

A User's Guide to Farragut Middle School for Soon-to-be 5th Grade Parents (Created by the Hastings PTSA)

Welcome to FMS!

The transition from Hillside to FMS feels like a big one, especially for parents. Because classroom teachers are attempting to train their students to be more accountable for their work, they typically communicate less with parents than Hillside teachers do. There are also fewer opportunities for parents to come to their children's classrooms. All of this combined can make the transition hard on new FMS parents! If you are new to the district, welcome!

This document is an attempt to clarify a few key points about how FMS operates to help ease the transition. And remember: FMS provides all students with a school counselor who can also be a great resource for parents. And our principal, Gail Kipper, and assistant principal, Chris Keogh, are very accessible and happy to talk with parents about concerns.

The Parent / Guardian tab on the FMS website also has some very useful information (calendars, activities, forms, etc). Please be sure to check it out!

Learning about which teacher your child will have:

Letters are mailed at the end of August. Class lists that show all the students in your child's class are not provided.

School hours:

The library and cafeteria open at 7:30 for those students who need to come early. Students may go to their lockers at 8:05; classes begin at 8:15. Classes end at 2:45, and the activity period (see below) ends at 3:15.

Supplies:

Supply lists are found on the FMS website under "5th grade team." They are typically on the website toward the end of August. Children do not need to have supplies on the first day of school!

Each year, every child receives an FMS agenda notebook where they will record their homework assignments. At the front of the agenda notebook, you can find all sorts of useful information, including staff phone numbers, the FMS code of conduct, general information and procedures, an explanation of student services, and expectations of student behavior. Many parents don't realize just how useful these agenda notebooks can be!

Bookbags and backpacks should be left in lockers during the day.

School ID:

You need to use your child's school ID to access the Parent Portal (see below), and your child needs to use it when they buy lunch (see below). Your child's school ID can be found on their Hillside report card or their schedule.

Accessing technology:Parent Portal

From your computer or mobile device, you can find information about your child's schedule and attendance, and you can view report cards and grades and comments on formal assessments (tests, quizzes, graded homework for some subjects and projects). Keep in mind that not every learning activity is assessed formally on a daily basis. And, numeric grades don't always tell the entire story of a child's learning. Teachers may reach out to parents via email to share notable academic successes and struggles. Similarly, parents can communicate the same to teachers via email. As teachers spend most of their day interacting with students, please keep email communication brief and to the point (be sure to use your child's first and last name in the subject line in all communication), and understand that teachers may not be able to answer until the end of their teaching day.

At the left side of both the district home page and the FMS home page, under Quick Links, you'll find a link to the eSchoolData Parent Portal. You must register first using your child's School ID (see above). This registration must be verified by the district, which often takes a few days. There's a link for Online Registration on the portal's logon page. If you need help, a link to instructions is just below the Parent Portal link on the home page. If you need further help, please contact Michele Porter, the Registrar, at 478-6260 or at Porter@hohschools.org. If you have already registered during your time at Hillside, there is no need to re-register; your logon information still works.

FMS sends an e-blast encouraging parents to logon to the Parent Portal midway through each quarter in order to view student progress. Paper report cards are no longer provided. Ten days to two weeks after the quarter ends, FMS sends an e-blast announcing when report cards are posted on the Parent Portal. Because the parent portal does not store past year's report cards, FMS recommends that parents print out final report cards at the end of each year.

Teachers generally import grades into the portal when work has been returned. A zero indicates that that the assignment was not submitted at the point when the teacher has entered the grades. An ! is a placeholder that means that a grade has not been entered yet. The teacher may be in the process of updating the portal or that work may have been submitted and the teacher may be in the process of grading. Three asterisks (*) also indicates a missing assignment. Some teachers input "INC" to mean that the assignment has been submitted but it is missing components and needs to be revised and resubmitted. An "INC" as a quarter grade sometimes means that a student had an extended illness and is still making up work at the end of the quarter when the portal was closed.

Teacher Web Pages (aka "Schoolwires")

This is the platform that includes teacher web pages, homework assignments, and class resources. You can click on the calendar to access assignments, or you can click on links for current or past due assignments. Note, some teachers utilize Google Classroom as an additional tool to manage student assignments. A link to the Google Classroom may be on the teacher page. Parents can access Google Classroom by having their child log in with the given Google credentials.

Communications:

Paper flyers are rarely used in middle school. Most communication for school events comes through eblasts, so be sure you are signed up to receive them (by contacting Jeanine Genauer at Genauerj@hohschools.org). It is also helpful to check your child's teacher's webpage on a regular basis. And many times, we must rely on our children to tell us things. Gail Kipper also has a monthly newsletter, which can be found on the FMS home page under "Quick Links" (it also comes out as an eblast).

A class directory with phone numbers and emails is provided at Back to School Night and is also available in the main office.

Drop-off and pick-up protocol:

The area around the middle school and high school is, unfortunately, highly trafficked. If possible, please have your child walk to school. The District and the PTSA have just engaged a traffic engineer to look at the flow around FMS/HHS and make recommendations for safe dropoff and pickup zones. Hopefully these changes will be put in place before school starts in September.

In the meantime, if you have to drive or pick up your child, please enter the driveway in front of the school from westbound Mt. Hope Blvd (do not attempt to make a left from Farragut Parkway and circle into the driveway). If your child is not promptly exiting the school, please do not wait in the driveway and block traffic. Instead, go around the block and re-enter the driveway. Please also remind your kids to be aware of cars as they cross the crosswalks near the school; far too often, kids are on their phones and are not paying attention as they cross busy streets.

Late starts and early dismissals:

Late starts, where school starts at 9:35, happen periodically (please check the PTSA calendar). During late starts, each class period, including lunch, is shortened. It is often useful for kids to bring lunches from home on late start days. On late start days, classes end at 2:55 PM.

Early releases also take place periodically. School ends at 11:45 and does not include lunch.

Lockers:

All 5th graders are assigned a locker. They are old, and often the locks do not work well. Students receive their locker combinations on the first day of school. Teachers are very understanding about lockers and how hard they can be to open. Please have your child

visit their school counselor if they continue to have locker issues. You may want to have your child practice on a combination lock at home before the school year starts, just so they understand how these locks work. Locker decorating for birthdays begins in the 6th grade.

Shoes and clothing for PE classes:

Students are not required to change for PE class. They should wear comfortable clothing and sneakers on days when they have PE.

When your child forgets something:

To minimize disruptions during class time, students will not be “buzzed down” to the office for items that are dropped off for them during the school day. Instead, notifications with the student’s name are posted on the Drop Off Board, which is in front of the main office. Students are reminded by teachers throughout the day to check the board for notifications. Classes will be interrupted only in emergencies.

Class parties:

Typically, students and teachers work together to organize holiday parties, without parent involvement (5th grade classes typically do not have class parents). Parents also typically do not attend holiday parties.

Parents are often invited to visit 5th grade classrooms when there is something to showcase, such as a class play or poetry reading.

Kids can bring in treats for birthdays; parents can either send them in or drop them off. Rarely do parents come into the classroom to celebrate; the reality is that most 5th graders do not want their parents to come in!

Cell phone use:

All students in all grades must keep their cell phones in their lockers all day, including during lunch and recess. If students must call home, they may use an office phone; if parents must reach their children, they should call the main office. Cell phones that are misused will be confiscated and returned at the end of the school day.

Students are not allowed to bring cell phones on field trips. Teachers will be in contact with the school throughout the trip and can relay an urgent message to a student, if necessary.

And remember: even though your kids swear that they are the only ones without a cell phone or an Instagram, it’s really not true. Plenty of FMS students survive without smart phones or social media! Consider whether your child is developmentally ready to face the challenges brought on by technology and social media, and remember that most social media sites actually require children to be at least 13 years old!

Snack/Lunch/Recess:

Like at Hillside, students are allowed to bring and eat a snack, typically between 9:30 and 9:45.

If your middle school child buys lunch, you can pay for it through an online account that you replenish as needed. Go to www.mypaymentsplus.com to register. You'll need your child's school ID number to do so. (And your child will need to enter that ID number in the cafeteria, so be sure he/she knows it). Or, you can save yourself the service fee by sending a check to the school with your child made out to "Lunch Fund" with your child's ID number in the memo portion of the check. Your child will need to hand it off to the cashier when he or she purchases lunch.

Kids who bring their own lunch should keep it in their locker until lunchtime.

There are 20 minutes allotted for lunch and 20 minutes allotted for recess. There simply is not enough time for students to cross Hillside Avenue to play at Reynolds Field.

Each day, FMS staff distributes recess passes for those who would rather be in the library, computer lab, and/or game room. Playing computer games is not allowed during recess or after school.

Activity period:

The activity period is the time after the last period from 2:45 - 3:15. Students can stay with their classroom teacher to get additional help or to work on homework. Please make all appointments after 3:15.

After school activities:

There are several clubs that kids can join after school. Flyers about these clubs are posted throughout the school, and a list of clubs is provided at Back to School Night. Clubs run from 3:15 - 4:30 typically. The Maker Space is open on Tuesdays after school. You can also go to the Parent/Guardian tab on the FMS website to see a list of extracurricular activities.

Music program:

Orchestra, Band, and Chorus are offered at Farragut Middle School. All students are welcome to join as beginners. Please contact the teacher directly.

We are one of the few districts that offer instrument instruction in school. Even if a student takes private lessons, attendance in the group lessons is important for the ensemble experience. See below for when lessons are scheduled. Lunchtime lessons are also used for "make up" lessons.

Band (Mike Rubino; rubinom@hohschools.org) meets on Friday mornings 7:45-8:15. Group lessons take place on "E" days and rotate through 4 forty minute periods so that students aren't missing the same subjects every time.

Orchestra (John Carini; carinij@hohschools.org) meets on Thursday mornings 7:45-8:15. Group lessons take place on "D" days and rotate through 4 forty minute periods so that students aren't missing the same subjects every time.

Chorus (Jon Riss; rissj@hohschools.org) rehearses Tuesday mornings, 7:25-8:05.

All ensembles perform in the Grades 5/6 Winter and Spring Concerts.

5th grade musical:

Typically, the 5th grade musical takes place in January or February, and auditions typically take place in the late fall. (Dates for all of the musicals are set in the summer, so there could be changes to this schedule). Directors of the 5th grade musical typically attempt to accommodate students' schedules (this is harder to do when Modified Sports start in 7th grade!). The final week (or two) is 'tech week,' and directors ask that students clear their schedules then.

Intramural sports:

Drew Wendol, one of the PE teachers at FMS, runs an Intramural program for all middle school students (5th-8th) throughout the year. They run sessions during the morning (starting at 7:00) in the fall, winter, and spring and offer a variety of sports and games throughout the year, such as basketball, soccer, matball, dodgeball, and volleyball. Mr. Wendol posts all of the information throughout the school, he makes announcements in PE classes, and he posts information on his school webpage. The students can come to whichever sport they like and just show up whenever they want. Parents can email him at wendola@hohschools.org to find out more information.

Mr. Wendol also posts information about a variety of community athletic offerings (camps, clinics, teams) by the Middle School PE locker rooms.

Modified sports start in the 7th grade. Modified sports are at the level below Junior Varsity. Several sports are offered each season. Students choose a sport and then are expected to attend practice 5 days a week, typically from 3:15 - 5:30 or so, as well as any games. The PE department typically holds parent and student meetings prior to each season to discuss expectations.

PTSA and SEPTA meetings:

The PTSA holds parent meetings every six weeks. Please reach out to your FMS liaisons with any issues or concerns that could be part of the agenda for these meetings (you can find out who your liaisons are by going to the district home page, clicking on the "Community" tab, and then clicking on the PTSA link). The FMS VPs meet with Gail Kipper prior to the meeting to set the agenda. Agendas are blasted to the community a few days before each meeting.

SEPTA holds coffees periodically. To learn more about SEPTA, please go to the district home page, click on the "Community" tab, and then click on the SEPTA link.