

Anchor Bay North

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

January 19th– Martin Luther King Day– No school

February 13th and 16th– Winter Break– No school

March 5th & 6th– Final Exams

March 6th– End of 2nd Trimester

March 30th– April 6th– Spring Break– No School

April 13th–24th– 6th Grade M-Step testing

April 27th– May 8th 5th Grade M-Step testing

April 23rd– Take your child to work day

May 5th– PD Day-No School

May 19th– Band Concert @ABHS 7:00pm

May 20th– Choir Concert @ABHS 7pm

May 21st– Academic Awards Ceremony @ North Gym

5th Grade -9am

6th Grade -2pm

May 25th-Memorial Day-No school

May 28th– 6th grade Ice cream social

May 29th– Reward Trips

5th Grade —Walter and Mary Park

6th Grade —Dave & Busters

June 2nd– Student of the Month Luncheon

June 4th and 5th Final Exams

June 5th– Last day of school

January 13, 2026

Principal's Corner

James Thiede



Welcome Back & Happy New Year, Families!

Welcome back from the holiday break and Happy New Year! We are excited to begin the second half of the school year and are already close to the halfway point. The start of the new year brings renewed energy, focus, and excitement as we work together to finish the second part of the year strong.

We are incredibly proud of how well our students have adapted to so many big changes. As we reflect on this time last year, it's hard not to appreciate just how far we've come. Our school was under construction, some teachers were displaced from their classrooms, we were finalizing plans for an entirely new 5th and 6th grade school concept, preparing to welcome more than 800 students who had never attended our school before, and saying goodbye to half of our teaching staff while welcoming many new faces.

What has happened since then is truly remarkable. Together, our staff, students, and community have risen to the challenge and successfully recreated our school into the strong, positive learning environment it is today. This has been no small feat, and we could not be more proud of everyone involved. Thank you for your continued support, flexibility, and partnership. We look forward to an outstanding second half of the year!

Elective Rotation Reminder

Our 3rd elective rotation ends on Friday, January 23, and the 4th elective rotation begins on Monday, January 26. To help students prepare, they will receive a copy of their new elective schedule during 6th hour on Thursday, January 22, giving them time to familiarize themselves with their upcoming classes.

As a reminder, students (with the exception of band students) participate in a total of 12 electives throughout the school year, with 2 new electives every 6 weeks. Please remind your child that the classes titled *E4* on their schedule are their new electives for this rotation.

NWEA Testing

All students will begin a second round of NWEA testing this month. NWEA testing provides us with important data on our students. This data allows us to identify areas in which our students can improve and guides individualized instruction. I have included information on how to read NWEA reports and a description of the test on page 2.

Student Drop Off

To keep traffic flow moving, please pull up as far as possible to drop off your son/daughter. Please do not stop in front of the main doors, instead continue forward before dropping off. To speed up the process, please have your child gather his or her belongings and be ready for drop off. Thank you for your help!

Middle Years

In some Principal's Corner articles, and in future editions, you will find information about Middle School-aged children. The information comes from a newsletter called "Middle School Parents" produced by "The Parent Institute". I hope you find the information insightful.

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NWEA Information and Reports

NWEA describes its company as follows:

"NWEA is a research-based, not-for-profit organization that supports students and educators worldwide by creating assessment solutions that precisely measure growth and proficiency—and provide insights to help tailor instruction. For 40 years, NWEA has developed Pre-K–12 assessments and professional learning offerings to help advance all students along their optimal learning paths. Our tools are trusted by educators in 145 countries and more than half the schools in the United States."

Our school uses testing data from NWEA to adjust curriculum and offer interventions for our students. We also measure growth from one testing cycle to another. I have listed some information from the NWEA website to help you interpret reports.

What is a RIT Score?

After each MAP Growth test, results are delivered in the form of a RIT score that reflect students' academic knowledge, skills, and abilities. Think of this score like marking height on a growth chart. You can tell how tall your child is at various points in time, and how much they have grown between one stage and another.

The RIT (Rasch Unit) scale is a stable, equal-interval scale. Equal-interval means that a change of 10 RIT points indicates the same thing regardless of whether a student is at the top, bottom, or middle of the scale. A RIT score has the same meaning regardless of grade level or age of the student. You can compare scores over time to tell how much growth a student has made.

How do teachers and schools use MAP Growth Scores?

MAP Growth helps schools and teachers know what your child is ready to learn at any point in time. Teachers can see the progress of individual students and of their class as a whole. Principals and administrators can see the progress of a grade level, school, or the entire district.

Since students with similar MAP Growth scores are generally ready for instruction in similar skills and topics, it makes it easier for teachers to plan instruction. MAP Growth also provides typical growth data for students who are in the same grade, subject, and have the same starting performance level. This data is often used to help students set goals and understand what they need to learn to achieve their goals.

Please click on the link below to view an informational video on the NWEA Test.

<https://www.nwea.org/resource-center/resource/what-is-map-growth/>

Please click on the link below to visit the official NWEA website for more information on NWEA Testing.

<https://www.nwea.org/family-toolkit/>



Anchor Bay NORTH Clubs

We are pleased to offer a variety of after-school clubs this year, giving students the chance to connect with others, build friendships, and explore new interests. From athletics and the arts to strategy games and environmental action, these clubs provide meaningful opportunities for students to learn new hobbies, develop skills, and be part of a supportive community outside the classroom.

Pickleball Club – Mrs. Goerke

Mrs. Goerke is excited to bring the fast-growing sport of pickleball to our students! The Pickleball Club is a great way to get active, learn the basics of the game, and enjoy friendly competition with peers. Whether you're new to the sport or already a fan, this club is the perfect place to play, improve your skills, and have fun.

Art Club – Ms. Beninati and Mr. Martyniuk

For students who love to create, the Art Club with Ms. Beninati and Mr. Martyniuk offers a space to explore different art mediums, work on unique projects, and share ideas with fellow artists. This club encourages creativity, self-expression, and collaboration while building a community of students who enjoy the visual arts.

Spanish Club – Mrs. Ahedo

¡Bienvenidos! Spanish Club, led by Mrs. Ahedo, is the perfect opportunity for students to learn more about Spanish language and culture in a fun and engaging setting. From practicing conversational skills to exploring traditions, music, and food, this club celebrates cultural diversity while building global awareness.

Chess Club – Mr. Mittelstadt and Mrs. Rodgers

The Chess Club, led by Mr. Mittelstadt and Mrs. Rodgers, invites students of all skill levels to sharpen their minds and practice the art of strategy. Members can learn new tactics, challenge one another in matches, and build critical thinking skills—all while enjoying the fun and tradition of the game of chess.

Card Club – Mrs. Hann and Mrs. Rodgers

If you enjoy playing cards and learning new games, the Card Club with Mrs. Hann and Mrs. Rodgers is the place for you! This club is all about having fun while developing logical thinking, teamwork, and friendly competition. Students can play classic favorites and discover new games with their friends.

Student Council - Mrs.Kessel and Mrs.VanHeusden

Student Council, led by Mrs. Kessel and Mrs. VanHeusden, gives students a voice in shaping school spirit and activities. Members learn leadership, teamwork, and responsibility while planning events, supporting community service, and representing their peers. It's an excellent opportunity to build confidence and make a positive difference in our school.

Cooking Club is in Full Swing at Middle School North!

Ms. Beninati and Mrs. Brees are leading our 5th and 6th graders in learning how to cook safely, try new recipes, and work together in the kitchen. The club has received great feedback from students, staff, and parents—it's a fun way for students to connect, be creative, and build confidence! Several sessions will be offered throughout the year. Once the next session is scheduled, details will be shared through announcements, our website, and the Facebook parent page. The cost is **\$20**, and space is limited to the **first 36 students** who turn in their permission slip and payment.

Dungeons and Dragons Club-Mrs. Brandal

We are excited to announce the start of a **Dungeons & Dragons Club**! Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is a collaborative storytelling game where students work together to solve problems, use imagination, and go on adventures guided by a game leader. The club helps build creativity, teamwork, communication skills, and strategic thinking in a fun and inclusive environment.

Get it Girls-Mrs. Brandal

Our school is excited to offer **Get It Girls**, a STEM-focused club designed to inspire and empower girls through hands-on learning and collaboration. Get It Girls encourages students to explore science, technology, engineering, and math through engaging activities that build confidence, problem-solving skills, and teamwork. This club aligns with the strong STEM focus supported across Macomb County and helps girls see themselves as future innovators and leaders.

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Middle School Parents

January 2026
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Anchor Bay Middle School North

still make the difference!



This five-step process helps middle schoolers solve problems

When your middle schooler faces a challenge, it can be tempting to step in and provide the solution. A more effective approach is to equip your child with the skills to solve problems independently. This not only builds confidence but also prepares your middle schooler for future challenges.

Share this five-step method to help your child think problems through:

1. **Define the problem.** The first step is to get a clear picture of what's going on. Encourage your child to state the problem without getting sidetracked by emotions.
2. **Brainstorm solutions.** Once the problem is defined, have your child list possible solutions. Don't let your child get bogged down in analyzing

them yet. Remind your child there are often more than two options.

3. **Evaluate the options.** Now that there are several potential solutions, your child needs to weigh the pros and cons of each. Which solution seems especially strong?
4. **Make a plan of action.** Your child should choose the "best" solution and create a plan to carry it out. Let your child follow the plan independently, but offer support and guidance when necessary.
5. **Reassess the situation.** How is the plan working? Is it helping your child solve the problem or reach the goal? If yes, wonderful! If not, suggest that your child go back to the "evaluating" step and try another solution.

Try strategies that improve overall wellness



Many families are busy and stressed—which can have a negative impact on children's health and grades. While it's nearly impossible to lead a stress-free life these days, you can work to make your home a haven away from the daily grind.

To improve your family's overall wellness:

- **Encourage laughter.** Laughter should be a part of each day. Have everyone share favorite funny shows, movies, jokes and stories on a regular basis.
- **Share stress-relief strategies.** Teach family members to take deep breaths, go for a walk or turn on some relaxing music whenever they are feeling stressed.
- **Share good things.** Every day, have each family member report at least one good thing (no matter how small) that happened that day. Try to do this during a family meal.
- **Have everyone pitch in.** Chores go so much more quickly when everyone works together. Have a family chore time and then reward yourselves by doing something fun as a family.

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Be absolute when speaking to your child about alcohol & drugs



As your child gets older, you may find that some topics—curfew, free time and chores—are open for negotiation. Safety issues, however, should not be up for discussion. These include vaping, alcohol use and drug abuse.

Follow these guidelines:

- **Be explicit**, but give reasons. "Underage drinking, illicit drug use and vaping are all unacceptable. They are harmful to your health. You are never allowed to participate in these behaviors."
- **Do not expect your child** to experiment with drugs or alcohol. Yes, many young people do. But plenty of others do not! It is not a rite of passage. One experiment can harm your child. Say, "I expect you not to take that risk."

- **Restrict contact** with friends who drink or use drugs. If you know a friend of your child's drinks or uses drugs, don't allow your middle schooler to socialize with this person outside of school without supervision. Establish clear consequences for breaking this rule. Always make sure your child understands that the reason for this rule is their health. Experts agree that teens who spend time with others who use drugs or alcohol are more likely to use them themselves.

"By the time they're in 12th grade, 36.8% of teens have tried illicit drugs."

—National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics

Encourage your child to use a journal to plan for the future



It's not realistic to expect middle schoolers to know what they want to do for the rest of their lives. But it is appropriate for them to pay attention to what they like and what they don't, what they are good at and what they struggle with. Noticing and thinking about these things now gives your child a head start on preparing for the future.

One effective way for middle schoolers to get to know themselves better is to keep a journal. They can write about what they think as well as what they do.

Suggest that your child to use the journal to think through answers to questions such as:

- *What are my strengths in school?*
- *What are my weaknesses in school?*
- *What do I love doing outside school?*

- *What am I good at doing outside school?*
- *What do I like to learn about or would I like to learn more about?*
- *What is something new I want to try this year?*
- *What is important to me right now?*
- *What is a goal I am working toward right now?*
- *Do I prefer to work with others or alone?*
- *Am I happier when I am indoors or outdoors?*
- *What have I done in my life that I am most proud of?*

Encourage your child to update the journal regularly. The answers are likely to change—and that's OK. Help your child think more about the things that stay the same. These trends could provide clues to future success.

Are you staying involved in your child's life?



Some middle schoolers seem to close more than their bedroom doors. They also shut families out of important parts of their lives. Here's a quiz that will help you open those doors—and keep communication flowing. See how many questions you can answer:

1. **Can you name the students** who eat lunch with your child? Write one name: _____.
2. **Do you sometimes listen** to your child's music? Name a favorite song or group: _____.
3. **Do you know the names** of your child's teachers? Name a favorite teacher: _____.
4. **Do you know** who your child texts regularly? Name two friends: _____ and _____.
5. **Do you discuss** world events that may be worrying your child? Name one of your child's current concerns: _____.

How well are you doing?

Share your answers with your child and talk about them. Then, see if your child can answer some similar questions about you.

Middle School Parents
still make the difference!

Practical Ideas for Parents
to Help Their Children.

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Take opportunities to reinforce learning outside the classroom



The more you can connect what your middle schooler is learning in school to the world beyond school, the more you nurture a desire to learn.

To support learning at home:

- **Have your child teach you** a thing or two. Find out what your child is studying at school, and ask for an explanation. When students “retell” the things they are learning, they reinforce those things in their own minds.
- **Demonstrate its value.** If your middle schooler just finished tackling fractions in math, head to the kitchen. Show your child the real-life usefulness of fractions. “This recipe calls for half a cup of

milk, but we only have a 1/3-cup measurer. How can we figure out the right amount?”

- **Expose your child to new things.** Every meaningful experience your child has—from grocery shopping to a museum visit—has an impact on learning. On your next outing, challenge your child to connect the experience to something learned in school.
- **Put knowledge into action.** Let your child use skills to help you. For example, the next time you make a wrong turn somewhere, have your child look at a navigation app to get you back on track.
- **Encourage your child to use logic.** Are you working on a puzzle or riddle? Ask your child to help out.

Have a discussion with your middle schooler about bullying



Experts say that middle school is the prime time for bullying. Studies show that nasty behavior can even boost kids’ popularity.

The bullies of today aren’t just your typical schoolyard bullies. They also include the:

- **Verbally abusive bully** who calls people names and spreads rumors.
- **Social bully** who gets others to exclude or reject someone.
- **Cyberbully** who posts cruel or embarrassing comments and photos on social media or in group chats.

Talk to your middle schooler about the importance of taking a stand against all forms of bullying.

If your child is being bullied:

- **Discuss it gently.** Your child may be scared or embarrassed. Make it clear that what is happening is not your child’s fault.

- **Be supportive.** Assure your child that you will help resolve the problem.
- **Ask for help.** A teacher or guidance counselor might have a solution you haven’t thought of.

If your child is the one bullying:

- **Say that you will not tolerate** bullying behavior.
- **Ask what your child** was trying to accomplish. How might your child meet that goal in the future without hurting people?

- **Help your child figure out** how to make amends to the person.

If your child witnesses bullying:

- **Role-play ways to react.** Your child could say, “That’s not OK,” or walk away with the person being targeted.
- **Tell your child to report** it to school staff or you immediately.

Source: *Bullying: Engaging Parents, Students and Staff in Your Anti-Bullying Program Resource Kit*, The Parent Institute.

Q: The first half of the school year didn’t go so well for my seventh grader. Grades were lower than we both would’ve liked. How can I make sure my child does better during the second half?

Questions & Answers

A: Together, talk about how the new calendar year is a starting over point. To help your child make a fresh start, adopt—or recommit to—positive school habits. Here’s how:

- **Set goals.** You can’t expect your middle schooler to turn the school year around overnight. But you can help your student set reasonable, attainable goals. For instance, if your child earned all C’s last grading period, the goal might be to bring at least some of the grades up to B’s.
- **Schedule study time.** Has your child been slacking off on finishing assignments? Insist on a regular work time. If your child is freshest right after school, then make that study time. But if your child does better with a little downtime first, consider an hour break before cracking open the books.
- **Enforce bedtime.** Does your child always stay up for “just one more episode”? If so, there’s a chance your student is not getting enough sleep. Studies show that sleepy students don’t perform as well in school, so insist that your child head to bed (without digital devices) at a reasonable hour.
- **Monitor progress.** Don’t wait until your child fails a quiz to discover there’s a problem. Instead, review schoolwork and touch base with teachers.

It Matters: Effective Discipline

Three strategies can eliminate rude back talk



Parenting a middle schooler can feel like walking on eggshells. Some days, it seems like no matter what

you say, you'll be met with a rude or sarcastic comeback. It's completely normal to feel angry or frustrated, but try to avoid getting swept up in the emotion. Instead, consider this approach:

1. **Use "I-messages."** Anything that begins "you always" or "you never" or even just "you" may sound like an accusation to your child. And nothing will gear a middle schooler up for a fight faster than that.
Instead, put the emphasis on *your* feelings. Say, "I get frustrated when the recycling piles up," instead of, "You never take the recycling to the curb!"
2. **Become a broken record.** Don't get into a debate about *why* your middle schooler can't go to a concert without an adult. Instead, repeat yourself. "The rule in our house is no unchaperoned concerts." If your child continues to complain, respond again, "The rule in our house is no unchaperoned concerts."
3. **Say something nice,** then walk away. There are times when you just won't be able to get any further with your child. Try, "I know you're upset, and that makes me sad for you. But you're being so rude to me that I can't talk to you right now. I'll be happy to discuss things when we are both calm."

Positive discipline encourages appropriate behavior

Establishing effective discipline for a middle schooler can be tough, but experts agree that a positive, proactive approach is key. By focusing on what to do, rather than what not to do, you can create a more supportive environment for your child.

Here are some positive ways to approach discipline:

- **Be clear and specific.** Avoid using vague language like, "Try to finish your chores today." Instead, say, "Finish your chores today." When you need to correct behavior, offer specific guidance. For example, "It is your responsibility to remember your chores."
- **Focus on desired behavior.** Talk about the actions you want to see. Say "Speak in a respectful tone," instead of "How many times have I told you not to use that tone?"
- **State expectations directly.** Threats like "Do your homework



now or you don't get dessert" give your child the option to choose a punishment over a desired action. Instead, clearly state the required action without the threat. "You need to finish your homework before dinner." This leaves no room for negotiation and emphasizes the expectation.

Establish family rules that promote respectful behavior



The way children interact with their family members lays the groundwork for how they act toward others.

By establishing rules for acceptable behavior, you'll be creating a more peaceful, respectful climate at home—and at school.

Encourage family members to:

- **Ask before taking** or borrowing someone else's property.
- **Share.** A box of cereal is for everyone in the family.

- **Accept** that no one always gets their own way. Family members have to take turns.
- **Use a polite tone** when speaking.
- **Think of others.** Ask about their day. Offer support or praise when appropriate.

Don't tolerate behavior such as:

- **Physical violence** in any form.
- **Screaming** and yelling.
- **Insulting** other family members.
- **Stealing** from family members.
- **Treating** family property with disrespect.