

August 25, 2009

Dear Middle School Parents,

It is hard to believe that it is already August 25 and summer is winding down. I trust you have had a restful and enjoyable summer and that everyone is ready (or almost ready) to return to school.

If you stop by my office you might notice a framed 8x10 picture of an awkward middle school student. The haircut is sketchy at best (and pushing the dress code limits), there are the tell tale signs of acne, and the look on the child's face is a mixture of trying to look cool and tough. Actually the student is scared and nervous, but also a little excited. I found this old 7<sup>th</sup> grade school picture of mine when I visited my folks this summer and decided to bring it back as a reminder of how difficult and yet vital those years were. (A few disclaimers about the photo before you see it – cloth, v neck, velvet type shirts were big in upstate New York in the early 1980's and I quickly realized that the beaded necklace wasn't a good fit). The photo reminds me of my struggles to fit in, of the new found talents and abilities that began to emerge, and of all the great teachers and mentors who helped me through middle school relatively unscathed. This picture also reminds me of how much I enjoy working with this age group and of what a privilege it is to help young people begin to discover who they are and what they do well. As a faculty we are going to share our old middle school photos during orientation to help all of us reconnect with our own childhoods so we in turn can better connect with our students.

During this week and next, each student should receive a letter of introduction from his/her homeroom teacher (grades 5 & 6) or advisor (grades 7 & 8). The homeroom teachers and advisors will work closely with parents to ensure open lines of communication throughout the year and will be available to answer any questions parents may have.

Middle School Orientation will be Thursday, September 3 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Middle School. Not only will students meet with homeroom teachers and advisors, but they will also enjoy an important, informative session in the Arundel Gym. There will be time to set-up lockers/cubbies, meet teachers, receive schedules, and have all questions answered. Pizza and drinks will be provided.

Our first day of school is Tuesday, September 8. Homeroom/advisory will begin promptly at 8:00 a.m. Once again, this year the entire Middle School will travel to Camp Friendship in Palmyra, VA for field studies from Tuesday, September 15 through Wednesday, September 16. During these two days we will spend time in small groups, grade level teams, and, as a Middle School, will work on setting clear goals and expectations for the coming year. We'll be sending home a specific Camp Friendship letter in the near future with all the needed forms and information about the trip.

I want to remind you that summer reading assignments, school supply lists, grade level novel lists for Language Arts, and other important information are available at [www.highlandschool.org](http://www.highlandschool.org).

Enjoy the remainder of your summer break. I look forward to seeing you and your children soon. Please do not hesitate to call, e-mail or stop by to see me at any time.

Sincerely,  
Matt Ormiston  
Middle School Director