

Blind Brook Middle School  
Rye Brook, New York



August 27, 2010

Dear Eighth Graders,

Congratulations! You have made it to eighth grade and are now the LEADERS of our school! Do not underestimate how our sixth and seventh graders will look to YOU to set a good example and model the qualities of respect, kindness and achievement that define a BBMS student. I hope you are getting as excited as I am about the start of school on September 7! Here is some information that will be helpful:

**SCHEDULES:** By now you should have received your schedule. We suggest that you make several copies. One can be posted inside your locker when you come in for the Walkthroughs on September 1, 2 or 3 from 9am - 3pm. BE SURE TO BRING YOUR SCHEDULE TO SCHOOL WITH YOU ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL!

**LOCKS:** Remember that you will use your old lock. Be sure not to share your combination. If you need a new one, see Mrs. Currie.

**SLING BAGS AND STUDENT AGENDAS:** These important items will be distributed on the first day of school. For reasons of individual and building safety, backpacks and tote bags of any kind will no longer be permitted during the school day. You may bring them to and from school, but they must be stored in your locker during the day.

**WRITING WORKSHOP:** Many of you will see Writing Workshop 8 on your schedule. This does NOT mean that you needed AIS or extra support with your writing. It will be an excellent period to work with Mrs. McDowell, who will be teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA, on ANY writing assignments (and there are

many...) that you will be doing in all of your classes: a lab report, a social studies or English assignment, etc. The reason why we were able to schedule many 8<sup>th</sup> graders for WW is because we decided to have two smaller sections of Physical Science 8 (with about 15 students in each) instead of one huge section of 30 students. In order to do that, we had to eliminate a second separate lab period for Physical Science, which is not required. If you are taking Physical Science, labs will be an important part of the course, but done within the regular class time, not in a separate additional period. So... if you are taking Physical Science you may see that you have a period of Writing Workshop every other day. Don't worry: you will not get additional writing assignments in WW for homework, etc. You will work on writing assignments you are doing for all of your classes with some discussion of writing skills which will enhance your writing. I am confident that you will see this as a valuable time to get some of your big assignments done in school with an ELA teacher there to provide help if you need it.

**21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY ISSUES:** This is a course for 8<sup>th</sup> graders designed to provoke thought about controversial topics of our day. This year, Mr. Dakers will be teaching it, and you can count on lively and thought provoking discussion and debates. Your persuasive talents and ability to choose and defend a position will be sharpened and you should enjoy the lively give and take with your classmates and teacher.

**ACTIVITY PERIOD:** As you know, 8<sup>th</sup> graders have certain privileges... You have earned the option of using your cellphone from 2:20-2:40 (NO other time of day and please ask your parents NOT to phone or text you in school). You may also hang out at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade lockers and outside at the busport. You may not dismiss yourself by leaving campus prior to 2:40. If that or any other behavioral issues arise, you will lose those privileges and be restricted for Activity Period. Also, if your grades start to slide at any point during the year, you may be assigned to your academic teachers during that time, not as a consequence, but as a supportive measure until your grades improve. It is VERY important to understand that if any teacher TELLS you to come for help a certain day and time, you MUST be there. Ignoring teachers' instructions to come to them for extra help will result in a loss of privileges. Eighth grade is a challenging year academically, and working directly with your own teachers during triple A and Activity Period is the most important

thing you can do to ensure academic success. We take this very seriously, and you should too.

**AIM Plans:** AIM stands for Academic Improvement Model. Because 8<sup>th</sup> grade is so important academically as you prepare for a successful transition to high school, we instituted this support system last year for 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Your counselor, Ms. Sosnow and I review your Progress Reports and Report cards carefully starting with the first quarter report midway through the marking period. If any D's or F's are indicated on the report, here is what occurs:

- Ms. Sosnow and I meet with you and your parents and review the Progress Report or Report Card. Ms. Sosnow brings comments from your academic teachers about how you are doing in class and whether you need to come to them for extra help, etc. We share this with you and set goals or targets for you at the next checkpoint, which is the next Progress Report or Report Card. During that time, you are assigned to one of your core academic teachers for Activity Period. During that time you may go to other teachers, but you must check in with the assigned teacher first. At the next report review with you (and sometimes your parents) we look for progress and determine whether to continue or discontinue the assigned Activity Period. Once again, this is done in a supportive manner, not a punitive one.

An AIM Plan provides an academic safety net so that a student receives support while it can make a difference, rather than dealing with a poor grade at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We began AIM plans last year. Every student who had one demonstrated outstanding improvement and success and transitioned to high school with good grades. We know 8<sup>th</sup> grade is challenging and want to provide as much support (and structure if needed) to ensure the success of every student.

**OPENING DAY ASSEMBLY:** You will attend a grade level assembly during Period 9 on the first day of school to provide more information about the upcoming year.

If you have a question about your schedule, see Ms. Sosnow at the beginning of the school year, or have your parent call her on extension 3132. Enjoy what is left of summer and I'll see you soon!

*Mrs. Bronson*

