



25/26 Middle School Family Handbook



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MISSION, BELIEFS, & COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

The Mission of the Burlington School District is to graduate students who

- Value different cultures
- Engage with the community
- Communicate effectively
- Think creatively
- Skillfully solve problems
- Achieve at their highest academic, intellectual, and personal potential

Our Vision

BSD: Cultivating Caring, Creative, and Courageous People- Join the Journey!

Our Core Beliefs

- Every child can succeed
- Families and community are partners in educating our children
- Diversity and inclusion promote strong schools and communities
- A welcoming, supportive climate fosters learning
- Self-reflection and accountability improve our practices

Our North Star

Every learner is challenged, empowered, and engaged.

Community Agreements

Our goal is to teach and model the skills needed to evolve as respectful, responsible, and safe learners and citizens of our school, city, state, and world. In keeping, Burlington Middle Schools have three basic community agreements for student behavior:

- ★ Be Safe
- ★ Be Responsible
- ★ Be Respectful

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative Practices are rooted in relationship-building and rebuilding to create a culture of equity and belonging that results in healing and learning. Burlington School District, in partnership with the Burlington community, embraces Restorative Practices ensuring that all, including those who have been harmed, will have their needs and experiences recognized and acted upon, thus creating a supportive climate of empowerment for all. Burlington School District has made restorative practices a top priority to increase belonging and well-being in the District and to reduce suspensions and expulsions, particularly of students from marginalized backgrounds.

To read more about restorative practices in our district and to learn more about RP, expectations, and how RP is used in our schools, please read the [BSD Restorative Code of Conduct](#).

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students have legal rights as defined under federal and state law as it relates to their education. More information about students' rights can be found on the [ACLU student page](#), which provides a helpful, clear guide.

As outlined in the [Restorative Code of Conduct](#), it is the responsibility of students to

- ★ Exercise and practice self-awareness
- ★ Understand and follow school expectations, including the [Restorative Code of Conduct](#) and their school's Student Handbook
- ★ Behave in a manner that focuses on academic success

- ★ Be responsible and accountable for meeting school expectations (see BSD District Policy [F 13: STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE POLICY](#))
- ★ Help build a positive community

STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Be free from harassment or discrimination
- Freedom of expression and the press
- An equal education
- Due process in discipline
- Participate in school government
- Meet confidentially with social workers
- See your school records
- Ask for a restorative conversation or conference with peers
- Ask for a restorative conversation or conference with a teacher, staff member, or administrator

STUDENTS DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Harass others verbally, physically, emotionally, sexually, or electronically
- Intimidate others
- Disrupt learning
- Smoke, vape, drink, take drugs in school
- Vandalize or litter
- Fight
- Cheat or plagiarize
- Skip class or hang out in the hallway
- Use cell phones or other non-school devices, electronic or otherwise, during the school day
- Swear or use inappropriate language
- Withhold their name from a member of the staff and faculty
- Refuse a search of their person or locker that's based on reasonable suspicion
- Leave the school grounds without knowledge and permission from an administrator

What To Do If Rights Are Violated

If any of the rights above are violated, members of the school community have the right to work with the school staff and/or Office of Equity to resolve and repair the damage to the individual and/or community. In addition, if any member of the school community feels they have been subject to or has witnessed discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, sexual identity, religion, national origin, or disability, they should notify the Designated Employee and/or school principal immediately. Concerns may also be submitted as an [Equity Ticket](#), where they will be reviewed by members of BSD's Office of Equity, who work quickly to make sure your concerns are addressed.

SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS

In Burlington schools, we strive to meet the needs of students wherever they are. Our North Star is to ensure every learner is challenged, empowered, and engaged, and we understand that students may need individualized support in order to be successful. If you have academic or social concerns about your student, please contact their team teachers and school counselor, as they have the most in-depth experience with your students. You may also contact your administrative team. We want to hear from you!

Counseling Department

The Office of Counseling at each middle school includes school counselors, a Student Assistance Program (SAP) Counselor, school-based social workers, and an administrative assistant. Your student's school counselor is the "hub" of their school team, providing individualized support, encouragement, and help with problem-solving. They are your first points of contact at the middle schools. The SAP Counselor has special skills to work with students around

substance abuse concerns, education, and referrals to additional services. We partner with the Howard Center to provide social workers that work with students and families and act as liaisons between the school, child, and area social service agencies as needed.

The Student Support Center

In cases where a student may benefit from more intensive support, they may request a pass from their teacher or be referred by a teacher to the Student Support Center (SSC). The SSC provides support in academics, conflict resolution, restorative responses, regulation, and community connection for any student. Students in the SCC will be able to connect with a dedicated staff member to identify challenges and develop a plan to participate positively in their learning. Our goal is for students to return to class and be able to participate productively as soon as possible.

Multilingual Learners

In all of our schools, we serve students who understand and speak multiple languages. We work hard to meet our students where they are, to honor their first (and additional) languages, and to support their English learning so that they can be fully engaged in our school and the wider community. In addition, we have an extensive network of Multilingual Liaisons who facilitate communication between school and home via individual and group phone calls and social media apps for each of our major language communities. BSD also strives to provide written translations of important documents when necessary and practical. For more information, please see our [Multicultural Supports webpage](#).

Student Support Services

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are developed and implemented by special educators and classroom teachers to meet the specific needs of special education students. If you are concerned about your student's academic performance or social emotional learning progress, your first step is to contact your school team. For more information, please visit the [Student Support Services](#) website or contact your school team.

EXPECTATIONS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL DAY

Classroom Expectations

Learning happens in the classroom, so we expect that students will

- Arrive on time to class
- Participate as best as they can in the activities
- Listen to and follow teacher instructions
- Ask for a pass in order to leave the classroom
- Respect others' opinions and learning styles
- Treat teachers and classmates with respect
- Leave their classroom and other shared school spaces better than they found it

Backpacks

Hallway space is limited, so backpacks must be kept in lockers throughout the day.

Lunch Expectations

Lunch must be eaten in the cafeteria unless otherwise specified. Student expectations while in the cafeteria include:

- Respect the space, each other, and yourselves in the lunch area
- Join the lunch line or find a seat
- Remain at your chosen table
- Ask permission to leave the cafeteria for any reason
- Clean up all food and garbage before exiting the cafeteria

Hallway Transitions and Dismissal

Transition time is the time between the ending of one class and the start of the next. In middle school, this will often require students to collect their things, leave the room, visit their locker to get the materials for their next class, and navigate to the classroom where their next class is taking place, all quickly and efficiently. Efficient transitions are key to maximizing learning time in classes. ***Transition time between classes is three minutes.***

During transitions and dismissal, students are expected to:

- Be on time for class
- Be safe and respectful
- Adhere to the [Middle School Cell Phone Procedure](#)
- Keep hands to yourself unless you have consent to greet a peer
- Stick to the right as you walk through the hallways and up and down stairs so everyone has space and can move safely
- Keep building clean

Academic Honesty

All forms of cheating and plagiarism are prohibited. Cheating and plagiarism include, but are not limited to,

- Copying a peer's homework
- Looking at or copying a peer's test or quiz answers
- Allowing a peer to look at or copy your homework
- Allowing a peer to look at or copy answers from your test or quiz
- Copying information from an outside text without citing the source
- Using ChatGPT or other AI technology to complete assignments without expressed direction and citation

Students who are found to have cheated or plagiarized will face consequences on a case-by-case basis depending on the seriousness of the violation, prior violations, and other related factors.

SCHOOL SAFETY

One of our top priorities is to maintain the safety of our students, staff, and school community in order for all students to learn. To help with this, our middle schools follow the following policies set forth by the Vermont Legislature and/or Burlington School District.

Substance Use and Abuse

Burlington schools are drug-, alcohol-, and tobacco-free properties. Substances may not be used, consumed, or distributed in school buildings or on school grounds. To safeguard the welfare and safety of all students, the Burlington Board of School Commissioners has established a policy for dealing with substance abuse. A student who is under the influence of, uses or distributes, or attempts to use or distribute drugs, drug paraphernalia, or alcohol, on school property or while at a school-sponsored activity, is in violation of School Board Policy, in addition to local laws. (See ["Mandatory Policy- Student Alcohol and Drugs"](#) for more information)

While disciplinary consequences may be assigned, the District is primarily focused on supporting student health and wellness; depending on the specific circumstances, students may be referred to an internal SAP Counselor, an external substance abuse provider, or may be asked to take part in substance abuse harm circle, among other options.

Smoking and Vaping

Smoking of any substance is not permitted within any area of the school or campus at any time. All buildings are smoke-free environments; this includes all vaping products. Please refer to the [Code of Conduct](#) for more information on consequences of engaging in this behavior.

Weapons

Weapons of any type are strictly prohibited from middle school and their surrounding grounds. This includes but is not limited to knives, firearms, BB & Airsoft guns, throwing stars, and other dangerous devices. (See “[Mandatory Policy- FIREARMS AND DANGEROUS DEVICES IN SCHOOL](#)” for more information regarding Burlington School District’s weapons policy.)

Students found to be in possession of weapons or dangerous devices will receive consequences for their actions per BSD policy, as well as additional support as appropriate. Devices confiscated that are against school policy (e.g. airsoft, slingshot, etc.) will not be returned to a parent/guardian. A behavioral threat assessment will be required to re-enter the school community (as mandated by the VT Agency of Education).

Fighting

Fighting is not allowed at school or at school-sponsored events. Fighting causes other students and adults to feel unsafe and is disruptive to the learning environment, the school community, and our shared commitment to having a safe school. Fighting is the willful engagement/participation in physical contact, between two or more students, with the purpose of inflicting harm. This includes but is not limited to hair-pulling, hitting, slapping, punching, shoving, spitting, and kicking. Recording and/or posting or reposting fights is a violation of school rules, a violation of student privacy rights, and compromises the safety of our community. Students who record and/or post or repost documentation of fights will be subject to disciplinary action. A student who fights will meet with their school administration to determine the next steps and potential consequences.

Issuing Threats

Students who threaten students, staff, or teachers may be subject to in-school and/or out-of-school suspension. This includes threats made verbally or nonverbally, in person, through an intermediary (e.g. a friend), or electronically.

Hazing/Harassment/Bullying (HHB)

In accordance with Priority Area 1 of BSD’s Strategic Plan (Belonging and Well-being) and as required by Vermont State Statute, the BSD has policies and procedures to prevent and address student harassment, hazing, and bullying. You may read more about this on the District’s [Hazing, Harassment, and Bullying website](#)

All students, families, and school community members are encouraged to report incidents that they reasonably believe may be hazing, harassment, or bullying to any school employee or one of the two Designated Employees (DEs) at each of the middle schools. Any school employee who sees, hears, or receives a written or oral report of student hazing, harassment, or bullying must inform a DE immediately; the DE will do some initial investigating and submit a conduct form to the school principal within 24 hours. If the school principal believes that the conduct *may reasonably* be a form of hazing, harassment, or bullying, an HHB investigation will commence. The school will have five school days to complete the investigation, after which the Building Administrator will have five school days to decide, based on the evidence, and announce, whether the allegation is substantiated or unsubstantiated. The Building Administrator will then work with the Student Support Team to ensure the safety of all students and repair relationships if suitable.

DEs are posted [online](#) and at each District school/building at the beginning of each academic year. Please contact Sparks, Director of Equity, with any questions via email or phone: hsparks@bsdvt.org or (802) 865-5332.

The Restraint & Seclusion of Students: Vermont Rule 4500

Our goal is to create and maintain a positive and safe learning environment for all students and staff. Physical restraint/seclusion may be used only when a student's behavior poses an imminent and substantial risk of physical injury to the student or others and only by trained staff members.

Rule 4500 is a Vermont State Law around the use of restraint and seclusion on students in schools to ensure that our students are not subjected to inappropriate use of restraint or seclusion. All schools must follow the law of Rule 4500 and have procedures in place to protect all students. If a protective hold/restraint is required only trained staff members may legally use such interventions, except in an emergency in which imminent harm may befall the student or a community member. (e.g. running into a busy road). In addition, seclusion is the last resort and students must be visible to the trained staff members at all times.

Physical restraint/seclusion may not be used:

- a. For the convenience of staff
- b. As a substitute for an educational program
- c. As a form of discipline or punishment
- d. As a substitute for inadequate staffing or training
- e. In response to a student's use of profanity or other verbal or gestural display of disrespect
- f. In response to a verbal threat unaccompanied by demonstrated means of or intent to carry out the threat

For more information please refer to the following documents available on the Vermont AOE Website: [VT State Board of Education Manual of Rules and Practices: Series 4500](#); [Rule 4500 Restraint/seclusion Documentation Report](#)

Mandated Reporting

All BSD employees are mandated reporters. This requires all staff members who suspect that any child who may be at risk of abuse or neglect must report directly to the Department of Children & Families (DCF) at 1-800-649-5285 "within 24 hours of the time information regarding the suspected abuse or neglect was first received or observed " (33 VSA § 4913). DCF determines the outcome of the report, including whether parents will be notified of the report.

DRESS EXPECTATIONS

BSD schools are committed to creating a positive learning environment for all students. The purpose of our dress code is to promote a body-positive environment where all students are safe and feel welcome. The BSD dress code is in place to disrupt the marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income, or body type/size, and we seek to uphold standards that foster a secure and equitable community.

Our values are:

- All students should be able to dress comfortably for school and engage in the educational environment without fear of, or actual, body shaming or unnecessary discipline.
- All students and staff should understand that they are responsible for managing their own personal "distractions" without regulating individual students' clothing/self-expression.
- Student dress expectation fulfillment should not result in unnecessary barriers to school attendance.
- School staff should be trained and able to use student/body-positive language to explain the expectations and to address violations.
- Teachers should focus on teaching without the additional and often uncomfortable burden of dress expectation fulfillment.
- Reasons for conflict, inconsistencies, and/or inequitable discipline should be minimized whenever possible.

BSD's dress code is designed to be "school functional." This is defined as the basic principle: Certain body parts must be covered for all students at all times. Clothes must be worn in a way such that private parts are fully covered with opaque fabric. All items listed in the "must wear" and "may wear" categories below must meet this basic principle.

Note: These dress expectations apply to regular school days, afterschool programming, summer school days, and field trips, as well as all school-related events/activities, such as promotion ceremonies and dances. Students who feel they have been subject to discriminatory enforcement of the dress code should contact the Assistant Principal.

All Community Members Must Wear:

- Pants/skirt or the equivalent (e.g., jeans, sweatpants, leggings, dress, shorts, etc.)
- Shirt (with fabric in the front and back)
- Shoes

All Community Members May Wear:

- Hats (the student's face must be showing)
- Religious headwear
- Fitted pants
- Pajamas
- Ripped jeans, as long as underwear and buttocks are not exposed
- Tank tops, including spaghetti straps and halter tops
- Athletic attire
- Visible waistbands on undergarments or visible straps on undergarments worn under other clothing

No Community Members May Wear:

- Clothes with violent language or images
- Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any other illegal item or activity)
- Hate speech, profanity, or pornography
- Images or language that creates a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class or consistently marginalized groups
- Clothes that reveal visible undergarments (visible waistbands and visible straps are allowed)
- Swimsuits (except as required in class or athletic practice)
- Accessories that could be considered dangerous or could be used as a weapon
- Items that obscure the face (except as a religious observance or one that blocks airborne pathogens)
- Earbuds or headphones (unless otherwise authorized by a staff member)

Unified Arts Dress Expectations

Several of our classes have specific dress expectations to increase student safety while they are engaged in hands-on, physical learning. For example: students must at times wear protective eyewear in Design & Technology classes. Students must adhere to specific safety-focused dress code requirements in order to participate in class activities.

Alternative Options

A student who does not meet the dress expectations outlined above will be provided three options in order to be dressed more appropriately during the school day:

1. Wear their own alternative clothing, if already available at school, for the remainder of the day.
2. Borrow clothing from school for the remainder of the day.
3. Call someone to bring alternative clothing to the student to wear for the remainder of the day.

Students will not be shamed or required to display their body in front of others (e.g. students, staff, or parents) in school. “Shaming” includes, but is not limited to:

- Requiring a student to kneel or bend over to check attire fit
- Measuring straps, shorts, or skirt length
- Asking students to account for their attire in front of others
- Calling out students about perceived dress code violations in front of others
- Accusing students of “distracting” or “provoking” others with their clothing

STUDENT MATERIALS, DEVICES, AND TECHNOLOGY

Students are responsible for all textbooks, library books, or other items issued or loaned by the school. Parents/Guardians will be charged appropriately for lost or damaged items. Students are responsible for all personal property brought to school, thus we strongly discourage students from bringing expensive items or large sums of money to school.

School-Issued Digital Devices

All students will receive a school-issued Chromebook and their usage will be monitored through GoGuardian. GoGuardian software was designed in consultation with mental health experts. It monitors a user’s search history and signals alerts to administrators and counselors about content that relates to self-harm and explicit content that is inappropriate for underage users. Additionally, GoGuardian Beacon alerts staff to potential student safety threats or violence based on a student’s search content. Because of this, all families must sign and return the Device Agreement for Chromebooks as listed in power school as part of Returning Student Registration.

Cell Phones & Personal Devices

After finding that students continue to struggle with the abuse of smartphones and social media, and that the majority of incidents of bullying, hazing, harassment, and other conflicts between students are connected either directly or indirectly to social media, BSD has implemented procedures to limit the use of cell phones by middle school students. The procedures, which restrict the presence and use of cell phones during the school day, make our school communities safer and help keep students and staff focused on the reasons we are at school: to learn, build relationships with others, and be fully present and engaged members of our school community.

Cell Phone Procedures

Cell phones and “smart” devices (e.g. AirPods, headphones, smart watches, and other personal electronic devices) may not be used by middle school students during the school day. The “school day” begins when students enter the building (e.g. for breakfast at 7:45AM) and ends when students have fully exited the building (e.g. after a callback or after sports practice). If a student opts to bring a cell phone or other smart device to school, the device must be powered off during the school day, from the time a student arrives on campus through dismissal. Students have two options for how to store it during the school day:

- Keep the device (powered off) in their locker for the entire school day.
- Upon arrival, power off the device and check it into the locked phone storage locker in the main office for the day.

If a student or family is not comfortable with either of these options, the student must leave the device at home. Our middle schools encourage students to use locks to secure their personal belongings in their lockers; schools try to keep locks on hand for students unable to bring their own. PLEASE NOTE: Schools are not responsible for lost or stolen items, including cell phones and other electronic devices.

For more information, including consequences for using cell phones or other “smart” devices during the school day, please see Burlington School District’s [Middle School Cell Phone Procedure](#).

MIDDLE SCHOOL STRUCTURE

Our staff works continually to refine and improve our middle school philosophy and structure. We are organized into teaching teams. Sixth-grade students are members of a solely sixth-grade team that offers students a transition year from an elementary setting.

Seventh and eighth graders are on multi-aged teams. Seventh graders are assigned to one of three teams and remain with that team for two years. One of the goals of this design is to offer continuity for students, parents, and teachers. Teachers from the four core subject areas work together to design curriculum and activities which are often interrelated.

Our core curriculum includes Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science. Every student participates in these classes every day.

Students also participate in a variety of Exploratory classes. Each student will have the opportunity to take Physical Education, Health, World Language, Music, Design & Technology, and Art. Any student may elect to take Band, Chorus, and/or Strings. Eighth-graders may elect to take Algebra in addition to eighth-grade Math.

Daily Schedule

To provide our students with the widest range of course offerings, middle schools offer a block schedule with classes rotating daily in an “AB” pattern. At EMS “A” and “B” days are referred to as “Blue” and “White” days and at HMS they are referred to as “Red” and “White” days, corresponding with each campus’ school colors.

- Red-week or Blue-week means that Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are ‘Red’ or ‘Blue’ days; Tuesday and Thursday are ‘White’ days.
- White-week means that Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are ‘White’ days; Tuesday and Thursday are ‘Red’ or ‘Blue’ days.

SCHOOL DAY

The Main Office opens at 7:30 am and closes at 3:30 pm each day.

Arrival and Breakfast

Students are expected to arrive by 7:55 am.

At EMS: Breakfast is served at a grab-n-go kiosk located in the front lobby. Students may enter the building at 7:55AM, pick up their breakfast, and take it with them to their first class of the day. The first class of the day at EMS begins at 8AM.

At HMS: Breakfast is served in the cafeteria from 7:45-7:55AM. Students who are not eating in the cafeteria will enter the building at first bell through their designated doors. The first class of the day begins at 8AM.

At both middle schools, staff will be on duty beginning at 7:40 am every day and students will wait outside until the first bell, except when there is inclement weather (e.g. heavy rain, thunderstorms, very cold temperatures or wind chill, and/or Air Quality Index +151).

Dismissal

School is dismissed at 3PM Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Wednesdays, school ends at 2PM to allow staff to engage in professional learning communities. Students who are not participating in afterschool activities must be picked up promptly or have a plan for getting home (e.g. walk, bike, bus) as we do not have the ability to supervise students once the school day ends.

Afterschool Programming

School sports and afterschool programming/clubs begin immediately after school and end times may vary. Please refer to the section called "Afterschool Activities."

TRANSPORTATION AND BUSSING

Beginning this school year, all students will be allowed to ride GMT buses free of charge and will not need to show a school ID to board the bus.

With the exception of special education, BSD does not provide school transportation for middle or high school students. Instead, busing is done via public transportation with GMT. GMT schedules "Neighborhood Specials;" dedicated routes before and after school which pick up students at various points around the city and drop them off at the schools. Information on Neighborhood Specials routes and schedules can be found online at <https://ridegmt.com/gmt-schedules>. Other bus route information is available on the [GMT website](#) or by calling (802) 864-2282.

Note: Though bussing is provided by GMT, the bus to and from school is still considered an extension of the school day. GMT's Passenger Code of Conduct is expected to be followed by all passengers on GMT buses, and students who ride the bus must follow reasonable requests from the driver and act in a manner that is safe, respectful, and responsible. Students who do not meet these expectations while waiting to board the bus, riding the bus, or exiting the bus may have their bus privileges suspended. GMT buses are equipped with video surveillance cameras; schools and the Burlington Police Department have access to videotapes as needed. GMT's complete Code of Conduct can be found at <http://ridegmt.com/passenger-code-of-conduct>.

Alternative Modes of Transportation

Alternative and active modes of transportation to and from school are encouraged. Bicycles, skateboards, in-line skates, and scooters must be secured during the school day. Bike racks are provided and we recommend students lock their bicycles, as the school is not responsible for stolen property. In-line skates, scooters, and skateboards must be stored in a locker or other secured area, and may not be ridden in the building at any time.

School Drop Off & Pick Up

EMS: Parking on the Edmunds campus is limited. Please do not park in reserved spaces or fire lanes. Buses drop off on South Union Street in front of the gym and main entrance. For everyone's safety please do not double park in these designated areas. Families are encouraged to drop students off on South Union Street or on Main Street. *Please do not use the back driveway at EMS to drop off students.*

HMS: Students may be dropped off and picked up in front of the school. Cars must stay in designated lanes and stay mindful of students and staff moving through our parking lot. Cars may enter on Gosse Ct. and exit through the parking lot onto North Ave.

SCHOOL MEALS & FOOD FROM HOME

Adolescents experience rapid growth and need nutritious food to support their learning and development. To ensure all students are ready to learn, breakfast and lunch are available to every student each school day. Students who participate in afterschool programs will also receive supper. Here is a link to the [USDA Nondiscrimination Statement](#).

All meals are provided at no cost and include milk, with lunch featuring a fresh fruit and vegetable bar. [The Burlington School Food Project](#)—our school nutrition team—can accommodate most dietary needs, including alternatives to meat and dairy.

Students are welcome to bring food from home if they prefer. However, sugary beverages such as soda and energy drinks may not be consumed or carried during the school day. These drinks can be stored in a student's locker or the main office until the end of the day.

STUDENT PLACEMENT PROCEDURE

Team/Class Placement

Students spend one year with a Grade 6 team and two years with a Grades 7/8 team. A student placement committee makes the decisions regarding individual placement of all students; this team consists of the principal, assistant principal, school counselor, EL teachers, and special educators, and solicits information from classroom teachers. Our goal is to create balanced, equitable teams based on academic levels, individual needs, and other pertinent factors.

Request for Placement Change Procedure

Given the complex processes involved in team assignment, changes in student placement will be rare. Changes in team placement will only be considered in extreme cases where specific issues have been identified and only after efforts have been made to resolve those issues. For a placement change to be considered:

1. A student must be with a teacher or in a team assignment for at least four weeks.
2. Requests must be submitted in writing to the principal.
3. Adequate effort must have been made by the student, teacher, administration, and family to resolve the identified problem(s).

After receiving this request, in all cases, the school will consider all information presented and make its decision known to the applicant in writing within one week.

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS, CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT & HOMEWORK

Learning Expectations

BSD has clear expectations for high school graduation, as required by Vermont's Education Quality Standards ([EQS](#)). These learning expectations, called "transferable skills" in the EQS, begin in our elementary grades and extend through high school. Burlington's learning expectations include the following:

- 1. Critical thinking and problem-solving**
Goal: *I ask challenging questions, examine authentic problems, and analyze possible solutions.*
- 2. Effective communication**
Goal: *I use a variety of methods to express, receive, and respond to information and ideas.*

3. Cultural understanding and civic engagement

Goal: *I actively seek to learn about and understand peoples, cultures, and perspectives, and engage in the life of the community and the greater world.*

4. Personal development

Goal: *I identify strengths and weaknesses, advocate for health and well-being, make positive choices, and take intentional steps to grow.*

5. Curiosity and creativity

Goal: *I explore ideas with an open mind and try new and different ways to approach my own learning.*

Assessment

Assessment occurs on an ongoing basis in each classroom. These include teacher observations, quizzes, projects, student conferences, tests, and experiments that are part of instruction and provide teachers with rich information about what students know and understand. Ongoing classroom assessment also helps teachers adapt to individual learning needs and plan for future instruction, as well as make decisions about student skill development. In addition, there are national, state, and local assessments, which are administered to students in our School District, including:

- School or District Assessment (e.g. IXL diagnostic for Math & Literacy, BSD Mathematics Screener)
- State Assessment-Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP)
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Homework

The purpose of homework in our middle schools is to review, reinforce, and/or apply learning that has happened during the school day. We recognize the importance of independent practice as well as the varying ability of families to support students in doing homework. Therefore, our goal is that homework can be completed independently, completed in a specified amount of time, supported in after-school opportunities, and limited in its impact on course grades. Please review the full middle school [Homework Guidelines](#) for more details. See below under Expanded Learning Opportunities for homework help.

AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Our middle schools offer many extracurricular activities after school, all at no charge to families.

Expanded Learning Opportunities

Our mission is to foster the social and academic success of Burlington youth through quality programming in an environment that creates lasting connections with peers, adults, and the community.

- **Afterschool Clubs and Activities:** Offered free of charge to middle schoolers to extend fun and learning across an extensive range of interests such as D&D, Art Club, Lego Robotics, and You Be You. These programs include a daily snack and run from dismissal to 5:00 p.m. For more information regarding these opportunities visit the after-school clubs and activities webpage through your school's website.
- **Homework Help:** Homework help is available every school day to support students' academic development. Participating in homework help is an excellent opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of subject area material as well as prepare for the more rigorous homework demands at the high school level. This drop-in space is used to work on current assignments and catch up on classwork with afterschool staff.

- **Summer Programming:** A collaboration between Burlington and Winooski School Districts, the Middle School Summer Program is offered free-of-charge to all incoming 6th-9th graders in BSD and WSD. Breakfast and lunch are provided and school bus transportation to and from the program is available. 75+ enrichment and academic activities programming are offered.

Middle School Sports

Athletic teams offer a powerful opportunity for our students to learn/improve skills, work as a team, and develop their leadership and sportsmanship “muscles.” At both middle schools we offer:

- **Fall** *Cross Country, Field Hockey, Soccer*
- **Winter** *Basketball, Volleyball, Unified Basketball*
- **Spring** *Baseball, Softball, Tennis, Track & Field*

All interscholastic sports (school teams competing against other school teams) require a significant time commitment. Practices or games are generally held daily during the season, and attendance at practice is required to play in games. However, accommodations may be made if a student has a regular commitment after school that conflicts with practice or games. Coaches must be notified in advance of such conflicts.

In addition, student-athletes are expected to be as engaged in the school community and their own learning as they are on the field. Students are required to submit a weekly form, with teacher signatures, confirming that they have fulfilled the expectations of student-athletes. Please see the [BSD Athletic Handbook](#) for more information regarding player expectations. You can also find up-to-date information about athletic teams, sign-ups, and schedules at burlingtonathletics.com.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips deepen student learning and engagement. Each teaching team is responsible for organizing field trips as a part of their team’s curriculum; the administrative team, along with a committee of teachers and students, may organize school-wide or grade-level trips.

Field trips are a privilege, and when students and staff go out into our community, they represent our School and District. To participate in school field trips, students must consistently demonstrate that they can follow our community agreements: Be Safe, Be Responsible, and Be Respectful. Students who are unwilling to demonstrate these agreements or who do not return a signed permission slip will receive an alternative plan at school and be supervised by school personnel. Permission slips must be returned by the date indicated so that teachers and staff can plan appropriately. Final decisions will be made by the administrative team.

DANCES

Dances will be held at each school throughout the year and provide an important opportunity for students to connect outside of the school day in a fun and supervised social environment. ***Dances, and attendance of dances, are for enrolled students of the host school only.***

Admission to school dances is free, though snacks may be offered as a fundraiser for student clubs or the PTO. Students must present their student ID for admission. All students are welcome unless:

- They were absent from school on the day of the dance [except with administrator permission, e.g for the observation of a religious holiday].
- They are suspended on the day of the dance.

- They have not demonstrated a willingness or ability to follow basic school expectations: Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be Respectful.

Expectations for Student Behavior at School Dances

Students will be given one reminder to follow expectations; students will be sent home for refusing to follow expectations.

- Cell phones must be checked upon entrance and may only be used in the location designated for photos and calls home.
- Students must arrive at the dance on time or have permission from the school to arrive late. The school/dance entrance will be locked 15 minutes after the dance begins.
- Once at the dance, students may not leave before the end without permission from a parent or guardian.
- School Dress Expectations must be followed at all times (see Middle Schools Handbook for specific guidelines).
- Dancing must be safe and appropriate for middle school students. Unsafe behavior includes, but is not limited to: inappropriate or non-consensual touching, picking up or carrying others, running, or roughhousing.
- Food and drink are not allowed on the dance floor.
- Outside food or drink is not permitted.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE & TRUANCY

Attendance

On-time and regular attendance is the foundation of a positive school experience. We consider attendance at school to be essential for children as they cannot learn what we have to teach if they are not in class. Please reach out to your school team if you have any questions or concerns about your student's attendance; we are here to help.

Parents/Guardians are legally responsible for their child's regular school attendance. We expect students to arrive at school on time and be in class when it begins. Should an absence be necessary, we ask that you follow our attendance procedure:

- If your student will be absent or tardy, call your school's main office and dial 1.
- Leave a brief message reporting the absence or tardiness; include your student's name, grade, the reason for their absence/tardiness, and a callback number.

Excused Absences

The City of Burlington and the State of Vermont are continuing their efforts to ensure students attend school for a full school day. Students are required by state law to attend school unless they have an excused absence. An absence is considered excused only when it is the result of:

- Personal illness
- Appointments with health professionals that cannot be made outside of the regular school day
- Religious holidays whose observance is required during a regular school day
- Emergency family situations such as a death in the family
- Planned absences for personal or educational purposes that have been approved

Planned Absences (3-9 days)

Families must submit a [Planned Absence Request Form](#) and communicate with teachers regarding missed assignments.

Planned Absences (10+ Days)

If a planned absence will extend beyond nine consecutive days, a [10+ Days Planned Absence Request Form](#) must be filled out by the family and signed by the student's teachers and school principal.

Unexcused Absences

Absences that are not medical or emergency in nature will be marked as Absence Unexcused. This includes but is not limited to, absences that occur when a family is in town for a visit, attending family events, attendance at a regularly scheduled Alternate Education Program, such as Crow's Path, Teresa Davis Studios, or similar program, vacations during school time, or any other unexplained absence.

Tardiness Procedure

Students who are absent from school or arrive after 11:00 am may not participate in any school-sponsored after-school activities or athletics on that day unless the tardiness is excused due to the reasons listed above under "Excused Absences," or if it is due to attendance at a regularly scheduled Alternate Education Program, such as Crow's Path, Teresa Davis Studios, or similar program and the family has called the school to communicate this.

Phone calls may be made to parents at 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25 incidences of tardiness. A principal may request a meeting to address a student's tardiness.

Late Arrival & Early Dismissal

Students who arrive after the start of school must check in at the guidance office for a pass. If your child is going to be late, please call the school to let us know what time to expect them.

Students who have parental permission to leave during the school day must be dismissed by the administrative assistant in the office and released to an approved adult.

Truancy

When students experience repeated or persistent absences, we work to understand why they have been absent, how their learning has been impacted, and how we can work with the student and family to improve engagement and attendance.

A truancy notification letter will be sent to any student who has five or more absences for any reason, excused or unexcused.

The school will contact the family to make a plan to improve attendance after 10 cumulative absences.

After 15 cumulative absences during any school year, a school official may request that the parent/guardian(s) attend a school conference with representatives from the school and other appropriate community or independent resources.

After 20 or more cumulative absences during any school year, the school, at its discretion, may file an affidavit concerning the absences with the Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office. The parent/guardian(s) will be notified that the filing was made and will be notified of the possibility of a petition to determine if the student is a child in need of care and supervision. Here is a [truancy checklist](#) used in Chittenden County to guide appropriate steps.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

There are numerous opportunities for parent and caretaker involvement in our Middle Schools. We welcome and encourage parents to stay involved in their child's education throughout the middle school years. Parents are encouraged to volunteer with team and school activities. Please reach out to the school assistant principals to learn more.

Consistent communication between home and school has been shown to be extremely effective in a school's ability to educate its students. This can take the form of written notes, emails, telephone calls, and/or family/teacher conferences at school. Appointments for conferences can be made through the Office of School Counseling.

Family Conferences

School conferences are officially held in [November and March](#). Families and teachers are encouraged to hold conferences outside of this scheduled time when needed.

Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

While each Middle School PTO operates independently of the schools, they offer families a powerful point of connection to the school and a way to support deeper student learning and engagement. The PTO often raises money and provides person-power for field trips, school dances, and community events (see "VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS" below). Please visit your school website for more information on the *About Our School* page.

Family Advisory Groups

Every school in BSD has a Family Advisory Group. Family Advisory Groups connect families to our school communities in meaningful ways and have a real impact on how we do school. The purposes of these groups include:

- Discussing family perspectives on topics impacting their child's school
- Identifying common needs and goals among families
- Providing school administration and staff with feedback and insight on school processes, policies, and initiatives to ensure that the needs of families are included as decisions are made
- Serving as an advisory body that makes recommendations, encourages brainstorming, and provides opportunities for family involvement on committees and task forces

VISITORS and VOLUNTEERS

We welcome visitors and volunteers in our schools! Because we need to maintain a safe school environment that can be responsive in an emergent situation, all visitors and volunteers are required to sign in at the main office upon arrival at school and wear a nametag while on school property. Families or community members who would like to meet with a teacher or other school employee must request to visit in advance and make an appointment.

All volunteers must comply with [BSD's Volunteer and Work Study Students](#) procedure. Depending on the level of involvement, volunteers may need to complete background checks prior to volunteering with students and staff in our school; please [see the procedures](#) for more information. If you are interested in volunteering in our schools, please speak with your student's teacher, our administrative assistant, or the administrative team.

STUDENT RECORDS

Questions regarding school records should be directed to the Office of School Counselors. A copy of the [BSD Family Education Rights and Privacy Act policy](#) can be viewed in the main office.

Child Custody

Custodial and non-custodial parents have the same rights of access to their child's records unless specifically prohibited by court order. If non-custodial parents are not receiving school information, please contact the School Counseling Office.

Student Name and/or Gender Change

If a guardian or student would like to make a name change for a student, there are two kinds of student name changes: Legal Name Change and Non-Legal Name Change.

- (1) *Legal Name Change:* The family provides legal documentation of a name change. BSD will change the student's name in PowerSchool and all other databases in our system. The District will notify the Agency of Education of this change.
- (2) *Non-Legal Name Change:* The student uses a name that is not their legal name. We store the student's legal name in a special part of PowerSchool to use for state reporting, Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP), SAT/ACT, etc., but we make every effort to use the student's desired name in all circumstances we can control (this includes Unified Classroom, IXL, SRI, BSD Gmail, printed class rosters, sub plans, etc.).

BSD is committed to honoring each student for who they are as individuals and supporting a gender-affirming environment for all. To that end, we follow best practices for supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming students. The [Vermont Agency of Education has provided Best Practices](#) and detailed information on state policy, state law, and school guidance.

There are two kinds of student gender changes: Legal Gender Change and Non-Legal Gender Change.

- (1) *Legal Gender Change:* The family has provided legal documentation of a gender change. BSD will change the gender in PowerSchool and other databases, etc. in our system. We will notify the State of Vermont of this change.
- (2) *Non-Legal Gender Change:* The student uses a gender that is not their legal gender. We store the student's legal gender in a special part of PowerSchool to use for state reporting, Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP), SAT/ACT, etc., but will make every effort to use the student's desired gender in all circumstances within our control.

For additional support, contact your school's Counseling Office and/or explore the following resources:

- [Outright VT](#)
- [GenderSpectrum.org](#)
- [PFlag.org](#)

HEALTH SERVICES & MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Each school has a health office with services provided by a Registered Nurse, certified as a VT School Nurse.

In case of illness, please keep any symptomatic child home from school and call your pediatrician. **Children should be free of fever, diarrhea, and vomiting for 24 hours before returning to school.** If a child has strep throat, they must take antibiotics for 24 hours prior to returning to school.

Nursing staff will not diagnose or treat illnesses, beyond the immediate and emergent needs of students. In the event of a medical emergency, every effort will be made to contact a parent/guardian but the school will utilize local rescue services if such action is deemed necessary or appropriate.

Medications

School nurses are responsible for ALL medications that are given to students during the school day, both prescription and non-prescription. In order for any medication to be given, the student's physician and the parents/guardians must fill out and sign the [BSD Request Form for Administering Medications in School](#). All medication must be in the original labeled container and brought to school by an adult. All medication is kept locked in the school office. Please refer to the [BSD Student Medication Administration Procedures](#) if the administration of any medication by school personnel during school hours is necessary.

Though school nurses must have a doctor's order to give any medications at school, parents/guardians may come to school and administer the medication themselves.

Immunizations

Vermont State Law requires schools to get proof of your child's immunization status. If it is not provided, your child may not attend school. No person may enroll as a student in a BSD school without an age-appropriate or up-to-date record/certificate of immunization, or documentation proving religious or medical exemption. To comply with State Law:

- Submit proof of required immunizations to your student's school nurse.
- If your student is missing any required immunizations, make an appointment to have your student immunized with their healthcare provider and contact the school nurse to verify.
- Submit appropriate documentation regarding the student's exemption.

If you have any questions about your student's immunization status, please contact your school nurse.

Hearing and Vision Screenings

Schools are required to screen the hearing and vision of students in 7th grade. Parents are permitted to opt their children out of such screenings by giving notice to their school's principal.

Medical Limitations

If a student is unable to participate in Physical Education class due to illness, injury, or other physical limitations they must have a note from home or the school nurse. If a student will miss PE for more than three days, a doctor's note is needed. The doctor's notes should go to the nurse, who will alert the classroom teacher(s).

Asbestos

Per the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (40 CFR 763.93 (g) (4)) we are required to inform families that there is a "management plan for the safe control and maintenance of asbestos-containing materials" for the school building complex that is available to the public and located in the school office.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

BSD has updated its safety protocols based on a new model in coordination with city partners. We regularly practice safety drills. For more information, visit our [website](#) or read the [School Emergency Information Guide for Parents and Guardians](#), a joint publication from the AOE and the Department of Public Safety.

In addition, BSD has adopted an options-based response to a violent intruder scenario. We recognize that violent intruder drills evoke a range of emotions in both young people and adults. Families will be notified prior to the first violent intruder drill, along with being provided resources for conversations with your child.

Common Questions Answered

When and why are students and staff required to Hold, Lockout, Lockdown, Evacuate, or Shelter?

A school crisis can take a number of forms including an environmental event (e.g. chemical spill or gas leak), weather emergency (e.g. tornado warning), or an intruder in or near the school. The nature of the crisis dictates how school officials will respond to ensure the safety of our school community. Each school has a Safety Team that is trained and meets regularly throughout the year. It is the responsibility of each student and staff member to follow safety instructions in an emergency situation.

What are the responsibilities of parents/guardians during a school emergency?

Families should stay close to their phones and monitor local radio and TV reports for regular updates and instructions. To help school staff facilitate the emergency response, please DO NOT call the school repeatedly or try to pick your student up while the emergency is ongoing. While we understand the instinct, it complicates matters from a safety and security standpoint and can hinder the rescue attempts of emergency officials on the scene.

How will parents/guardians reunite with their students once the situation is safe?

Students will be reunited with their families as soon as we are able to do so safely and securely. Families will be alerted when it is safe to pick up their children and school staff will orchestrate the pick-up. In the event of an emergency relocation, the name of the relocation site and pick-up instructions will be broadcast to parents through text message alert.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Lost and Found

Items left behind on school property are put in the lost and found and held for a reasonable amount of time. Any items that are not claimed are donated at the school's discretion. Families are asked to label all articles of clothing to help with the prompt return of lost items.

Animals

Prior approval from the administration must be obtained in order for any animals to be brought on campus. This does not prohibit guide or therapy animals.

For the safety of all members of our community, if you walk your dog to drop-off or dismissal, please do not bring the dog onto school property or tie your dog up on or near the sidewalk.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION CONTACTS

School	Building Leaders	Email	Phone Number	Administrative Assistant
EMS	Principal John Oliver	joliver@bsdvt.org	802-864-8486 ext. 41002	Mia Marinovich
EMS	Assistant Principal Antony Dennis	adennis@bsdvt.org	802-864-8486 ext. 41009	Mia Marinovich
HMS	Principal Melanee Alexander	malexand@bsdvt.org	802-864-8469 ext. 61012	Shannon McDuff
HMS	Assistant Principal Megan Munson-Warnken, EdD	mmunsonw@bsdvt.org	802-864-8469 ext. 61011	Shannon McDuff