

## What PARENTS Want to Know about Middle School at Robert Gray

### **Q—What are reasons families like Robert Gray Middle School?**

**A—**RGMS is a high-performing, small, neighborhood middle school with an exceptional staff and excellent programs. Most students can walk to and from school. Integration into social circles is easier in the smaller setting, and ease of getting special support without being pulled out of the classroom ensures success for students that struggle. We are set up for academic success in a comfortable and personal environment but have a student body large enough to be able to offer a wide variety of enrichment electives.

### **Q—What is special about student life at RGMS?**

**A—**Our focus on research-based, age-appropriate strategies ensures that our students are happy and feel supported. We let kids be kids and don't sweat the small stuff. We have been a Positive Behavior Interventions & Support (PBIS) school for many years. We are opposed to punishment and harsh treatment and rely on positive practices and intervention to help students grow. We go out of our way to be friendly, helpful, good listeners and problem solvers. YES is music to our ears.

### **Q—Why do you call RGMS Hillsdale's "boutique" middle school?**

**A—**Check out the edgy, metro, retro, folksy, hip feeling of our cute school as you stroll down our lime green and pink tiled hallways. Enjoy that tucked-away feeling and the lovely view as you duck into our forested green gorge and walk the southwest trails. Lovely!

### **Q—When can I petition to attend RGMS?**

**A—**Parents will need to submit a hardship petition to request to attend RGMS if they live outside the catchment area or currently have a transfer to another school. Hardship petitions are made through the PPS Enrollment & Transfer Department preferably by March 8.

### **Q—What is the average class size?**

**A—**Class sizes vary because of the constraints of the master schedule and the funding given through the district's equity staffing formula. We are staffed to have approximately 31 students per class next year.

### **Q—Can my child do a shadow day?**

**A—**The district requires us to limit student visits to organized activities such as School Information Night and our school tours. All feeder school 5<sup>th</sup> graders will visit in April when we send home the electives and locker forecasting form.

### **Q—What are the classes like?**

**A—**The "core classes" are the same in all PPS mid-level grades: language arts, social studies, math and science. In addition, students take a semester of health/PE and three semesters of electives. Our teachers collaborate in planning lessons and focus on integrating technology. Each grade does its own traditional special projects, such as Dig In Trillium Gorge restoration, and classwork frequently includes artistic illustration.

Teachers practice active engagement strategies based on AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), fostered by the use of groupwork and the creation of original works. Differentiation in instruction provides rigor for high-performing students to excel and intervention ensures students that struggle will have the best chance of success. Students in need of intervention find RGMS has many supports that help them be successful and enjoy school.

### **Q—What are the elective choices?**

**A—**Art, music, PE, AVID, and technology. Students will have the opportunity to say which electives they prefer, but RGMS will make all decisions on a space-available basis. Students who need interventions may have academic support classes or English Language Development.

### **Q—When can my child take world language?**

**A—**French, Mandarin and Spanish are two-year, high school credit bearing classes offered only to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in compliance with the district's core requirements. We plan to continue to offer these very popular classes.



**Q—What level of math will my child have?**

**A—**Sixth grade students generally take Math 6, which is a rigorous course. Some will bypass Math 6 and start at Compacted Year 1. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students are tracked into regular Math 7 or into what we call Compacted Year 1 and accelerated students continue to Compacted Year 2. This sequence continues in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The Compacted path results in high school credit for Algebra. RGMS will contact parents of students that we believe may be good candidates to bypass Math 6 due to their outstanding content knowledge. We will wait until we have the Smarter Balanced Assessment scores to make decisions. We encourage all student to take the state tests to provide valuable data in our decision making processes.

**Q—How is the school doing academically?**

**A—**We were rated Outstanding last year on the Oregon School Report Card and earned an ESEA rating of 4 out of 5. Forbes ranked us in the top 16 middle schools in Oregon last year. We are strong academically and our students work hard.

**Q—Are the Robert Gray teachers good?**

**A—**Yes, they are experienced, creative, fun and love middle schoolers. Our students have a great time in their classes. RGMS teachers average almost 15 years of experience and are all Highly Qualified under ESEA. They embrace the characteristics of young adolescents and provide quality education that is rigorous but fun and enriching.

**Q—How do you serve special education students?**

**A—**Each student has a case manager who will oversee their IEP. Math support is included in mainstream classes, and academic support classes provide extra help and encouragement. No pull-out core classes separate students from classes with their peers. All instruction is done in resource center classes or general education classes implementing modifications and accommodations.

**Q—How can I prepare my child for the transition?**

**A—**Tell your child they have learned so much in elementary school and matured so much that you know they are ready for middle school. Open their new locker and walk the halls to find classrooms starting in late August. Walk/bike/drive the routes to school or the bus stop and choose the best. Reassure them that we are all here to help.

**Q—What will the school do to help with my child's transition?**

**A—**SUN Summer of Fun four-week program includes our students in grade 5. We will send information about it this spring. By providing school tours and visiting 5<sup>th</sup> graders at their feeder schools, a lot of students' apprehensions are decreased. Choice of locker partners, staff who go out of their way to be helpful, on-site registration in August, and Jump Start Day, our first day of school that is sixth graders only, all help a lot.

**Q—What if my child has trouble navigating that first week?**

**A—**A few students have anxiety that first week, but most settle in quickly. If your child is overly anxious, let our counselor know, and we will be sure to discretely pay special attention to them.

**Q—How can parents get involved in the school?**

**A—**Middle school parent volunteer activities tend to be more in our common spaces (office, library) and in organizing and carrying out PTA events and fundraisers. Our PTA is a strong and active force. SUN School has parent activities and opportunities to volunteer and instruct classes.

**Q—When will we hear about the start of school?**

**A—**We will contact families over the summer with details. Email is our primary means of communication. This is a great way to ease the fall anxiety for 6<sup>th</sup> graders because they will get their class schedule and locker assignment. If you are not able to attend on one of those days, please come in before school starts. The office is open from 8:00 am to 4:00 PM.

**Q—How can I get more information?**

**A—**Call the school and talk to the principal's secretary, Peggy Bruce. The assistant principal, counselor, and special education staff are also available for personal questions. Check out our website at [www.pps.net/schools/gray](http://www.pps.net/schools/gray). It is loaded with general information as well as links and documents such as the district middle school math program, school profile, student management plan, calendars, information on the Common Core State Standards, and much more.

# What STUDENTS Want to Know about Middle School at Robert Gray

**Q—What is fun about middle school at Robert Gray?**

A—New friends, more freedom, lots of kids your age, six classes a day, different teachers, taking band or choir, learning a foreign language, being in a play, using your iPod to play music at lunch, getting taller, and great teachers.

**Q—How many students are there?**

A—RGMS will have well over 550 students and we expect around 180 6<sup>th</sup> graders to enroll.

**Q—What time does school start and end?**

A—Breakfast starts at 8:30, you can go to your locker at 9:05, and first period starts at 9:15. That is nice and late, don't you think? School ends at 3:45.

**Q—How many classes are there and how long is each class period?**

A—There are six classes a day: three in the morning and three in the afternoon and five minutes between classes. Classes are 55 minutes long, but first period is 60 minutes to make time for daily announcements.

**Q—How will I find my classes?**

A—You will get a copy of your schedule when you come in late summer before school begins or on your first day. It will also be on our online system called StudentVue. The class schedule will have the room numbers on it. We will have plenty of people in the halls to help you find your way. You will get used to your schedule quickly.

**Q—Are the classes hard?**

A—Some classes are hard for some students; it depends on how strong you are in each subject. If you do your classwork and your homework, you should do just fine. If you need help, just ask.

**Q—Are the teachers nice?**

A—Yes, RGMS teachers are very nice. They have high expectations and will help you grow. And the principal and assistant principal are really nice, too! In fact, everyone is.

**Q—What will we do with computers?**

A—We have many Chromebook carts as well as computers in classrooms and the library. All 6<sup>th</sup> graders will take technology unless their schedule will not allow it.

**Q—Is there much homework?**

A—Every day, you will read for 30 minutes and you will have math homework during the week. There will be additional homework in some classes. You should expect to spend at least an hour on homework per day unless there are special projects.

**Q—How will I know what the homework is?**

A—Teachers will have you write it down in your calendar and some will give you a homework sheet. Many teachers post assignments on line. Often, you will start homework in class to be sure you know how to do it. All students carry the AVID Binder.

**Q—How can I easily find out my grades?**

A—You and your parents can use the online Synergy System ParentVue and StudentVue computer to see your progress and attendance.

**Q—Will I have a locker partner?**

A—Each student will have a locker partner. You will fill out a form to tell us with whom you would like to share a locker (or not) and we will match you up to be happy. Almost all students get their first choice for a locker partner. We are really good at this, so don't worry!

**Q—What if I don't get along with my locker partner any more or I need a different locker?**

A—Find a new partner and we will change you.

**Q—When will I get my locker?**

A—You will get a sheet with your locker number, partner and combination in August when you come to the on-site registration. You can decorate it and practice opening it until you are comfortable.

**Q—How can I learn to open a combination lock?**

A—Ask your folks to buy you a padlock so you can practice over the summer.

**Q—When can I use my cell phone at school?**

A—All electronics can be used during Personal Time. They stay off and away during Ready to Learn time in classrooms.

**Q—Is there recess?**

A—We don't have recess, but you will have time at lunch every day to get plenty of exercise and be with your friends.

**Q—How long is lunch?**

A—Thirty minutes, plus five minutes to get to 4<sup>th</sup> period when lunch is over.

**Q—What is lunch time like?**

A—Lunch time is for you to eat, have fun, and get some exercise. The cafeteria is a nice space or you may take your food and go to other areas that are open that day (except the library and gym where food is not allowed). When it is nice out, we use our covered play area, picnic tables and field. During the winter, if it is too rainy, we open the gym. The library is open every day. Sometimes the music room, art room and teachers’ classrooms are open, as is our SUN Room. We want you to be able to hang out, run around and have fun.

**Q—What is the school lunch like?**

A—They offer fresh salad and fruits and veggies every day, a choice of a main course, and milk. Our cook does a great job of bringing variety to the menu.

**Q—What is the dress code?**

A—The district dress code says you should dress comfortably and appropriately for school. We have some dress-up days and enjoy our hats and individual looks. Be comfortable and wear shoes.

**Q—Do students get along with each other?**

A—RGMS students are respectful, don’t fight very often, have fun and make friends. They come together from different schools and become one, big 6<sup>th</sup> grade. We are good at helping students solve problems without making them worse.

**Q—Is it easy to get in trouble?**

A—Not many students get in trouble because we make sure you know what is expected and teach you to be respectful, responsible and safe. The most common reaction to misbehaviors is a “do over”. That means we will ask you to try again. If needed, we have students fill out “problem solvers” to figure out how to be safe, respectful and responsible.

**Q—What happens if I am tardy to class?**

A—We will help you figure out how to get to class on time. The building seems large at first, but you will get used to it pretty quickly. Five minutes is plenty of time between classes.

**Q—Are there dances?**

A—We dance at lunch, in drama, in PE, and in some classes. Sometimes, we just dance.

**Q—What are the before-school activities?**

A—The library and gym are open from 8:30 am until school starts. Before 8:30, all students stay in the cafeteria.

**Q—What are the after-school activities?**

A—Some of the activities are sports, music performances, and SUN School classes. Our drama program is huge and all students that want to participate are invited.

**Q—How can I participate in drama?**

A—We will have a fall play, a winter play, and spring musical. All students who audition get some kind of role on the cast or crew, learn a dance, and sixth graders have their own play before the main play. Some students participate in the plays during all three years of middle school. Drama is a huge and important part of student life.

**Q—What sports are there?**

A—Middle school sports in PPS include volleyball, basketball, cross country, wrestling, cheer, track & field, dance team, and possibly others. We also have a SUN Community School with open gym, physical activity classes, table tennis, and other activities.

**Q—Are there activities at lunch?**

A—Chess Club, Minecraft Club, Ukulele Lunch Players, Jewish Enrichment Club, Gender and Sexuality Alliance, Oregon Battle of the Books and many other clubs are held at lunch. Students may start lunch clubs with permission from the principal. Teachers often have classrooms open where students can go. Before school, we offer jazz band.

**Q—What other fun activities are there?**

A—The PTA puts on our Back-to-School Picnic, Run for Gray, and other fun activities for students and families.

**Q—What is the first day of school like?**

A—You will attend your new classes, learn your way around the school, start to use your locker, learn school and class rules, and make new friends. We hope to have a “Jump Start Day” where only 6<sup>th</sup> graders come to school the first day. We will contact your parents in the summer with information on the new school year. It’s going to be fun!

