

Woodside Elementary School District

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August 13, 2021

Dear Upper School Students and Families:

Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year!

I look forward to working with each and every one of you this year, as we learn, grow, and bond with one another. Woodside School is such a special place, and I could not be more excited to transition back to a more typical school year, where students will be able to rotate classrooms, interact with peers, and enjoy events put on by the school.

The Upper School staff is very excited for the upcoming school year and has been eagerly preparing for students' arrival on Thursday, August 19th. The Upper School faculty has been hard at work, honing their rigorous, enriching curricula that will build academic, social-emotional, and executive functioning skills. Our students are so lucky to have such incredible teachers this year!

Below are some updates to begin the school year, as well as information about student schedules. Please note that it is very important that both parents and students check their email regularly throughout the school year.

New Teachers: We are very excited to introduce three wonderful new Upper School staff members this year. Please join us in welcoming them when you meet them next week!

- Mrs. Baumgartner- 5th Grade
- Mr. Jacob Niebaum- 7th and 8th Grade Science
- Mrs. Annie Brown- 5th-8th Grade Spanish

6th-8th Grade Schedule Structure: Based upon updated guidelines from the California Department of Public Health and San Mateo County, we will be returning to our traditional middle school schedule. This means that students will have an 8-period day, where they rotate classrooms for each subject area. We will return to operating on a modified block schedule, where students attend periods 1-8 on Monday and Tuesday, periods 1-7 on Wednesday with an early dismissal, odd numbered periods on Thursday, and even numbered periods on Friday. By providing students with access to limited classes on Thursdays and Fridays, they are able to spend twice the amount of time continuously in each class, allowing for more in-depth projects and assessments to take place. Students will receive help deciphering their schedules on our first day, when we will meet in grade level groups to engage in team building and to review expectations for the year. Please note that we are returning to our traditional bell schedule for grades 1-8 as shown below:

8:25 am - 3:10pm (M/T/Th/Fr)
8:25am - 2:30pm (Wed only)
Morning recess: 9:51 - 10:11am
Lunch: 12:20 - 1:00pm

6th-8th Grade Individual Student Schedules: 6th-8th grade students will receive detailed schedules on the first day of school when we work in grade level groups. Our staff will be on hand to welcome students to campus and to direct them to the correct room for grade level meetings on the first day.

Teachers will walk students through their schedules so that they are ready to go on the first full day of school, Friday, August 20th.

Class Lists: Students' class lists will be sent out digitally on Tuesday, August 17th, so please look out for that communication. Please note that class lists for 6th-8th grade focus on your child's immediate cohort, but students switch groupings throughout the day for Math, Music, PE, and electives.

PowerSchool/Email Usernames & Passwords: Students' PowerSchool usernames and passwords will remain the same as previous years. If you need a copy of this data, please contact the front office.

First Day of School: Per tradition, our 6th-8th graders will spend the first day of school in grade level meetings, where we will walk students through schedules and procedures so that they know exactly what to expect this year. This is a great opportunity to begin the year and address many of the topics that are pressing (e.g., schedules, behavior expectations, technology, SEL and team building activities, etc.). Please note that the first day of school, Thursday, August 19th, is a minimum day. 5th graders will report to their homerooms, where they will engage in classroom and class activities for the day. It is sure to be a great first day for all of our students!

Class Assignments: The assignment of students to classes requires time and careful planning by our staff members. Classroom teachers, specialists, and administration have worked hard to create balanced class lists. Placement decisions include, but are not limited to, academic, social and emotional considerations, total class size, male/female ratio, special behavior needs, maturity, development and/or age level. **Unfortunately, we are not in a position to grant any schedule changes at this time.**

6th-8th Grade Math Placement: Middle school Math placement is determined using student data (i.e., MARS, state testing, and classroom performance from the prior year). This year, students will return to traditional Math groupings, where students are placed into one of four available sections for their grade level. These groupings are based on pacing, student assessment data, prior Math class performance, and possible successful attempts to opt into the acceleration program. The entire Math department and the administration met to review student data and to place students in their Math sections for this year. We are extremely confident that every single student's Math placement was reviewed with care and thought. Students often erroneously refer to the "high group" or the "low group" when talking about Math placements. Please discuss with your child that the majority of students in a particular grade are taking the same Math. Each section differs with depth, complexity, and pacing, but the content is the same. This should help to alleviate any misconceptions about being perceived to be in a certain Math class. Our Math teachers will monitor student progress closely, and will adjust any placements as necessary in the beginning of the year. To learn more about the placement process, I encourage you to visit the Middle School Math Pathways webpage [HERE](#).

I look forward to welcoming all of our students back personally as the new school year begins, and I cannot wait for you to see what our Upper School staff has in store for our students! Please contact me with any questions that you might have.

Best wishes for a successful school year!

Sincerely,

Jenn Pedersen
Upper School Principal