

Parent Guide to **SUCCESS**

Hibbett Middle School
Florence Middle School

2010 – 2011



Futures Take Flight

VISION

A premier school district educating a diverse population for a global society

MISSION

The mission of Florence City Schools is to:

- Set high expectations;
- Provide equal educational access for diverse learners;
- Maintain a safe, orderly environment that is intellectually challenging and physically, emotionally and socially stimulating;
- Develop healthy, productive citizens adept in academic and life skills who are accepting of themselves and others; and
- Ensure that students are environmentally aware, technologically competent, and capable of lifelong learning.

MANTRA

Failure is not an option

Accreditation

The Florence City Schools are fully accredited by the Alabama State Board of Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Equal Education/Employment Opportunity Statement

It is the official policy of the Florence City School District that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, disability, sex, religion, creed, national origin or age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program, activity or employment.

For questions, concerns and/or information regarding the school system's compliance with Title IX contact Dr. Randy Pettus, Federal Programs Supervisor, at (256) 768-3033.

For questions, concerns and/or information regarding the school system's compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 contact Mr. Bob Grice at (256) 768-3061.

August 1, 2010

Dear Parent:

Welcome to the middle school! We are looking forward to this school year and trust that it will be a successful experience for you and your child. We are certain that you may have questions regardless of whether you are new to the middle school concept or a veteran middle school parent.

Middle grade students are unique. No other grade span encompasses such a wide range of intellectual, physical, psychological, and social developments.

This booklet is designed to assist you in the rearing of your child while providing some basic information about Florence's middle school program.

If you have any questions, please call Hibbett Middle School at 768-2800 or Florence Middle School at 768-3100 to speak to an administrator or guidance counselor.

Please feel free to visit your child's school. We will be delighted to see you.

Sincerely,

Administrators and Counselors
Hibbett Middle School
Florence Middle School

CURRICULUM

Core Courses:

Science
Social Studies
English
Mathematics
Reading (grades 5-6)

Required Course:

Physical Education

Encore Courses: (Grades 5-6, 9 weeks; Grades 7-8, 1 semester)

General Music/Choral Music
Computer Essentials (grades 7-8)
Career Explorations Through Technology (grades 5-6)
Career Discoveries (grades 7-8)
Family and Consumer Science (grades 5-8)
Fine Art (grades 5-8)
Keyboarding/Computer Applications (grades 5-6)
Strings (grades 6-8)
Pre-Agriscience/Carpentry (grade 7)
Agriscience Exploration/Carpentry (grade 8)
Skills for Success (grades 5-6)
Internet Applications (grades 7-8)

Elective Course:

Band

- **All students** in grades 5-8 enroll in the four core courses and in Physical Education. All students at the Hibbett campus take four of these six encore courses: General Music, Keyboarding, Career Explorations Through Technology, Fine Art, Skills for Success and Home Arts. Students at Florence Middle School select two of these courses each year and remain in those courses for a full semester.
- **Since the** core courses are taught by interdisciplinary teams of teachers (one Science, one Social Studies, one Reading, one English and one Mathematics per team) in grades 5 and 6, the units of instruction are much more likely to reflect more than one discipline within them. For example, a study of ancient Greece might involve students researching the topic from various sources, solving mathematics problems related to it, and making written and/or oral presentations based on the research.
- **Pre-algebra is** offered in grade 7 and Algebra I in grade 8. Students in grades 5 and 6 whose SAT-10 scores in language arts and reading fall in stanines 7, 8 and 9 are offered more challenging work during the Advanced Reading period (in addition to their regular English class).
- **A full complement** of special education services is available in these areas, among others: Learning Disabilities, Speech Therapy, Vision/Hearing Impaired, etc.
- **Students take** comprehensive examinations in all courses each semester in grades 7 and 8. They may exempt the examination the second semester in a given course by maintaining a grade of 90 or above in the course and by being absent no more than eight days during the second semester.

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF CORE COURSES

English (Grade 5) In grade 5, students are introduced to the five strands of communication from the State Course of Study: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Viewing. Much emphasis is placed on the development of writing skills since the Alabama Writing Assessment is administered in this grade.

English (Grade 6) Students read and talk about what they have read; write and show others what they have written; and communicate their feelings and thoughts orally and listen while others do the same.

English (Grade 7) Students participate in group learning experiences; process reading and writing; conversation and discussions; and technological media activities. Creative and critical thinking are encouraged and valued.

English (Grade 8) Students are taught to personalize and expand their communication processes, to enjoy and appreciate language, and to develop abstract thinking. They learn to be responsible for finding information for specific assignments and for organizing this information appropriately.

Reading (Grades 5-6) Each student in grades 5 and 6 is enrolled in a class for Reading instruction. Classes are grouped to meet the varying reading abilities of students.

Social Studies (Grade 5) The history of America forms the content of fifth grade social studies. From the period of European exploration of the New World to the year 1877, students learn about the development of our great country.

Social Studies (Grade 6) American history from 1877 to the present is the focus of this course.

Social Studies (Grade 7) Two semester-long courses comprise this year's work: Citizenship and World Geography. These set the stage for further study in social studies.

Social Studies (Grade 8) World History and Geography to 1500 is the basis for this course. It is followed immediately in grade nine with a study of the same topics from 1500 to the present.

Science (Grade 5) Students study science through both book knowledge and hands-on experiments. Concepts from the Alabama Mathematics, Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) are incorporated into this course.

Science (Grade 6) In keeping with the Alabama Course of Study in Science, Earth/Space Science is the basis for this course. The processes, knowledge and application of science are also emphasized. Concepts from AMSTI are included.

Science (Grade 7) Continuing the adherence to the Alabama Course of Study in Science, this course focuses on Life Science. Emphasis remains on hands-on classwork through AMSTI concepts.

Science (Grade 8) The field of Physical Science is the area of emphasis for this eighth grade course. Students continue science experiences through AMSTI.

Mathematics (Grade 5) In order to establish a strong mathematics base for students entering their first year of middle school, instructors review previously-learned concepts and introduce new ones in all aspects of mathematics. Concepts from AMSTI are included.

Mathematics (Grade 6) Topics covered in this course are: Number Systems/Sense/Theory; Geometry/Spatial Sense/Measurement; Patterns/Functions/Algebra; Probability/Statistics/Discrete Mathematics. Concepts from AMSTI are included. Advanced Mathematics is offered to certain students based on their SAT-10 scores in Mathematics.

Mathematics (Grade 7) The same topics included in grade six serve as the basis for this course, but they are taught on a higher level as the student progresses through the middle school grades. NOTE: Those students who meet certain criteria related to mathematics skills are scheduled into Pre-Algebra. See your Guidance Counselor for details.

Pre-Algebra - Grade 8 - Building on the skills learned in previous grades, the student learns to think critically and abstractly. This course is the vitally-important transition into high school mathematics. NOTE: Those students who meet certain criteria related to mathematics skills are scheduled into Algebra I. These regulations apply to students enrolled in Algebra I:

1. If a student decides to move from Algebra I to regular mathematics, he/she must do so by the end of the second week of a given semester. If the Algebra I teacher wishes to move a student, he/she must do so by the end of the sixth week.
2. If a student wishes to move from Algebra I to regular mathematics after taking Algebra I during the fall semester, he/she may do so. He/she receives one-half unit of credit if he/she successfully completed the semester.
3. If a student remains in Algebra I for both semesters but makes a failing grade for one of the two semesters, his/her two semester grades may be averaged together if the average will result in a passing grade for the year. Otherwise, the student gets one-half unit of credit for the semester successfully completed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF ENCORE COURSES

1. Music (grades 5-8, General Music; grades 7-8, Choral Music also [no auditions required]) Building on the musical knowledge learned during their elementary years, students have the opportunity to acquire more advanced musical skills and to exhibit those skills through various types of performances.

2. Career Explorations Through Technology (grades 5-6) Through computerized modules students experience the excitement of constructing a building, designing an automobile, and more.

3. Career Discoveries (grades 7-8) This course includes concepts, practices and careers associated with Physical, Communication and Bio-Related Technologies through hands-on activities.

4. Fine Art (grades 5-8) From hands-on art projects to units of study in art appreciation, this course helps students to become more aware of the beauty in their world and to understand the many ways in which artists have enriched our lives.

5. Family and Consumer Science (grades 5-8) A modern-day update of the former home economics curriculum, this course introduces students to a wide range of topics such as personal finances, grooming, career possibilities, etiquette, family living, etc.

6. Keyboarding/Computer Applications (grades 5-6) Students in grade 5 explore various applications of the computer (e.g., Internet, Word Processing, Power Point). Students in grade 6 increase their facility with the computer keyboard and their understanding of the ways that computers may be used to enhance all aspects of the learning process.

7. Computer Essentials (grades 7-8) This course emphasizes the use of computers in the lives of people throughout the world. It culminates in a test which, if successfully completed, declares the student to be computer literate – a requirement for high school graduation.

8. Internet Applications (grades 7-8) To function well in today's world, every student must become technologically literate. This course assists in that process and, upon successful passage of an end-of-course test, the student is declared computer literate – a requirement for high school graduation.

9. Strings (grades 6- 8) Students in grades 7 and 8 may choose this course which focuses on all types of stringed instruments, from cello to violin.

10. Pre-Agriscience/Carpentry (grade 7) Through hands-on experiences, students gain knowledge and skills in such areas as: animal and plant life, woodworking, and use of tools and equipment.

11. Agriscience Exploration/Carpentry (grade 8) This course provides students the opportunity to learn about such agriscience topics as: animal science, fisheries and woodworking. Hand tools are used, and safety with such tools is emphasized and practiced.

12. Guitar (grades 7 and 8) Group guitar instruction is offered in this semester-long course.

13. Skills for Success (grades 5 and 6) This is a computer-based remediation course in Mathematics and Reading for students with grade-level deficits on the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT).

	10-11 Year Olds Tend To:	12 Year Olds Tend To:	13-14 Year Olds Tend To:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be emotional about body changes • have difficulty controlling emotions • display highly variable interests • have outbursts such as crying, fighting, and swearing due to overexertion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • worry over school work, examinations, and report cards • have rather sensitive feelings • have ambivalent attitudes - want to be independent and yet hold to delights of childhood • rebel at the idea of having a baby-sitter • confide in an adult outside of family rather than parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be anxious about the normality of development • be easily angered and take longer to recover than when they were younger • vacillate among interests • exhibit erratic behavior • realize their independence within the family structure is deepening • learn to think, feel, and act in a role congruent with their sex • identify and relate to the behaviors inherent in sex roles
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • begin to break away from parental control • be concerned with standards set by peer groups • be able to display teamwork • be concerned with privacy in the home • show interest in the opposite sex/be teasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have critical attitudes toward home, parents, and society in general • show independence in choice of friends • be concerned with group loyalty • crave periods of being alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exhibit an indifference to adults, especially teachers and parents • be concerned with presenting a positive image for the peer group • strive to conform in order to achieve peer acceptance • be continuously changing friends depending on peer pressures and changing interests, needs, and wishes • begin to explore aspects of their sexuality
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be involved in a period of brain growth • show rapid increase in weight (girls) • be willing to work hard at acquiring physical skills • display awkwardness, restlessness, and "laziness" as a result of uneven growth • show beginning of secondary sex characteristics • show an increased appetite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be at a plateau in brain growth development • experience rapid growth • be self-conscious about trying to learn new physical skills • experience periods of extreme fatigue • be self-conscious about sexual development • be capable of initiating good personal hygiene habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be approaching a new period of brain growth development • experience uneven bone-muscle growth; experience a variety of growth patterns • be easily upset if they are not physically coordinated or physically attractive according to existing cultural standards • be extremely restless • need a daily release of energy • tire easily; be reluctant to admit it • have difficulty accepting body changes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need reinforcement of basic skills • function at literal thinking levels • be oriented to the present • be oriented toward viewing ideas and facts in isolation • make simple generalizations • begin to develop reasoning skills • handle formal operations and abstract thinking on a limited basis • need encouragement to work to the maximum of his/her intellectual ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be able to refine those reasoning skills which have been learned • have difficulty acquiring new conceptual skills • begin to think for themselves • begin to understand abstract ideas like "justice," "honesty" • demand privileges but avoid responsibility • develop a "hero" type worship of a sports figure or an entertainer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • display varying levels of skill interests and abilities which are unique in the development pattern • like to discuss their experiences with adults • see relationships among similar concepts, ideas, and experiences and make inferences • be capable of evaluating critically • have fluctuating interests • be easily discouraged if they do not achieve • have a varying range of expression • understand the elements of the environment and can be helped to see their relationship • be capable of exploring and selecting learning materials and experiences on their own • be trusted to assume personal responsibility for their own learning

SOURCE: *The Early Adolescence Magazine*, January, 1986/Volume II, Number 3.



TEN KEY POINTS TO SUCCESS WITH THE YOUNG ADOLESCENT

1. Give them opportunities to be independent and make decisions.
2. Provide opportunities for positive activities.
3. Be consistent with rules and expectations.
4. Take time to talk and make time to listen.
5. Recognize their friends as an important part of their lives.
6. Reward or acknowledge good or appropriate behavior.
7. Remember once it's said, it's very difficult to take it back.
8. When dealing with punishment, separate the behavior from the child.
9. Understand the "I want to be me" attitude.
10. Remember, the world is very different from 10 years ago but love, caring and understanding haven't changed.

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAMS

Middle school students in grades 5 and 6 are divided into teams. This means that the same group of teachers shares the same group of students housed in the same part of the facility for the same block of daily instructional time. Teaming reduces isolation and anonymity, allows teachers to know their students better and permits teachers to interact with students in positive ways.

Below you should list your child's teachers and the requirements for each teacher's class.

Teacher	Subject
Required Materials	
Homework Policy	
Make-up Policy	
Teacher	Subject
Required Materials	
Homework Policy	
Make-up Policy	
Teacher	Subject
Required Materials	
Homework Policy	
Make-up Policy	
Teacher	Subject
Required Materials	
Homework Policy	
Make-up Policy	
Teacher	Subject
Required Materials	
Homework Policy	
Make-up Policy	
Teacher	Subject
Required Materials	
Homework Policy	
Make-up Policy	

Helpful Hint: Place your child's name on all personal belongings including notebooks, backpacks, jackets, and physical education clothes and shoes.

BEHAVIOR/ASSIGNMENT REPORT

You may wish to initiate daily or weekly checksheets that report your child's performance based on homework, tests, daily activities and behavior. If so, talk with one of the guidance counselors.

STUDENT ABSENCES

Parents or guardians shall be required to give reason for the absence of their children from school. On the day your child returns to school after an absence, he or she should bring a signed and dated note. The note should explain the reason for the absence and should be given to the homeroom teacher. Refer to the *Parent/Student Handbook* for further details. When your child is absent, you may call the school office before 9:00 a.m. to get homework assignments.

PHONE CONFERENCES

Teachers are available for telephone conferences during their planning period. Telephone the guidance counselor and request that the teacher call you back.



PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

To arrange a parent-teacher conference, you should phone the guidance counselor and make an appointment to meet with your child's teachers. On that day, these teachers will be ready to meet with you.

CONFERENCE NOTES

Language Arts:

Mathematics:

Science:

Social Studies:

Physical Education:

Encore Courses:

YOUR CHILD'S GRADES ARE IMPORTANT

GRADING SCALE	DESCRIPTION
90 - 100 A	Outstanding
80 - 89 B	Above Average
70 - 79 C	Average
60 - 69 D	Below Average
0 - 59 F	Failing
I	Incomplete



PROGRESS REPORTS

Progress Reports are provided in the middle of each nine weeks' period to inform you of your child's progress. This may be a good time to schedule a conference.

REPORT CARDS

There are four grading periods during the school year. Your child will receive a report each nine weeks. The purpose of this report card is to inform you of your child's progress both academically and behaviorally.

On your child's report card you will find numbers listed under "Teacher Comments" which refer to your child's grade or behavior. These numbers are explained below. Please read these carefully to further understand your child's grades and to help your child make needed improvements.

1. Contact guidance department
2. Commendable progress.
3. Earnest and cooperative.
4. Absences are affecting schoolwork.
5. Working below apparent ability.
6. Test grades are low.
7. Books and materials are not brought to class.
8. Assignments are not completed regularly
9. Class participation is poor.
10. Behavior needs improving.

SETTING LIMITS FOR YOUR CHILD

1. State clearly to your child what you expect from him or her.
2. Tell your child the consequences of his or her actions if he or she does not accomplish what you expect.
Example: "If your attitude does not improve, you cannot go to the movie theatre on Saturday."
3. Back up your words with actions.
Example: "John, I said you could not go to the movie theatre if your attitude did not improve this week. It has not improved, so you will not be going."
4. Let your child earn the privilege.
5. Provide praise for your child as he or she improves.

SUGGESTED CONSEQUENCES FOR MISBEHAVIOR



Many parents feel that the "old" consequences for misbehavior, such as no playtime (grounded), are ineffective with this age group of children. Some suggested consequences of misbehavior that may be more useful could be withholding some of the following:

hair permanent
hot rollers
sleep over
parties
motorcycle, bicycle

telephone, email
hanging out with friends
TV, VCR, movies
shopping
skateboard

dance
radio, cd player, ipod
computer, video games
ball game
roller skating

Caution: *If you pull too many privileges, (no sports, no telephone, no friends over, no television, no radio) this may cause "overkill," which may result in your child missing the basic point: that the child suffers a consequence for poor behavior or poor grades, not that he or she suffers severe punishment for it. Using a reasonable consequence should motivate that child to earn the privilege again, not cause him or her to give up and feel defeated.*

STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The following are appropriate responsibilities for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders:

1. Keep your own area in order. Do not write on desk. Keep books, notebooks and lockers in order.
2. Be in class on time and ready to work.
3. Have assigned work complete on time. Make sure you know what the teacher has assigned and when it is due.
4. Follow the rules of the teacher and realize that all students are there to get an education.
5. Be sensitive to each person's feelings.
6. Respect your classmates' property and school property.
7. Demonstrate respect for those in authority through your attitude and your way of talking.
8. Politely wait your turn to speak.
9. When you see a job that needs to be done, do it!

HOMEWORK

Homework is a learning activity to be conducted by students outside of the regular classroom setting and scheduled under guidelines provided by teachers. It is an integral part of the instructional process and important to the total educational development of students. Appropriate, purposeful homework should develop student responsibility and study skills. It should be a positive, meaningful learning experience.

The following guidelines are used in establishing homework assignments:

Grades 5-7	Average 40-60 minutes per school day
Grade 8	Average 60-90 minutes per school day

Within these guidelines, it is recognized that the actual length and nature of homework will vary with the ability of the student, the requirements of various subjects, and the pattern of instructional activities.






















STUDY TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. Your child requires a quiet, uncluttered space in which to complete his or her studies.
2. All supplies should be readily accessible.
3. If possible, institute a study/reading hour in your home in which everyone is engaged in some type of reading (newspaper, book or magazine) or study.
4. Your child's homework is important practice for the lesson in class; therefore, it is important that your child does his or her own homework.
5. If your child asks for help, be certain you read all material in the homework assignment.
6. Know the teacher's homework policy.
7. Show your child that you value education and that homework is as important or more important than social activities
8. To help your child perform well on tests, make sure he or she gets a good breakfast and is well prepared physically and mentally.
9. Even if your child does not have an assignment in a particular subject, be sure to quiz him or her about what happened during that day's lesson.

REPORT CARD FOR PARENTS

Check each statement which describes a practice that you do to help your child succeed in school.

-  Controlling the quantity and quality of television programs your child views
-  Engaging in frequent conversation with your child
-  Reading with your child on a daily basis
-  Expressing interest in what your child has done in school
-  Ensuring that your child gets plenty of rest
-  Supporting your child and protecting him or her from anxiety and fear
-  Introducing your child to a wide variety of experiences
-  Frequently taking your child to the public library, museums, and other educational resource centers
-  Listening to your child and to what he or she has to say
-  Letting your child be himself or herself — never comparing or forcing him or her to be like someone else
-  Ensuring that your child has regular health checkups which include vision and hearing examinations
-  Helping your child complete homework
-  Developing a rapport with your child's teachers, principal, and other school personnel
-  Playing with your child
-  Being patient with your child
-  Ensuring that your child attends school
-  Loving your child and letting him or her know it each and every day

Everything you checked will help your child succeed in school. There is no intensive training needed

to be a supportive person in any of these areas. It does take a lot of time and effort.

In short, it is a lot of work . . . but your child is worth it!

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