

JOHN WITHERSPOON MIDDLE SCHOOL
Parent Information Packet

Main Office: 609-806-4270
Guidance Office: 609-806-4272
Health Office: 609-806-4273
Fax: 609-806-4271

ACADEMIC CALENDAR 2009-2010

Recess Days

Monday	September 28	Yom Kippur
Thursday, Friday	November 5, 6	NJEA Convention
Thursday, Friday	November 26, 27	Thanksgiving Recess
Thursday through Friday	December 24 – January 1 (resume Monday, January 4)	Winter Recess
Monday	January 18	Martin Luther King Day
Friday	February 12	Staff Development Day
Monday	February 15	President's Day
Monday through Monday	March 29-31, April 1-5 (resume Tuesday, April 6)	Spring Recess
Friday	May 28	Staff Development Day
Monday	May 31	Memorial Day

DAILY SCHEDULE

The school day begins at 8:25 a.m. and ends at 2:55 p.m. Students at each grade level are assigned to interdisciplinary academic teams called Houses. There are two Houses, consisting of five teachers and approximately 110 students in each House. The House plan encourages teachers to use team-teaching techniques, multiple texts, and individualized as well as small group instruction.

A typical student schedule includes five academic subjects, two periods for non-academics and a thirty-minute lunch period. Students begin the day with a five-minute homeroom period followed by seven, fifty-minute classes. Courses offered are: English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, World Languages of French or Spanish, Physical Education, Health, Music (choral and instrumental), Art, Computers, Tech Prep Wood, Modern Living, Drama/Theatre Arts, Culture & Arts/Humanities and Study Skills.

Comprehensive basic skills, special education, and English-as-a-Second Language classes assist the overall program at John Witherspoon.

SCHOOL CLOSING

If school is to be closed due to inclement weather or any other reason, call 806-4202. Announcements will be made on the following radio stations: WHWH (1350 AM) and WKXW (101.5 FM) beginning at 6:30 a.m. The local television stations, WPVI (Channel 6), WCAU (Channel 10), Comcast Channel 25, Verizon Fios Channel 46 or check online notices at www.prs.k12.nj.us.

HOMEROOM PERIOD

Students must be seated in Homeroom by 8:25 a.m. All students must observe the *Pledge of Allegiance*, which will be followed by important daily announcements on the public address system.

ABSENCES

- A. ATTENDANCE:** Regular school attendance is mandatory and essential to school success. All students must be in the building by 8:25 a.m. A note from a parent/guardian explaining the student's absence **must be brought to the Homeroom teacher the day following any absence.** Parents have the right to permit a student to remain at home due to illness. Other legal reasons for absences are certain religious holidays.

- B. TRUANCY:** A child who is sent to school by his/her parent/guardian, but does not attend for other than lawful reasons is truant. Truancy is a violation of the Compulsory State School Attendance Law. Administrative disciplinary measures result from truancy.
- C. TARDINESS:** Tardiness is unacceptable. If students arrive after 8:35 a.m., they are considered tardy. Students arriving after the Homeroom period, 8:35 a.m., must first report to the Main Office to obtain a late card. A written note from a parent/guardian stating the reason for the student arriving after 8:35 a.m. must be submitted. The late card must be signed by all the teachers and returned to the Main Office. Students who have excessive unexcused tardies are assigned detention by his/her Homeroom teacher. The guidance counselor will contact a parent/guardian if excessive tardiness continues.
- D. APPOINTMENTS:** Students may not leave the building during the day for any reason. Students will be excused from school for dental, medical or other appointments when written permission from a parent/guardian is brought to the Main Office in advance for approval. Students will only be released to a parent/guardian.
- E. EXTENDED VACATIONS:** Extended vacations are discouraged. Parents should plan vacations to coincide with scheduled school holidays. We believe the continuity of instruction is a vital part of each student's education.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

- A. ACCIDENTS:** Immediately report all accidents to the school Nurse, regardless of the severity of the injury.
- B. ILLNESSES:** If a student becomes ill in school, the Nurse will contact a parent/guardian and issue a medical excuse to return home.
- C. EXTENDED ABSENCE DUE TO ILLNESS:** If a student is going to be absent from school for **three days or more** because of illness, contact the school Nurse at **806-4273** and report the nature of the illness. If a student has been out due to a contagious disease, operation, or serious illness, he/she must see the Nurse upon his/her return to school.
- D. MEDICATION:** The school Nurse administers medication to students only when the medicine has been prescribed by a physician and is accompanied by written permission from the parent/guardian. Non-prescriptive medication is not to be taken in school without written permission from home and may be taken only under the supervision of the school Nurse.

BUS INFORMATION

All John Witherspoon rules are in effect on all bus routes. The bus driver is in full charge of the bus and pupils. All students must remain in their seats. Never throw any objects from the bus. No profanity or physical contact is permitted. The driver is instructed to report any misbehavior to the Assistant Principal for appropriate action. NJ Transit (Loop Bus) tickets will be sold on Wednesday mornings from 8:00 to 8:25 a.m. in the Main Commons. Bus safety drills are conducted twice a year.

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

When walking to school, always use the sidewalk and cross only where the crossing guards are located. Never litter! Students may not leave John Witherspoon School once they have arrived even if school has not officially begun. **Students are not permitted to visit the Princeton Shopping Center, Princeton High School or Westminster Choir College.**

BICYCLING

When bicycling, observe the safety regulations set by the Police Department. All bicycles must be kept in the bicycle racks and **locked** for security. Do not lock bicycles to trees, handrails or fences. New Jersey State Law mandates that all students, **14 and under**, must wear approved safety helmets when operating a bicycle.

SKATEBOARDS, ROLLER BLADES AND SCOOTERS

Skateboards, roller blades and scooters may not be used on John Witherspoon Middle School sidewalks, playground or driveways.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Any student, who changes address within the District or transfers to another school, must contact the Guidance Office. All changes must be submitted in writing to the school and follow the District's specified guidelines.

DISCIPLINE

To insure that our goal of "Excellence in Learning and Teaching" may continue to be a reality, John Witherspoon students are expected to adhere to school rules and regulations. Students must exhibit appropriate behavior. Pupils must submit to the authority of all school personnel; they must pursue their prescribed course of study and they must obey the rules of the school they attend (NJSA18A: 37-1.) Not obeying the rules or engaging in conduct which creates or causes disruptive behavior will subject the student to disciplinary action which, depending upon the severity of the infraction, may include suspension or expulsion.

Guidelines for Success

1. Attend school and all classes regularly and on time. Follow rules which are posted in each classroom.
2. Respect the rights of all individuals to be different. "He who gives respect, gets respect."
3. All physical contact is inappropriate.
4. Use, possession or sale of a controlled dangerous substance, tobacco product, or alcohol is prohibited. A copy of the Board Policy will be distributed to students.
5. Selling or buying anything is prohibited on school property.
6. Gambling is prohibited on school property.
7. Vandalism, defacing school property, writing on lockers, desks, or walls is prohibited. Students will be charged for any damages.
8. Compliance with all classroom, lunchroom, and corridors rules and regulations must be followed without exception.
9. No gum chewing.
10. Obtain authorization from administration prior to leaving school for any reason.
11. Cursing or other profanity is prohibited.
12. Possession and or use of weapons or toys, which resemble weapons is prohibited.
13. Threats, written or verbal, toward school personnel or students is prohibited.
14. Harassment, sexual harassment, and cyber bullying is prohibited. A copy of the Board Policy will be distributed to students.
15. Asking for or receiving money or personal property from other students is prohibited.
16. Public display of affection between students is prohibited.

The sixteen items listed are our Guidelines for Success. Students violating these regulations will make themselves eligible for disciplinary action.

DRESS CODE

Students are expected to attend school wearing neat, clean and non-offensive clothing. Shoes are required at all times and head coverings of any kind are not permitted in the building during school hours. No offensive tee shirts, bare backs, spaghetti straps, exposed stomachs, short shorts, short dresses, low-cut tops, or low-cut pants. Nothing should be worn that will be a distraction to learning.

FIRE DRILLS

Scheduled fire drills occur twice monthly. Students must follow their teacher's instructions and walk quietly and in an orderly fashion to the assigned exit. **Silence is mandatory.** The Principal and Assistant Principal will supervise fire drills. Evacuation maps are posted in each classroom. School lock down and evacuation drills will be conducted annually.

CORRIDOR BEHAVIOR

Students are reminded that classes are in session and that excessive noise, running or loitering in the corridors is prohibited. Students are not permitted in the corridors during classes, except with the written permission of school personnel.

APPEARANCE OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING

We are proud of our fine building and its appearance. Never damage property inside or outside of the building. Please set an example by picking up papers from the corridor floors and classroom floors and place trash in receptacles.

LOCKERS

Each student will be assigned a hall locker with a combination lock. Homeroom teachers will inspect the lockers periodically. Physical Education teachers will assign a gym locker. For security, **never** share combinations with other students. Students may only use their lockers during the following times: before and after school, before and after Physical Education, before and after lunch. The Principal and Assistant Principal may inspect student lockers at any time.

CARE OF BOOKS

All school textbooks must be covered and cared for properly. Students will be charged for textbooks that are lost, defaced or damaged. Students are to write their names inside the front cover, in the proper place, so that it can be returned if misplaced.

HOMEWORK

Homework is an integral part of the school curriculum and will be assigned by teachers regularly. If a student misses classes due to illness or other reasons, it is the student's responsibility to see his/her teacher to make up assigned work promptly. If students are **out ill for three days or more** and would like to receive assignments, parents are to contact the Main Office at 806-4270 to place their request. If students are out ill one or two days, they may obtain assignments from his/her "homework buddy" or classmates.

EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTER

The school Media Center is open to all students from 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. every school day. Students may borrow library books for two weeks with renewal privileges unless the book the student needs is on the reserve list. Library books must be signed out through the Media Specialist. Reserve books may be borrowed overnight. They may be obtained only after school and must be returned before 9:00 a.m. the next morning. Use of the Media Center is a primary part of education. Students are encouraged to use this resource as a regular practice.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

All students are required by State Law to participate in Physical Education. Each student will be issued a locker. Students must change out of the clothes they have worn to school and into a tee shirt or sweatshirt, shorts or sweatpants for class. All students must wear sneakers in class. Students will participate in a swimming unit. They are required to adhere to the following guidelines with regard to attire and necessary items: Boys' swim trunks, Girls' one piece bathing suits, towel, flip flops footwear, and shower supplies. Students may be excused for an extended period of time from Physical Education if they have presented a written excuse from a doctor.

LUNCH

Lunch is available for students to purchase in our Cafeteria. Many students choose to bring lunch from home. All meals are nutritionally balanced and the cost of lunch is **\$4.00** (subject to change.) The school does not lend lunch money. Money can be deposited in the student's lunch account. Parents are responsible to keep their child's lunch account funded. Students may not charge against their lunch account. All food and beverages must be consumed inside the Cafeteria. After students have finished eating, he/she is to place all refuse in the receptacles and return trays to their proper station. Students may then go outside to the Playground, to the Media Center or remain in the Cafeteria. On inclement days, the Old Gymnasium is open. Students may not loiter in the corridors or commons. Students are not permitted to go to their lockers during lunch.

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

ATHLETICS: All students are encouraged to participate in our sports program:

Fall: Co-ed Tennis, Field Hockey, Soccer, Cross Country
Winter: Basketball, Wrestling
Spring: Baseball, Co-ed Track, Lacrosse, Softball

Physical examinations are required prior to participation in any sports program. The school Nurse provides medical forms.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: Students are encouraged to participate in various club activities, which include: **Art, AV, Best Book, Drama, Little Tiger School Store, Mathletes, Stage and Lighting Crew, Do Something and Yearbook.** Detailed information regarding times and meeting places will be announced during the school year.

OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIPS

Middle school students who have legal issues pending (in or out of school), narcotics involvement (possession or use), or sexual misconduct shall be prohibited from participating in overnight field trips.

PARENT CONSENT FORMS

A Photo Image Consent Form is mailed to students for parent/guardian signature in August. Homeroom teachers will distribute other permission forms.

DANCES

Dances begin at 7:30 p.m. and end at 10:00 p.m. Students may not leave dances early unless he/she are picked-up by a parent/guardian. Parents/guardians are requested to promptly pick-up students after the dance. Visitors from other schools must have prior administrative approval.

VISITORS

All visitors must report to the main office upon arrival at school.

Students who want to bring a visitor to school for **one day** must adhere to the following procedure:

- The visitor must be from out-of-state.
- The request must be made one week prior to the date of the visit.
- The request must include the visitor's name and the place he/she lives.
- The request must be approved and signed by each teacher the student will have on the date of the visit.
- After teachers have granted approval, the request must be given to the Principal or Assistant Principal for final approval.
- On the day of the visit, the student is to bring the approved request to all his/her classes.
- Special situations not falling within these guidelines must be discussed with the Principal or Assistant Principal.

VALUABLES/PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Valuables are not to be brought to school unless the items have been approved by an administrator as part of a class assignment. Students may not carry large amounts of money to school. Digital Cameras, Cell Phones, CD's, DVD's, iPod's, MP3 players, walkmans, radios, recording devices, portable computer games/devices, video games, laser pointers, valuable trading cards, dice, and software are not permitted in school. The school supplies basketballs and other recess equipment for students. Students are not permitted to bring personal recreational equipment to school.

LOST AND FOUND

The clothing Lost and Found is located in the Old Gymnasium area. Other articles of value, such as glasses, wallets, watches, jewelry, etc., should be turned into the Main Office where students may claim them upon identification. If something is lost, the student is to report this immediately to his/her teacher or to the Main Office. It is recommended that students place his/her name in items for easy identification and return. Unclaimed articles will be donated to charity.

INSURANCE

An insurance policy is available to each student in the school. Detailed information will be distributed early in the school year. Students enrolling in school after September 8 may obtain this information when they register.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Parent conferences will occur during the school year. Formal parent conferences are scheduled in November. All other conferences will occur as needed during the school year and appointments should be made through the student's Guidance Counselor.

REPORT CARDS

Students will receive four report cards yearly. Report cards will be issued to students in November 2009, February 2010, April 2010, and a final report card will be issued to students on the last day of school. Report card envelopes must be signed by a parent/guardian and returned to the Homeroom teacher no later than three days after the initial distribution. Each teacher will give a grade (A, B, C, D, F, Inc.) as well as a social conduct mark (C-commendable, S-satisfactory, N-needs improvement, U-unsatisfactory.) Grade values are as follows:

A —90-100	D —60-69
B —80-89	F —59 or below
C —70-79	Inc—Incomplete

STUDENT/TEACHER LEARNING AGREEMENT

Students in need of improvement will work out a cooperative student/teacher Learning Improvement Agreement that must be signed by a parent/guardian. This agreement will show the student ways in which he/she can improve his/her schoolwork.

STUDENT SERVICES

Student Services is comprised of Guidance Counselors, Psychologist, Social Worker, Nurse, and a Learning Consultant. These staff members are available to assist with problems or concerns. Appointments to meet with these staff members should be made by contacting the Guidance Office at **806-4272**.

2ND FLOOR NEW JERSEY'S YOUTH HELPLINE

The New Jersey Youth Helpline, 2nd FLOOR, a toll-free, anonymous and confidential helpline available 24 hours a day, all year, to all New Jersey youth, ages 10 to 24. Youth can call 2nd FLOOR at 1-888-222-2228 to speak with professionals and trained volunteers who listen attentively, non-judgmentally and compassionately to issues and problems they are facing. Visit www.2NDFLOOR.org for more information.

TELEPHONES

Two free telephones are located in the corridor across from the Main Office for use after school only. Each classroom has been equipped with a telephone. Telephones may not be used before school or during school hours. **Emergency calls** are to be made through the Guidance Counselor's Office or House telephone. Cell phone use in the building is prohibited.