forward to working with you through the coming year.

Sincerely,
The Middle School Team

Regular Academic Schedule

Advisory	7:45 – 8:00
Period 1	8:02 – 8:50
Period 2	8:53 – 9:43
Break	9:46 – 9:56
Enrichment	9:56 – 10:20
Period 3	10:23 – 11:13
Period 4	11:16 – 12:06
Band/Chorus/Academic	12:08 – 12:45
Lunch	12:45 – 1:06
Cluster I*	1:11 – 1:51
Cluster II*	1:54 – 2:32

* A note on Cluster classes: these classes include Computers, Wellness, Physical Education, Foreign Language Exploration (FLEX), Art, Music and MS Media and are an integral part of the Middle School program. Students will have the opportunity to explore all classes. Students will have two classes each afternoon and will rotate through all classes in the course of a year.

Special Middle School Rules

In addition to rules listed in the Black River Middle/High School Handbook, students will be expected to abide by the following:

1. Leave backpacks in lockers. No backpacks will be allowed in classrooms. They are to be used to bring books to and from school only.
2. The only beverage allowed in classrooms is water in a clear container. No glass containers are allowed
3. Students may have a snack during break time. Healthy snacks are encouraged.
4. Hats and hoods are not to be worn during the school day.
5. No ipods, MP3 players or other electronic devices in class. Cell phones must be turned off and put away.

Black River Middle School Grading Procedures

1. Homework will be graded by the teacher who assigns it. Long term assignments will be weighted more heavily than daily assignments.
2. If a student is absent, he/she is responsible for seeing each teacher to arrange make-up work within a reasonable period of time.
3. Students who do not submit assignments on time will receive a zero. However, each teacher will provide another opportunity to master the material through EAIP (see below). An absent student must submit long-term assignments (those assigned prior to the absence) immediately upon his/her return to school.
4. Tests and quizzes will be graded and weighted by individual teachers.
5. Students who do not complete and/or hand in long-term assignments will be referred to EAIP (see below).
6. Students who fail to turn in homework will be given one chance to make up an alternate assignment with parental signature.
7. In each of the four core academic classes, students will be graded on major assignments which constitute 60% of the overall grade and daily grades which constitute 40% of the overall grade. The following symbols may be used:

++√ = 95

+√ = 85

√ = 75

-√ = 65

O = no credit

Black River Middle School believes all students can succeed. A growing number of middle school students are experiencing academic challenges. Opportunities exist for students to be successful in middle school. Student need to be encouraged to come after school for extra help, take retakes when offered, see teachers in the morning for homework and other questions, and make up assignments missed due to absences. In addition, the Black River Middle School Team has addressed the issue by developing and implementing two programs to meet the needs of these individual students. These programs involve parents, students, administration, guidance, members of National Honor Society, and teachers.

Black River Middle School Advisory Program

The mission of the Black River Middle School Advisory program is to help students in grades seven and eight develop skills to ensure academic and social success through their middle school years and beyond.

Expectations of Participants:

- Student will demonstrate respect for others and tolerance of diversity (Vermont Standards 3.3, 4.3, and 4.4)
- Students will demonstrate indicators of self-esteem and self-respect (Vermont Standards 3.3 and 3.11)
- Students will demonstrate the ability to make informed choices (Vermont Standards 3.1, 3.4, and 3.5)
- Students will develop skills for life-long learning (Vermont Standard 3.2)
- Students will demonstrate the ability to form meaningful relationships and work collaboratively (Vermont Standards 3.10 and 3.11)
- Students will demonstrate a commitment to self, school, and community through service (Vermont Standard 4.1).

An advisory program involves an advisor, or mentor, working collaboratively with a number of student participants on issues that affect student's lives.

The role of an advisor is:

- *To lead discussion and exploration of a set topic that relates to the academic and social success of students*
- *To demonstrate and encourage respect*
- *To be available to student participants throughout the year as a mentor and advocate*

The role of a student participant is:

- *To demonstrate respect and cooperation at all times*
- *To fully participate in the activities of the group*
- *To ask the advisor for help, support, and guidance as needed*

As a member of an advisory program, we are all committed to the well-being of the individuals in our group and to the well-being of the whole school community.

Early Academic Intervention Program (EAIP)

This program is designed to assist individual students in areas of need. The focus will be tests, quizzes, portfolios, projects, and essays. If a

student is having difficulty in any of these areas they will be asked to be part of EAIP. Two important components of EAIP are study skills and organization. Everyday homework assignments will not be part of the program; this is for long-term assignments only. ***Only assignments that are fully completed to standard and turned in by the end of EAIP for the marking period will receive full credit.***

F Be-Gone Program

This program is designed to assist students who have failed one or more courses at the end of each of the first three quarters. These students will be identified by the team at the end of each marking period and individualized contracts will be constructed and approved by all concerned parties. This program will have strict guidelines which will be identified in the contracts. ***A student may only take this program twice for any given course.***

- Parents are encouraged to support these programs. However, a parent has the right to decline this assistance in writing.
- In both EAIP and F Be-Gone student participation and acceptable behavior is mandatory. There will be no second chances.
- The Black River Middle School staff believes it is important for all students to be successful. The purpose of these programs is to encourage excellence in all students and allow for growth and change.

Student-Led Conferences

Student-led conferences may be conducted by both seventh and eighth grade students. This conference format offers the opportunity for students to present to their parents/guardians evidence of their academic and intellectual growth over the school year. There will also be the opportunity for parents to meet with teachers.

Research suggests the following benefits from conducting student-led conferences:

- ❖ Better communication between school and home;
- ❖ Emphasis on student learning and self-evaluation;
- ❖ Student goal-setting that promotes motivation and achievement in the classroom and beyond;
- ❖ Student reflection of his/her learning (style, outcomes, goals, etc) in partnership with parents;
- ❖ Student focus that encourages the learner to excel.

"The pride in accomplishment that students feel when they have a positive story to tell and tell it well can be immensely motivational. The sense of personal responsibility that they feel when anticipating what it will be like to face the music of having to tell their story of poor achievement can also drive them to productive work."

-Rich Stiggins, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 1999.

Students will have the opportunity to reflect and practice before the initial conference. They will discuss strengths, needs, a selection of work from each class, and their goals as part of the conference.

Classroom Expectations

The Middle School Team believes in providing the best learning environment for all students. Responsibility for the classroom environment rests with both students and teachers working together to promote excellence. All members of the classroom community should:

- Be RESPECTFUL of people and their property;
- Come to class PREPARED;
- Be POSITIVE;
- Do your own BEST work;
- WAIT your turn;
- Be a TEAM player.

Black River Middle School Concepts

...learning through discovery

The Middle School Program is built around seven themes in accordance with Vermont Vital Result Standards.

RESPECT

See through others' eyes and demonstrate self-reflection
Standards 3.3, 3.10-3.13

CHANGE & TRANSITION

Growth and development, alteration of a state over time, moving from one
state to another over time
Standards 3.16, 4.5

PATTERNS & PROCESSES

Predictable relationship consistencies, step by step procedures
Standards 5.22-5.27, 6.6, 7.1, 7.6, 7.10

COMMUNICATION

Transfer of thoughts or ideas
Standards 1.1-1.22

ORIGINS

"Firsts", beginnings, roots
Standard 4.1

CHALLENGE

Beyond comfort zone, questioning status quo, unordinary opportunity
Standards 2.1 - 2.14

CONNECTIONS

Links and relationships
Standard 1.16
Learning Opportunities D.1 -D.3

Retention Criteria

A middle school student will be considered for retention if the student has not demonstrated satisfactory achievement and is failing two or more courses of English, Social Studies, Science, or Math as indicated by report cards grades. The principal, after consulting with the student's

teachers, guidance counselor, and parents, shall decide if a particular student should be retained.

Contact Information

Black River Middle School
43 Main Street
Ludlow, VT 05149
Phone: 802-228-4721
Guidance: 802-228-3132
Homework hotline: 802-228-5184

www.brhsms.org