



**Sparta Middle School  
Student/Parent Handbook  
2024-2025**

**How to Use this Handbook:**

This handbook is to be used as a source of information about Sparta Middle School's rules and policies as well as our district's mission, vision and disciplinary philosophy. It is also meant to be used as a tool to provide parents and students with clarity in the event that there are questions or concerns. We believe that being proactive by communicating, in advance, very clear expectations and how they will be supported will help foster cooperation between home and school to better serve your student.

**Who to Contact with Questions about the SMS Handbook:**

Brad Wood	Andrew Buikema
Principal, Sparta Middle School	Assistant Principal, Sparta Middle School
616-887-8211 ext. 2005	616-887-8211 ext. 2004
<a href="mailto:brad.wood@spartaschools.org">brad.wood@spartaschools.org</a>	<a href="mailto:andrew.buikema@spartaschools.org">andrew.buikema@spartaschools.org</a>

**Important Points of Contact at SMS:**

Brad Wood, Principal: [brad.wood@spartaschools.org](mailto:brad.wood@spartaschools.org)  
Andrew Buikema, Assistant Principal: [andrew.buikema@spartaschools.org](mailto:andrew.buikema@spartaschools.org)  
Lexi Baker, Counselor: [alexis.baker@spartaschools.org](mailto:alexis.baker@spartaschools.org)  
Marie Uzarski, School Nurse: [marie.uzarski@spartaschools.org](mailto:marie.uzarski@spartaschools.org)  
Tina Harmsen, Main Office/Attendance Secretary: [tina.harmsen@spartaschools.org](mailto:tina.harmsen@spartaschools.org)  
Lauren Farr, Main Office Secretary: [lauren.farr@spartaschools.org](mailto:lauren.farr@spartaschools.org)  
Sarah Cline, KSSN Coordinator: [sarah.cline@spartaschools.org](mailto:sarah.cline@spartaschools.org)  
Maci Podbilski, KSSN Clinician: [maci.podbilski@spartaschools.org](mailto:maci.podbilski@spartaschools.org)  
Josh Fellows, SAS Security: [josh.fellows@spartaschools.org](mailto:josh.fellows@spartaschools.org)

**Emergency Response & Preparedness:**

Emergency procedures for fire, tornado and lockdown situations are contained in folders in every classroom at Sparta Middle School. These procedures are practiced during our required drills throughout the year. Our emergency procedures are also posted in every classroom (see poster below) and reviewed on the first day of school with all students.

# IN AN EMERGENCY TAKE ACTION



## **HOLD! In your room or area. Clear the halls.**

### **STUDENTS**

Clear the hallways and remain in room or area until the "All Clear" is announced  
Do business as usual

### **ADULTS**

Close and lock the door  
Account for students and adults  
Do business as usual



## **SECURE! Get inside. Lock outside doors.**

### **STUDENTS**

Return to inside of building  
Do business as usual

### **ADULTS**

Bring everyone indoors  
Lock outside doors  
Increase situational awareness  
Account for students and adults  
Do business as usual



## **LOCKDOWN! Locks, lights, out of sight.**

### **STUDENTS**

Move away from sight  
Maintain silence  
Do not open the door

### **ADULTS**

Recover students from hallway if possible  
Lock the classroom door  
Turn out the lights  
Move away from sight  
Maintain silence  
Do not open the door  
Prepare to evade or defend



## **EVACUATE! (A location may be specified)**

### **STUDENTS**

Leave stuff behind if required to  
If possible, bring your phone  
Follow instructions

### **ADULTS**

Lead students to Evacuation location  
Account for students and adults  
Notify if missing, extra or injured students or adults



## **SHELTER! Hazard and safety strategy.**

### **STUDENTS**

Use appropriate safety strategy for the hazard

#### **Hazard**

Tornado  
Hazmat  
Earthquake  
Tsunami

#### **Safety Strategy**

Evacuate to shelter area  
Seal the room  
Drop, cover and hold  
Get to high ground

### **ADULTS**

Lead safety strategy  
Account for students and adults  
Notify if missing, extra or injured students or adults

**Other Sources of Information for SMS Families:**

Please visit our school website at <http://www.spartaschools.org/middleschool/>. On this site you can access teacher contact information, view our building calendar and also access digital copies of this handbook and our monthly parent newsletter, "News You Can Use". We also regularly update our Sparta Middle School Facebook page to keep families informed. You can access it [HERE](#).

**Principal's Welcome:**

Dear Sparta Middle School Parent/Guardian:

I would like to personally thank you for entrusting our team of teachers and support staff with the responsibility of educating your child. It is my first priority to provide your child with a safe, caring and orderly environment. Our mission is to work in partnership with you to ensure that your child's progress is monitored and that we facilitate their growth as both students and citizens. Your child is entering a building full of educators committed to fostering a positive, collaborative culture rooted in a belief that all students are capable of reaching their full potential.

I encourage you to email or call me directly with any concerns or questions that may arise during your child's time here in our school. Communication between home and school is essential. I welcome your feedback and look forward to working alongside you to make your child's time at Sparta Middle School enjoyable and successful.

I can think of few things as rewarding as supporting and educating young people, especially in a community like ours. As the Principal of Sparta Middle School, my hope is that we can work cooperatively to recognize and celebrate your student's successes and offer support when needed. I am confident that with your help, we can make your child's experience at Sparta Middle School great!

Sincerely,

Brad Wood  
Principal, Sparta Middle School

### **Sparta Area Schools Mission Statement:**

Creating valuable relationships and innovative learning experiences within our schools and community that empowers all learners to thrive and excel.

### **Sparta Area Schools Vision Statement:**

Cultivating a dynamic, passionate community that empowers all learners to lead successful lives.

### **Sparta Area School District Exit Standards:**

TO IMPLEMENT THE MISSION STATEMENT, STUDENTS OF SPARTA AREA SCHOOLS WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY ARE:

- Self-directed learners who anticipate, gather, organize, analyze, and employ data to cope with a changing world.
- Productive citizens who promote activities for the health and welfare of self and others.
- Creative thinkers who use varied strategies and resources to solve problems.
- Effective communicators who listen, speak, write, and read proficiently in a variety of situations.
- Cooperative workers who function effectively in groups to collaborate and solve problems.
- Quality producers who create intellectual, artistic, and useful products reflecting high standards and modern technologies.

### **Non-Discrimination Statement/Policy of Sparta Area Schools: (Board Policy 1422)**

#### **1422 - NONDISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

The Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), disability, age, religion, height, weight, marital or family status, military status, ancestry, genetic information, or any other legally protected category, (collectively, "Protected Classes"), in its programs and activities, including employment opportunities.

#### **Definitions:**

Words used in this policy shall have those meanings defined herein; words not defined herein shall be construed according to their plain and ordinary meanings.

**Complainant** is the individual who alleges, or is alleged, to have been subjected to unlawful discrimination/retaliation, regardless of whether the person files a formal complaint or is pursuing an informal resolution to the alleged discrimination/retaliation.

**Respondent** is the individual who has been alleged to have engaged in unlawful discrimination/retaliation, regardless of whether the Reporting Party files a formal complaint or is seeking an informal resolution to the alleged discrimination/retaliation.

**School District community** means students and Board employees (i.e., administrators, and professional and classified staff), as well as Board members, agents, volunteers, contractors, or other persons subject to the control and supervision of the Board.

**Third Parties** include, but are not limited to, guests and/or visitors on School District property (e.g., visiting speakers, participants on opposing athletic teams, parents), vendors doing business with, or seeking to do business with, the Board, and other individuals who come in contact with members of the School District community at school-related events/activities (whether on or off District property).

**Day(s):** Unless expressly stated otherwise, the term "day" or "days" as used in this policy means a business day(s) (i.e., a day(s) that the Board office is open for normal operating hours, Monday - Friday, excluding State-recognized holidays).

For purposes of this policy, "military status" refers to a person's status in the uniformed services, which includes the performance of duty, on a voluntary basis, or involuntary basis, in a uniformed service including active duty, active duty for training, initial active duty for training, inactive duty for training, full-time National Guard duty. It also includes the period of time for which a person is absent from employment for the purpose of an examination to determine the fitness of the person to perform any such duty as listed above.

### **District Compliance Officers**

The Board designates the following individuals to serve as the District's "Compliance Officers" (also known as "Civil Rights Coordinators") (hereinafter referred to as the "COs").

Steve Johnson, Director of Academic Services

616-887-0068 ext. 6211

steve.johnson2@spartaschools.org



### **SMS Snack Policy During Class:**

Students are allowed to bring a snack to their class as long as it is not a disruption to the learning environment. Students may also bring water to drink. During lunch students may consume school appropriate beverages\* other than water. Snacks and water are not allowed in the gymnasium, band room, or library/learning commons.



### **SMS Beverage Policy:**

[CDC/American Pediatric Society info on caffeinated beverages](#)

At Sparta Middle School, we encourage students to make healthy choices. During school hours, with the exception of passing time before AM E4S, water is the only beverage allowed in academic areas. Students may drink other beverages (juice, milk, etc) in the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch. Energy Drinks (beverages that contain large doses of caffeine, and other legal stimulants like ephedrine, guarana, and ginseng), are known to have dangerous side effects for children and are not permitted for student consumption on school grounds from 7:30am-2:16pm. All beverages need to have the ability to be sealed and spill proof. Open containers are not allowed.



## [2024-2025 SAS District Calendar - click to print](#)

### SPARTA MIDDLE SCHOOL DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

\*This is an alternating block schedule. Students will attend their 1st, 3rd and 5th hour classes on "BLUE" days and their 2nd, 4th and 6th hour classes on "WHITE" days. Students will attend their classes every other day with the exception of Essentials 4 Success which students will have every day in the morning and afternoon.

<b>Doors Open/Breakfast</b>	7:30am-7:40am
<b>E4S</b>	7:40-8:05am
<b>1st/2nd</b>	8:10-9:40am
<b>3rd/4th</b>	9:45-11:15am
	11:20am -1:25pm A Lunch: 11:20-11:50 (7/8) B Lunch: 11:53-12:23 (6) C Lunch: 12:26-12:56 (7/8)
<b>5th/6th (&amp; Lunch)</b>	
<b>E4S/Earned Activity Time</b>	1:30-2:16pm

### E4S EXPECTATIONS

## E4S

### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

**TO BRING:**

- CHARGED CHROMEBOOK
- MISSING WORK
- BOOK
- PENCIL & PAPER
- CALCULATOR
- SIGNED E4S PASS

**TO DO:**

- FOLLOW THE MENU OF OPTIONS
- USE TIME WISELY

**WHY:**

- EARNED ACTIVITY TIME
- MS DANCES
- IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO!

## E4S

### MENU OF OPTIONS

**STUDENTS WILL...**

- CHECK POWERSCHOOL
- WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON?
- WHAT ARE YOU MISSING?
- CHECKLIST:
  - MATH
  - ELA
  - SOCIAL STUDIES
  - SCIENCE
  - ENCORE

**THEN STUDENTS WILL...**

- COMPLETE ASSIGNED / MISSING WORK
- PREP FOR THE NEXT SCHOOL DAY
- READ YOUR BOOK
- EMAIL REQUEST PASS FROM TEACHER FOR FOLLOWING DAY FOR E4S

### SMS Grading Policy:

At Sparta Middle School, our teaching staff utilizes an 70/30 grading policy. This means that summative assessments comprise 70 percent of a student's final semester grade while 30 percent of the grade is made up of formative assessments. As a rule of thumb, summative assessments measure a student's learning over a larger amount of material that has been taught over an extended period of time. Formative assessments are utilized to measure a student's learning more frequently and typically are shorter, covering less material.

### Summative Assessment Retake Grading Policy for ELA, Math, Science & Social Studies:

Within 2 weeks of the original summative assessment date or when the assessment is returned to the student with a grade, a student and/or teacher may arrange for a retake of the assessment during ASC, EAT or another mutually agreed upon time.

Students who earn a 74% or lower on a summative assessment are eligible to retake the assessment.

Scoring guidelines of a summative assessment retake are as follows:

- A student may increase their score up to a 75% on a summative assessment they retake.
- The new grade for the assessment is determined by taking the score on the retake up to 75%.
- If a student's score is lower on the assessment when they retake it, the first score will remain unchanged.
- Students may only retake a summative assessment one time.

Students & parents can identify what assessments are summative or formative by referring to the syllabus in each of their classes.

### 2024-2025 SMS Recommended Supply Lists link:

Content Area	Recommended Supplies
English/Language Arts	-A binder with pockets, used only for this class (or a folder with pockets and fasteners for paper) -A notebook for writing, used only for this class -Pencils and pens with blue or black ink -Headphones or earbuds to use with audio text.
Mathematics	A 1.5 inch binder Divider tabs (optional) Spiral notebook <u>or</u> loose-leaf lined paper Pencils Erasers (cap erasers preferred)



	Ruler and/or Protractor Scientific Calculator A highlighter
<b>Social Studies</b>	3 Ring Binder 1 Spiral Bound Notebooks Pencils/Colored Pencils Highlighters Headphones/Earbuds for school only
<b>Science</b>	1 Inch 3-Ring Binder Spiral Notebook or Loose Leaf Paper Pencils & Colored Pencils Headphones or Earbuds
<b>Art</b>	Pencils/Colored Pencils Markers
<b>Spanish 1 &amp; 2</b>	3 Ring Binder, Earbuds and a writing utensil
<b>Band &amp; Choir</b>	Pencils 1 inch 3-ring binder with pockets and page protectors Instrument (band only)

*\*Please note it is not a requirement that your son/daughter arrive with these materials on the first day of school. However, if you are able to provide them with these items it would be greatly appreciated.*

### **Kent School Services Network (KSSN)**

KSSN is an initiative that involves many partners, but a single goal; to ensure all children are healthy and learning. With the help of the KSSN coordinator, KSSN mental health clinician, and many local community members & partners we are able to bring health and human services directly in the school building. This partnership provides a one-stop location for students and their families to easily access services.

#### **KSSN Vision:**

- Bring the school and community together
- Create an environment which increases learning, growth, and achievement
- Students and their families are able to get the services they need, when they need them  
- at school
- Assist in the development of the whole child to ensure that children are physically, emotionally, socially, and academically ready to learn

#### **Goals of KSSN:**

- Increase student achievement
- Lower student absences

- Increase access to mental health services
- Actively engage parents and community involvement
- Effectively coordinate and deliver resources and services as needed
- Provide support to students, families, and the school

#### KSSN Staff

Community School Coordinator - helps connect students and families to services, cultivates relationships with community partners to bring needed resources and supports into the school, assists with attendance initiatives, and whatever else may be needed to support our students, families and staff.

Mental Health Clinician - provides counseling services to students within the school building, creates and facilitates groups based on student need, as well as providing direct help to families.

For more information contact our KSSN Coordinator:

Sarah Cline

[sarah.cline@spartaschools.org](mailto:sarah.cline@spartaschools.org)

887-8211 ext. 2207

#### **Message from our School Nurse: Mrs. Marie Uzarski**

It is our goal here in Sparta to provide your children with a safe and healthy environment in which to learn. Please notify the school as soon as possible of any medical concerns that your child may have. This information will help us meet your child's medical needs here at school. Please understand that this information is kept confidential and shared on a need to know basis only.

Please visit the "Nurse's Information" link on our Sparta Area Schools website at <http://www.spartaschools.org/departments/nurseinformation/>. This is designed to provide you with practical information about many aspects of your student's health and well-being.

If you have questions or need more information, please contact Nurse Marie at your convenience. She can be reached via email at: [marie.uzarski@spartaschools.org](mailto:marie.uzarski@spartaschools.org)

**\*\*\*\*The school nurse has responsibilities within the school district that requires her to visit each building on a daily basis.**

**Because of this, Nurse Marie only spends a portion of her day at the Middle School.\*\*\***

#### **Medication Information:**

If your student is required to take medication during the school day, it will be necessary for the medication to be kept and taken in the health office. At the Middle and High School level, inhalers and Epipens can be self-carried with physician approval and the completion of the Self Carry/Self-Administration Medication Authorization Form.

In January 2024, Sparta Area Schools revised their medication administration policy to align with state law. This medication policy is for **ALL medication** given at school **including prescription AND over-the-counter medication**. This policy also applies short-term or single dose medications. The district understands that this is a change from the previous policy, but please understand **the State of Michigan requires a physician/provider signature for school staff to administer any medication to your student**. (Section 380.1178 of the Michigan School Code).

**Please note, no new medications will be accepted without the proper Medication Administration Form on file.** Signed forms can be returned to your student's building office via email, fax or hard copy.

**All medications must be dropped off by a parent/legal guardian.** Students are not permitted to drop off medications. Parents are responsible for keeping track of when your students need prescription refills. All medications must be received in their original pharmacy container with a current pharmacy label that states student name, medication name, dosage, and time to be administered. Non-prescription medications must also be in its original packaging/container. School staff are not permitted to administer unlabeled medications. **The school will not have any over-the-counter medication (pain reliever, creams, lotions, or cough drops) to dispense to students.**

#### **End of Year Medication Pick-Up:**

All prescription and over-the-counter medications must be picked up within one week of the last day of school. **Medications can only be released to parents or guardians.** Any medications that have not been picked up at that time, will be disposed of according to school policy.

#### **Student Cell Phone/Smartwatch/Personal Electronic Device Usage (PED) Usage:**

Students at Sparta Middle School are expected to keep their phones, smartwatches, and personal electronic devices (PEDs) turned off, out of sight, and not on their person during the school day (leave device in their bag or backpack). Ear buds may be used by students during class time for academic reasons, but may not be visible in hallways/common areas during passing time, before school starts or during lunch.

Students at SMS who choose to bring a personal electronic device of any kind to school, do so at their own risk. Teaching staff and administration are not responsible for lost, stolen or broken devices. Students are expected to follow the SMS technology policy to ensure responsible use of technology at all times, to maximize in class learning, to maximize their safety and the safety of those around them. Administration reserves the right to revoke technology privileges as needed due to students' use/misuse.

- Phones, smartwatches, and PEDs must be safely stored in a bag or other secure location **out of sight and not on their person** where it cannot cause a distraction to themselves or others.

- Phones must be on silent or turned off while on school grounds upon arrival at school through the end of the school day at **2:16**. Vibrating phones can be confiscated.
- Student use of cell phones, smartwatches, and PEDs in any school bathroom is prohibited.
- Taking pictures or recording video is strictly prohibited at all times while on school grounds, or on school buses without a school official's permission.
- Use of social media on school grounds is prohibited.
- Students may use their cell phones, smartwatches, and PEDs to communicate with home after the end of day bell sounds.

\*Students will always be granted permission to call home during the school day from a school phone. Students may also ask permission of their teacher to make a phone call using their device while in class on a case by case basis.

\*Parents/Guardians wishing to communicate with their student(s) during the school day can do so by calling the office and leaving a message which will be delivered by our staff to their student.

#### **Possession/Use of Distracting Items in Class:**

To ensure students are learning in an environment that is free from unnecessary distractions, students are not permitted to possess or use fidget spinners or other distracting items in class. Fidget spinners or other items that are a distraction to self and others may be confiscated by the teacher and turned into the RTC. The student may then pick up the confiscated item(s) at the end of the school day. If a student continues to use a fidget spinner or other device that causes a distraction after being given the RTC questions by their teacher, the student will receive appropriate disciplinary consequences in addition to having the device/materials confiscated. Appropriate accommodations will be provided for students who have an IEP or 504.

#### **Dress Code:**

Sparta Middle School encourages our teachers to use their discretion to address student clothing when/if there is inappropriate content or clothing that is deemed to be too revealing for the school/classroom environment. Students whose clothing or facial make-up/drawings are regarded as inappropriate or as a disruption to the learning environment will be asked to change into alternative clothing and/or remove said make-up/drawings. If the student is unable to comply a phone call home will be made to make arrangements to get a change of clothing so the student can remain at school and in class or the school may supply the student with alternative clothing as available. If the student refuses to comply or continues to wear an item that has previously been deemed inappropriate the Progressive Discipline Rubric will be followed and consequences will be awarded.

**\*Hoods:** Hoods are not permitted to be worn during passing time or in common spaces, including the cafeteria, or while inside the building before and after school. Hoods may be worn in classrooms with teacher permission.

### **Gum Policy:**

Students are permitted to chew gum as long as it does not disrupt the educational process. Students are expected to demonstrate respectful behavior when they chew gum. Examples of respectful behavior include chewing with one's mouth closed, no gum snapping, no blowing bubbles, and disposing of the gum and wrappers in the proper receptacles.

Students who are disruptive with their gum or dispose of it improperly may lose their gum chewing privilege. All staff reserves the right to prohibit gum chewing in their classroom if improper use and/or disposal of gum become chronic.

Gum chewing is not allowed in the Learning Commons, gym, or band and choir rooms. Consequences for students caught chewing gum in these areas will follow SMS Progressive Discipline Rubric.

### **Attendance Policy:**

It is recognized that regular attendance in school is essential to the continued academic success of your student(s) at Sparta Middle School. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to have their student(s) in attendance on a daily basis. If a student is often tardy to school, or if a pattern of absenteeism is noted, the following school Attendance Plan will be followed. KSSN and the middle school administration will make every effort to assist parents/guardians in developing a plan to improve their student's attendance pattern. By law, the school must report absences that are excused and unexcused to the Kent County Intermediate School District's (KISD) truancy office.

### **Ridgeview/Appleview/Middle School Attendance Plan:**

SMS: Parents receive an automatic robo-call from the school with every absence

1st truancy referral will be filed when absences reach 10% of possible days:

- An Attendance Contract meeting will be scheduled with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to complete an attendance contract. This contract will be followed up on every 2 weeks to check for progress in the students attendance and to modify the plan as needed.

2nd truancy referral will be sent when:

- A parent/guardian is not responsive to attempts to schedule the Attendance Contract meeting [the School Resource Officer will make an attempt to hand deliver notice for meeting to the parent/guardian(s) home]
- OR
- Progress towards the goals set in the attendance contract are not being seen
- OR
- Attendance continues to be 89% or less for 2wks or more after attendance contract has been signed
- Kent County Truancy Officer, Mark Larson initiates an investigation

- Parents are asked to schedule meeting with Attendance Team - revise attendance improvement plan

### **Excused Absences:**

A student's absence may be excused if a parent/guardian calls the attendance line at **887-1079** within 24 hours of the date of the day of the student being absent. This is a voice mail system available 24 hours a day. **Calling helps us make sure your student(s) is/are accounted for and safe and not missing.**

Excused absences are still counted as missed school days by the ISD.

### **Unexcused Absences:**

If no phone call is received, or if the phone call is received 24 hours after the absence, the absence will be considered unexcused.

*Please note: all excused and unexcused absences will be counted by the Kent ISD Truancy Office towards truancy.*

### **Medically Excused Absences:**

When students are absent from school for part or all of the day for doctor, dental, or other medical appointments/procedures, it is requested that they return with a notice from their doctor. The medical documentation must be on medical letterhead, with the dates and times of the appointment(s) and/or extended absences, and signed by the medical professional. These must be presented in the SMS office within 48 hours of the students return to school. These absences with documentation as outlined above **will be considered to not** count toward truancy.

### **Pre-Arranged Absences:**

Students who know in advance that they will be absent may request a pre-arranged absence form from the office. Before the pre-arranged absence date, the students are required to return the form to the office complete with a parent signature and make-up work instructions from each teacher. Parents may also choose to phone or email the teachers to request homework at least two weeks in advance of the absence.

### **Homework for Extended Absences:**

Parents may call the office to request homework after the student has been absent two or more days in a row. Please call before 8:30 a.m. to be able to pick up work for your student. Students are responsible to make-up absent work in a timely manner. Failure to do so may result in a failing grade.

### **Tardiness:(DEFINED AS--Student not inside the classroom at the bell & less than 3 minutes after the bell. More than 3 minutes late constitutes "Out-of-Area"):**

Sometimes circumstances occur that prevent students from being to school or in class on time. Tardiness will only be excused if it is due to an appointment or extenuating circumstances as communicated to the administration. A note from the parent/guardian is required to verify the

circumstances. All other tardiness will be considered unexcused. Consequences for tardiness are clearly delineated in the Sparta Middle School Progressive Discipline Rubric and will count toward Truancy.

### **Early Dismissal:**

Early dismissal passes can be obtained from the office on the day the student needs to leave school early for an appointment. Students must bring a note from the parent/guardian to the office when they arrive at school to obtain the pass. If students leave early and will be returning to school, they must check in at the office when they return. Parents/guardians MUST sign their child out in the office before the student is allowed to leave<sup>1</sup>

### **Discipline Policy Guide:**

In order to be:

#### SAFE

We need to keep ourselves under control.

#### CARING

We need to treat each other with respect and courtesy.

#### ORDERLY

We need to follow directions.

TOGETHER we can promote an environment of school pride.

### **Student Code of Conduct:**

#### Student Rights and Responsibilities

- A student has the right to be educated in a safe, caring and orderly environment.
- A student has the right to be educated in a climate of high expectations for success.
- A student has the right to an environment offering a variety of opportunities to learn.
- A student has the right to receive frequent reports of his or her progress in school.
- A student has the right to open communication between the school and their home.

Along with their rights, Sparta Middle School students have a set of responsibilities. These responsibilities help students learn important behaviors which will train them for their future. These responsibilities are:

- Each student is responsible for being in school daily and on time for his or her classes.
- Each student is responsible for producing quality work in class and for class participation.
- Each student is responsible for dressing in appropriate attire respecting the learning environment.
- Each student is responsible for his or her behavior in the classroom, hallways, cafeteria and all areas of the building and school property.
- Each student is responsible for school issued Chromebooks, books and materials. Students will be charged for them if they are lost or damaged.
- Each student is responsible to use all school owned and personal technology, of all forms, in accordance with school policies.

- Students are expected to treat all school property (i.e. Textbooks, Lockers, Desks, Tables, Furniture, etc...) and the property of others with respect. Misuse, vandalism or theft of school or other's personal property will be dealt with using the SMS Progressive Discipline Rubric.

### **Discipline Vision Statement:**

The discipline policy at Sparta Middle School teaches, rather than punishes, resulting in improved student conduct. It provides fair and logical consequences for misconduct, determined by our knowledge of the child, in order to preserve student dignity.

### **Discipline Process Description:**

Sparta Middle School discipline is designed to maintain the dignity of the student. Consequences for poor choices will be designed to provide a learning experience for the student. Consequences are given based on the poor choice the student makes. Consequences will be designed to fit the students and the situations where problems have occurred. Parent support is required for the school to be effective in helping students learn from their mistakes.

### **Discipline Process & Consequences:**

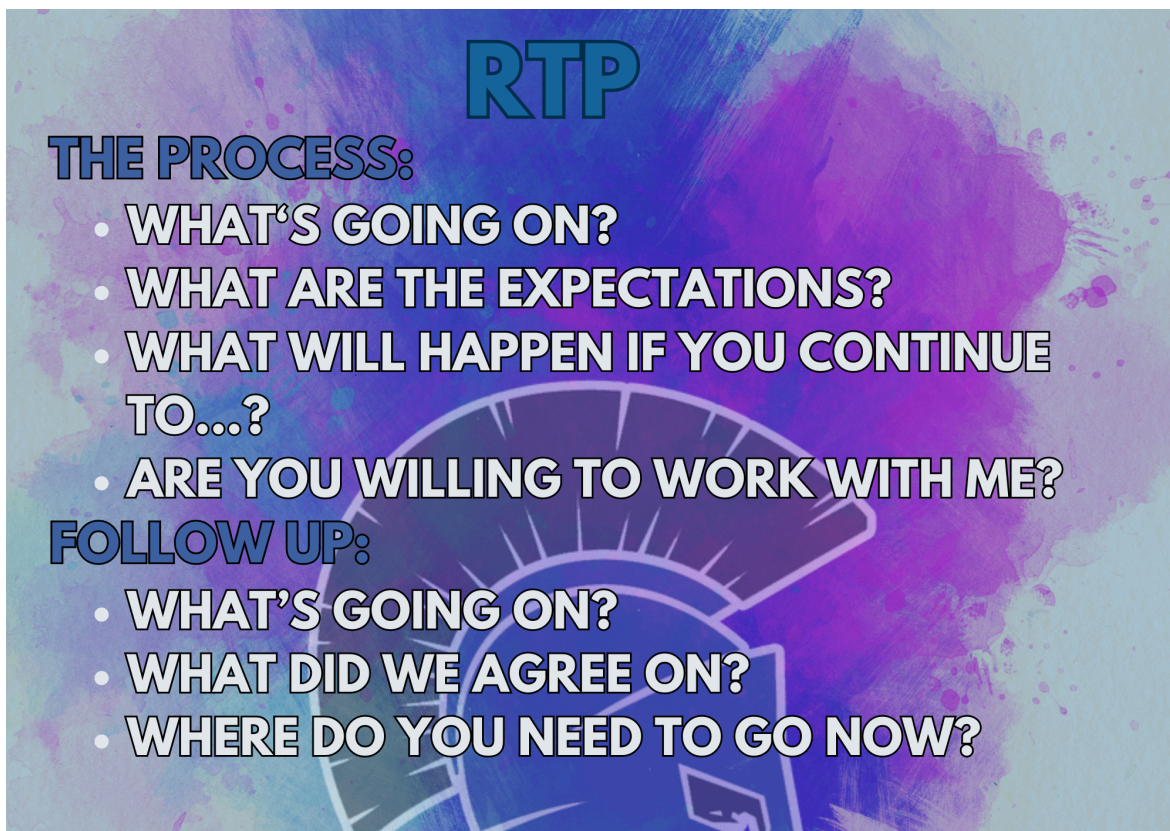
The school administration and teaching staff designs consequences to fit the actions or reactions of the student. We will assess each situation, looking carefully at the facts of the incident as well as the circumstances in which the incident occurred.

Our main goal is to work with the student and parent to keep incidents from escalating to a serious nature. We want all of our students to be successful and to feel comfortable in school so they can learn the skills they need to function in today's society.

- Student behavior on the bus, at the bus stop, and at all athletic events and other school sponsored events/activities are under the jurisdiction of the Sparta Middle School/Sparta Area Schools behavioral policies. Students may be disciplined in school for misbehavior at events just as they can during the school day.
- More serious behaviors/unsafe choices and/or patterns of behavior that are disruptive/unsafe to a student and those around them may require students to appeal to administration before a decision is made about the eligibility for privileges including, but not limited to, field trips, dances, assemblies, 8th Grade Recognition and other end-of-year activities.
- Certain behaviors/unsafe choices may lead to a student becoming ineligible for privileges including, but not limited to, field trips, dances, assemblies, 8th Grade Recognition\*, and other end-of-year activities. This will be based on the severity of the offense and the discretion of the administration.



The process being used at Sparta Middle School to assist with this goal is the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP).



The Responsible Thinking Process (RTP) is a discipline process that teaches students how to think through their behavior and accept responsibility for their actions. The key component of this process is its focus on teaching students how to achieve their goals without getting in the way of others trying to do the same thing.

The Responsible Thinking Center (RTC) is where students are referred to when they continue to violate the rights of others. In the RTC, students work on a plan to learn how to achieve what they want without interfering with the rights of others. If a student chooses to disrupt the learning process in the classroom, the teacher will initiate a series of questions that are designed to allow the student to think about his/her actions and respond appropriately and stay in class. If the student chooses to continue to disrupt, then he/she has made the choice to go to the RTC. In the RTC, the student will create a written plan regarding the disruption. The plan must be negotiated and discussed/reconciled with the teacher/person in charge when returning to class. Each visit to the RTC is documented and kept in the student's discipline file. Additional consequences may be forthcoming for students who cause frequent disruptions to the classroom, exhibit a pattern of misbehavior, or participate in serious acts of misconduct. Students who do not follow the rules and procedures of the RTC will be given appropriate consequences. **Administration reserves the right to alter consequences as needed.**

All Sparta Middle School teachers and staff are expected to use the Responsible Thinking Process in all environments of the school.

### **Search and Seizure:**

To maintain order and discipline in the schools and to protect the safety and welfare of students and school personnel, school authorities may search a student, student lockers and student cars under the circumstances outlined below and may seize any illegal, unauthorized or contraband materials discovered in the search. Student lockers and desks are school property and remain at all times under the control of the school district; however, students are expected to assume full responsibility for the security of their lockers and desks. Students should not expect privacy regarding items placed in school property because school property is subject to search at any time by school officials. Periodic general inspections of lockers and desks may be conducted by school authorities for any reason at any time without notice, without student consent and without a search warrant. A student's failure to permit searches and seizures as provided in this policy will be considered grounds for disciplinary action. A student's person and/or personal effects (e.g., purse, book bag, athletic bag, electronic devices) may be searched whenever a school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that the student is in possession of illegal or unauthorized materials or content. If a properly conducted search yields illegal or contraband materials such findings shall be turned over to proper legal authorities for ultimate disposition. 4.18.1 Canine Detection During the school year, canines will be used to search the campus to determine if there are any illegal or unauthorized items on campus. This may include all areas of campus and items on the campus, inside and outside the building. Student possessions may be inspected by the canines. A positive detection by a canine constitutes a reasonable suspicion that there is an illegal or unauthorized material present.

### **Additional Consequences:**

Discipline at Sparta Middle School is progressive. If a student continually fails to respond to interventions, the consequences will increase in severity. Parental support can help deter students from a pattern of continual misbehavior. An intervention may be called for, involving parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, and student. Some incidents of misconduct may result in a conference with the Assistant Principal and/or Principal and an assignment of an ISS or OSS. An In-School Suspension (ISS) takes place in the RTC and is designed to allow the student to remain in school and do his/her school work within a supervised setting. In the case of an Out-of-School Suspension (OSS), the student is not allowed on school property or to attend any school related function(s) while suspended. Arrangements may be made to provide school work for the student given an OSS depending on the length of the OSS. **Administration reserves the right to alter consequences as needed.**

Per State of Michigan legislation, the following factors are considered and followed when issuing disciplinary consequences:

**\*All reported incidences/allegations will be followed up on/investigated.**

The following will always be considered before determining an appropriate level of consequence(s).

1. The student's age.
2. The student's disciplinary history.
3. Whether the student is a student with a disability.
4. The seriousness of the violation or behavior committed by the student.
5. Whether the violation or behavior committed by the student threatened the safety of any student or staff member.
6. Whether restorative practices will be used to address the violation or behavior committed by the student.
7. Whether a lesser intervention would properly address the violation or behavior committed by the student.

### **Restorative Circles & Conferences:**

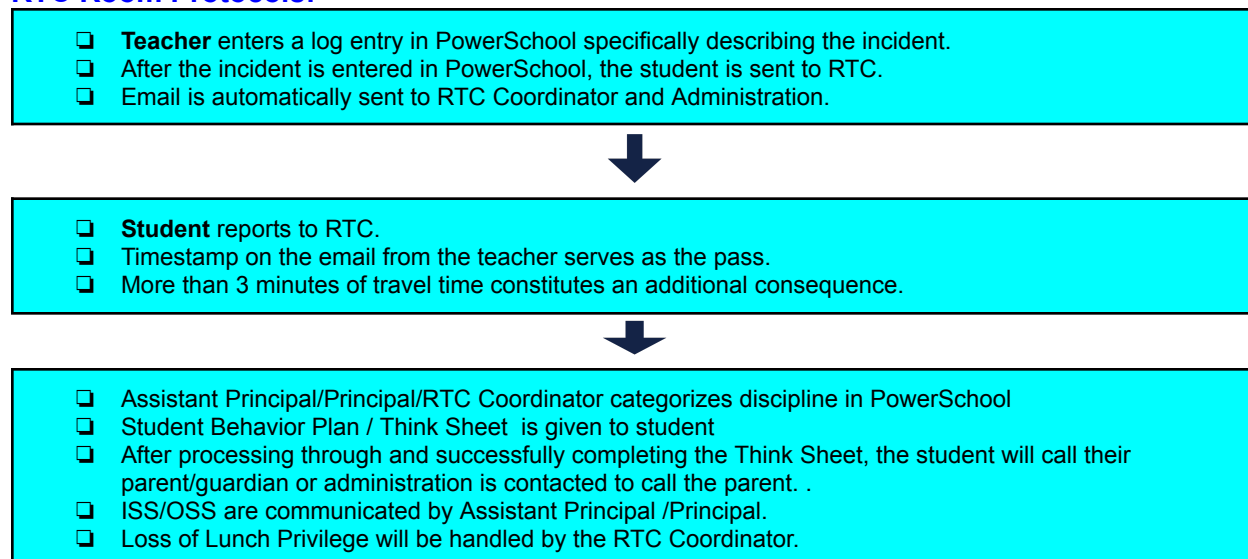
**"Restorative circles and restorative conferences allow victims, offenders and their respective family members and friends to come together to explore how everyone has been affected by an offense and, when possible, to decide how to repair the harm and meet their own needs" (McCold, 2003).** Restorative circles are used, when able, to bring together both the harmed and the one who caused the harm in a structured meeting. The goal is to hold the offender accountable for the harm they caused and to repair the damage caused to the harmed by allowing both parties to be involved in the process versus just punishing the one who caused the harm. Research supports this strategy's ability to repair the harm caused to both sides, restore a sense of community, hold the person(s) responsible accountable for their actions and decrease repeated behaviors in the future. This process is used in conjunction with our Progressive Discipline Rubric and will be used whenever possible. **Consequences may be altered if this process is followed at the discretion of Administration.**

# RTC

## RTC EXPECTATIONS:

- ENTER ROOM RESPECTFULLY
- CHECK IN WITH RTC TEACHER
- TAKE A SEAT & FILL OUT THE THINK SHEET
- WHEN FINISHED, RAISE YOUR HAND
- THOUGHTFULLY PROCESS WITH THE RTC TEACHER & MAKE A PLAN
- EXIT THE RTC WITH PERMISSION & PLAN OR PASS BACK TO CLASS

### RTC Room Protocols:



### Eligibility for Co-Curricular Events (Field trips, 8th Grade Recognition, 6th Grade Camp, assemblies, dances, etc...):

Students are encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities whenever there is an opportunity to do so. Students participation in these activities is a privilege. Students may need to appeal to administration or may be deemed ineligible to participate in co-curricular events/activities for serious acts of misconduct or for repeated inappropriate choices/behaviors.

It is our goal to ensure that all students who participate in **8th Grade Recognition**, assemblies, dances, go on field trips, etc...have demonstrated an ability to make positive choices and not compromise the experience for those around them. We at Sparta Middle School believe in every student's ability to make positive choices consistently, especially when the expectations have been communicated clearly. A student's failure to make positive choices may result in a loss of privileges in some instances

### **Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Racial Harassment, Bullying and Aggressive Behavior:**

Sparta Area Schools' policy prohibits harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and hazing of students. This behavior disrupts the educational process and interferes with this District's commitment to provide a stable environment to its students. All students are expected to conduct themselves with respect for the dignity of others. The Sparta Area Schools, because of its desire to prevent and prohibit this behavior, adopts this policy and gives notice that it is wrong and will not be tolerated by this District.]

If a pattern of harassment is established, or if the circumstances of an individual incident are identified as harassment, the following consequences will be applied: up to a 10-day suspension, police contact, and possible recommendation for expulsion or long-term suspension.

### **Definition of Harassment:**

- a) Submission to such unwelcome conduct or communication is made either an explicit or implicit condition of utilizing or benefiting from the services, activities, or programs of the School District
- b) Submission to, or rejection of, the unwelcome conduct or communication is used as the basis for a decision to exclude, expel or limit the harassed student in the terms, conditions, or privileges of the School District
- c) The unwelcome conduct or communication interferes with the student's education, creates an intimidating hostile or offensive environment, or otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities. This may include racial slurs, mocking behavior, or other demeaning comments.

### **Definition of Sexual Harassment:**

Sexual Harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- a) Verbal harassment or abuse
- b) Pressure for sexual activity
- c) Repeated remarks with sexual or demeaning implications
- d) Unwelcome touching
- e) Sexual jokes, posters, cartoons, etc.
- f) Suggesting or demanding sexual involvement, accompanied by implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, safety, job, or performance or public duties.

### **Bullying and Other Aggressive Behavior Toward Students or Staff:**

The Sparta Board of Education believes that a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. It is the policy of the District to provide a safe and nurturing educational environment for all of its students. This policy applies to all activities in the District, including activities on school property, in a school vehicle, and those occurring off school property if the student or employee is at any school-sponsored, school-approved or school-related activity or function, such as field trips or athletic events. "Bullying" means any written, verbal, or physical act, or any electronic communication, including, but not limited to, cyberbullying, that is intended or that a reasonable person would know is likely to harm 1 or more pupils either directly or indirectly by doing any of the following:

- Substantially interfering with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of 1 or more pupils.
- Adversely affecting the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school district's or public school's educational programs or activities by placing the pupil in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing substantial emotional distress.
- Having an actual and substantial detrimental effect on a pupil's physical or mental health.
- Causing substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school.

Any student who believes s/he has been or is the victim of bullying should immediately report the situation to the building principal. The student may also report concerns to a teacher or counselor who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate administrator.

Every student is encouraged, and every staff member is required to report any situation that they believe to be aggressive behavior directed toward a student. Reports shall be made to those identified above. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. All complaints about aggressive behavior that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated, and documented. If the investigation finds an instance of bullying or aggressive behavior has occurred, it will result in prompt and appropriate remedial action. The complainant will be notified of the findings of the investigation, and as appropriate, what remedial action has been taken.

Parents may request a complete copy of School Board policy 5517.01 in the main office or may visit our website (<https://www.spartaschools.org/schools/middleschool/>) to view the policy in its entirety. Sparta Area Schools will adhere to State law and update this policy if/when changes are made at the State level.

### **Sexual/Racial Harassment:**

It is the goal of Sparta Middle School to foster an environment where students feel safe and cared for by their teachers and other students.

In the event students report incidents of sexual/racial harassment, the situations will be investigated and appropriate disciplinary actions will be taken toward the individuals involved in the harassment. When a situation warrants it, law enforcement will be contacted and a report filed regarding the harassment situation.

If you feel you are being sexually harassed:

- Let the person know that you do not like their behavior or comments and that you want them to stop.
- Tell a trusted adult with whom you feel comfortable sharing the information and who will support you.
- Write the incident in your own words. Include who was involved, who witnessed the incident, what happened, when it happened, where it happened, and how it made you feel.
- See a school official: teacher, coach, counselor, Assistant Principal or the Principal.

The District encourages any student who believes he or she has been subjected to sexual/racial harassment to report his/her concerns directly to any building principal or guidance counselor.

Board Policy 2266 addresses sexual harassment:

#### 2266 - **TITLE IX SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

**The District prohibits unlawful sex discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, in any of its education programs or activities in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and corresponding implementing regulations.**

Complaints or reports of sexual harassment shall be handled as confidentially as possible. However, in certain circumstances, the District may be required by the Child Protection Law to report child sexual abuse to the Department of Social Services or other designated law enforcement agency.

All reports or complaints of sexual/racial harassment will be promptly investigated by appropriate District representatives. Any student who violates this policy will be subject to appropriate corrective action, including suspension or expulsion.

The District prohibits retaliation against students who file or make such complaints. Filing of a complaint or otherwise reporting sexual/racial harassment will not reflect upon an individual's status nor will it affect a student's grades or work assignments. However, the District will take appropriate action if it finds that a student has deliberately filed a false complaint.

*The Sparta Area Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability in its programs and activities. In order to protect these rights and assure compliance, the Sparta Area School District has appointed Mr. Steve Johnson as Coordinator of Title II, Mr. Steve Johnson as Coordinator of Title IX, VI, and the Age Discrimination Act and Mrs. Allison Dykstra as the Coordinator of Section 504. The district Anti-Harassment Compliance Officer is Mr. Steve Johnson.*

#### **Compliance With Federal/State Laws/Board Policies:**

##### **WEAPONS AND CRIMINAL ACTS**

As of December 1995, the Schools Legislative Requirements were revised to read that school districts are **required** to **expel** students who possess a dangerous weapon in a weapon free school zone or commit arson or criminal sexual misconduct in a building or on school grounds. The State Law also requires the school districts to expel students who bring a weapon

to school for not less than one year. (See Policy 5772 for more details). Amendments to the state law require districts to consider seven factors before expelling or suspending a student for more than 10 days for any of the following behaviors:

- Student in grade 6 or above who commits physical assault against another pupil
- Any student who brings a dangerous weapon on school property, commits arson or criminal sexual conduct
- Student in grade 6 or above who commits physical or verbal assault against an employee, volunteer, or contractor or makes a bomb threat

Except for possession of a firearm, the following seven factors will be considered prior to expelling or suspending a student for more than 10 days:

- 1. The student's age.**
- 2. The student's disciplinary history.**
- 3. Whether the student is a student with a disability.**
- 4. The seriousness of the violation or behavior committed by the student.**
- 5. Whether the violation or behavior committed by the student threatened the safety of any student or staff member.**
- 6. Whether restorative practices will be used to address the violation or behavior committed by the student.**
- 7. Whether a lesser intervention would properly address the violation or behavior committed by the student.**

Restorative practices will be considered in addressing student behaviors at Sparta Middle School. These are practices that emphasize repairing the harm to the victim and the school community caused by a pupil's misconduct.

Restorative practices may include:

- Victim-Offender conference
- Apology
- Community service
- Counseling
- Restitution

Board Policy 5500 describes Sparta Area Schools' expectations for student conduct as follows:

"Respect for law and for those persons in authority shall be expected of all students. This includes conformity to school rules as well as general provisions of law regarding minors. Respect for the rights of others, consideration of their privileges, and cooperative citizenship shall also be expected of all members of the school community.

Respect for real and personal property; pride in one's work; achievement within the range of one's ability; and exemplary personal standards of courtesy, decency, and honesty should be maintained in the schools of this District."

Board Policy 5600 describes Student Discipline as follows:

"...the best discipline is self-imposed and that students should learn to assume responsibility for their own behavior and the consequences of their actions." This policy further states that



students are required to follow rules and submit to disciplinary measures assigned for infraction of those rules.

Policy 5600 states school rules shall require that students:

- Conform to reasonable standards of socially acceptable behavior
- Respect the person and property of others
- Preserve the degree of order necessary to the educational program in which they are engaged
- Respect the rights of others
- Obey constituted authority and respond to those who hold that authority

### **Behavior At Athletic Events:**

Student attendance at athletic events is encouraged to ensure the enjoyment of all spectators, students who are disruptive, disorderly or otherwise do not exemplify good citizenship will be given consequences for their choices. The first offense will be a warning. The second offense any time thereafter is restriction from the current season's attendance of events. The third offense is restriction from all remaining home athletic events for the year.

### **Student Visitors:**

There may be times during the school year when students need to bring a visitor to class. Visitations are to be requested one week before the planned visit. We ask that students plan ahead by getting a permission slip from the main office for the visitor. Approval must first be granted by a building administrator. This slip must be completed by the student and signed by teachers, as well as parents and an administrator.

### **Grading:**

Our goal is for students to successfully complete the current grade level content before they move to the next grade level.

The grading scale is as follows:

A	90%-100%
B	80%-89%
C	70%-79%
D	60%-69%
E	59% or lower with no good faith effort

A "Good Faith Effort" is shown when a student follows the directions, completes the work, and submits the work on the due date, or when a student solicits help before the due date to accomplish the task.

### **Report Cards:**

Report Cards are electronically available for each Semester in PowerSchool(PS).

### **Progress Reports:**

Within our semester academic calendar, progress reports will be available in PS at the midway point of each marking period. Parents may access their student's grades through a PS link found on the district's website,

[www.spartaschools.org](http://www.spartaschools.org). Parents will have their own unique PS login and password to be able to access their students' PS. There are multiple features within PS that parents may change to receive up-to-date information and routine alerts about their student(s) grades.

\*You can obtain a parent login and user password by contacting the middle school office.

### **Student Lockers:**

- STUDENTS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SIGN UP AND BE ISSUED A LOCKER AT OPEN HOUSE.

We will accommodate requests for lockers throughout the school if there is a specific parent request. Please give the SMS Main Office a call at 887-8211 with your request for a locker.

Lockers are the property of Sparta Middle School. Inspections/Searches may occur to promote cleanliness and to ensure safety or compliance with school rules. Each locker is equipped with a combination lock. A locker will be issued only upon special request from a parent/guardian.

## **SMS SPARTAN ATHLETIC CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **Letter to Parents**

This material is important to you if your son or daughter has a desire to participate in interscholastic athletics. We believe that participation in sports provides a wealth of opportunities and experiences, which assist students in personal development. It should be recognized that involvement in interscholastic athletics is a privilege. A student who elects to participate in athletics is voluntarily making a choice of self-discipline and commitment. These are the reasons we place conditions on involvement, as the health and safety and welfare of athletes must be our first priority. Good training habits and lifestyle are necessary for us to insure this experience. Failure to comply with the rules of training and conduct means exclusion from the squad. This concept of self-discipline and commitment is tempered by our responsibility to recognize the rights of the individual within the objectives of the team and the interscholastic program. There is no place in middle school athletics for students who will not discipline their minds and bodies for rigorous competition. This decision is not ours alone but that of the Supreme Court of the United States, as there have been challenges to athletic codes on five occasions and the Supreme Court has ruled in favor of such codes on each occasion under the premise that athletes' safety and health must be insured. Challenges to the athletic code shall be considered, but no consideration shall be given to any party or stakeholder who will not agree to such provisions.

It is the role of the department of athletics to establish and maintain rules that govern the spirit of training and competition for the school district. These are the clear and consistent boundaries that insure the success of our young people. These rules need a broad basis of community support, which is achieved only through communication to the parent(s), the coaches, the

student athletes and fans. It is our hope to accomplish this objective through this athletic policy for students and parents.

When your son/daughter participates in athletics at Sparta Area Schools our staff will strive to provide your son/daughter with:

- Adequate equipment and facilities
- The best available, well-trained coaches
- Equalized contests with skilled officials
- Adequate supervised transportation

### **Student-Athlete Defined:**

A student-athlete is considered to be a member of any interscholastic sports team. This includes, but is not limited to, team managers and student trainers.

### **Message to the Student-Athlete:**

As a student-athlete, you are subject to the Sparta Middle School (SMS) Athletic Code, the rules and regulations of the OK Conference and the rules and regulations of the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA). MHSAA guidelines can be found in the athletic director and principal's office or online at [www.mhsaa.com](http://www.mhsaa.com). Your dedication as a student-athlete is essential for a successful athletic program.

Participation in interscholastic athletics is a privilege and it is also a responsibility. Being a member of a Sparta athletic team is a fulfillment of an early ambition for many students. The attainment of this goal carries with it certain traditions and responsibilities that must be maintained. A great athletic tradition is not built overnight; it takes the hard work of many people over many years. As a member of an interscholastic squad of SMS, you have inherited a wonderful tradition, which you are challenged to uphold. Like anything of value, it comes with a price tag. That price tag is a commitment from you to follow established rules. By participating in athletics to the greatest extent of your ability, you are contributing to the reputation of our school. We base our success on two separate venues:

1. The process - what you can learn through athletics that can be used throughout life
2. The product - the win/loss records of our teams. We field teams to compete and our goal is to achieve and to compete at our best possible level, in every contest.

It is our deepest goal, that there is always a balance between these two areas.

Our tradition at SMS is to prepare our MS athletes for SHS athletics. We strive to give each SMS athlete a fun learning experience where we teach learning to win and lose with honor. We work to develop young people of character, that our community has pride in, on and off the field. We desire to win, but only with honor to our athletes, our schools and our community. Such a tradition is worthy of the best efforts of all concerned.

It will not be easy to contribute to such a great athletic tradition. When you wear the colors of royal blue and white, we assume that you not only understand our traditions, but also are willing to assume the responsibilities that go with them. However, the contributions you make should be a satisfying accomplishment to you and your family and our community. Whether right or wrong, society holds athletes in esteem and your behavior at all times is under scrutiny.

## **Responsibility**

You are expected to share in the responsibility for such an opportunity that is provided. This includes:

- 1. Responsibility to Yourself**

The most important of these responsibilities is to broaden and develop strength of character. You owe it to yourself to derive the greatest benefit from your high school experiences, to live a healthy lifestyle, and to respect your health both physically and mentally at all times.

- 2. Responsibility to your Academic Studies**

Your academic studies, and your participation in other extracurricular activities as well as sports, prepare you for your life as an adult. Athletics, while very important to many young people, is only a small part of life. It is important to realize how few athletes make it to the collegiate level and beyond.

- 3. Responsibility to Your School**

Another responsibility you assume as a squad member is to your school. Sparta Area Schools cannot maintain their position as having outstanding schools unless you do your best in the activity in which you engage.

- 4. Responsibility to your Community**

The community and school tax monies make this athletic experience possible. For that reason, we must remember that we hold a clear and paramount responsibility to our community. You assume a leadership role when you are on the athletic squad. The student body and citizens of the community know you. You are very visible with the spotlight on you. The student body, the community and other communities judge our schools by your conduct and attitude, both on and off the field. Because of this leadership role, you can contribute significantly to school spirit and community pride. Our desire is that our student athletes are a class act, not for the fact that we win rather that we are known as a program of character and excellence. Make Sparta Middle School proud of you and your community proud of your school, by your consistent demonstration of these ideals.

- 5. Responsibility to Others**

As a squad member you also bear a heavy responsibility to your home. If you never give your parents anything to be ashamed of, you will have measured up to that ideal. When you know in your heart that you have lived up to all of the training rules, that you have practiced to the best of your ability everyday and that you have played the game "all out", you can keep your self-respect and your family can be justly proud of you, win or lose.

- 6. Responsibility to Younger Athletes**

The younger students in the Sparta Area Schools are watching you. They know who you are and what you do. The 8th Grade athletes are role models for the young athletes that will come after you. Make them proud. Be an example. They will copy you in many ways. Do not do anything to let them down. Set good examples for them. "Being the first to cross the finish line is only one phase of life. It's what you do after you cross the line that really counts." Ralph Boston, Olympic Gold Medalist

## **Purpose of the Athletic Code**

Through the establishment and enforcement of uniform standards, it is expected that all student-athletes will strive for and attain high standards of self-discipline in all areas of their lives, thereby allowing them to reach their full potential as students and athletes. The Athletic Code defines the positive expectations that we have for coaches, parents and athletes. The common values in our program reflect shared goals and a framework of principles agreed upon by the stakeholders' need for active support from other stakeholders, such as the school board, school administration, other school staff and the community. As in a clearly laid out playing field, it defines how we as a school will establish and maintain a healthy environment in which student athletes can mature through athletics.

This Athletic Code is meant to be a usable, and dynamic document to guide the educational process through our school's athletic program. It defines our mission, philosophy, goals and parameters of our programs.

## **SPARTA MIDDLE SCHOOL INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS PROGRAM**

Sparta Middle School offers the following interscholastic sports to all students in grades 7-8th:

### **1. GIRLS' SPORTS**

Fall: Cross Country\*, Volleyball, Football

Winter I: Competitive Cheer

Winter II: Basketball, Wrestling\*

Spring: Track & Field\*

### **2. BOYS' SPORTS**

Fall: Cross Country\*, Football

Winter I: Basketball

Winter II: Wrestling\*

Spring: Track & Field\*

\*6th Grade athletes may participate fully in practices but will be entered in exhibition only

## **Equal Opportunity**

SMS is an equal opportunity education institution and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex or handicap in its activities, programs or employment practices as required by Title VI, Title IX and Section 504.

## **Philosophy of Athletics**

Athletics are an integral part of the educational process of Sparta Area Schools. Therefore, it shall be referred to as a 'co-curricular' activity rather than an 'extracurricular' one. If our athletic program is to be successful, it must encourage individual physical fitness, develop a knowledge and appreciation of sports, teach athletic skills and cultivate a competitive nature with good sportsmanship. To this end, the athletic program is designed to stress that:

- A. The student-athlete learns the value of teamwork, self-discipline, hard work and personal sacrifice, all of which are necessary attributes which prepare the student-athlete for success in a democratic society. The athlete learns that their contribution to the team is more important than their personal goals or desires.

- B. The student-athlete learns in a positive manner to cope with the competitive nature of our society. The student-athlete learns the value of success, realizing that s/he will not always win, but she/he can succeed when they continually strive to improve.
- C. The student-athlete learns to be a good sport. Through participation in athletics, the student-athlete must develop emotional control, honesty and cooperativeness and learn to be modest in victory and gracious in defeat.
- D. The student-athlete learns the importance of having a sound physical body. To enjoy life and to be a contributing citizen, one must develop good health habits and must maintain a high degree of physical fitness.
- E. The student-athlete will operate within the rules of the sport, and the SMS Athletic Handbook.

In addition, the athletic program of Sparta Area Schools is governed by these general guidelines:

- 1. Participation in interscholastic athletics at SMS is a privilege and not a right. While we do strive for maximum participation, interscholastic athletics is for those that have outstanding physical skills in their respective sports.
- 2. We demand that the coaching staff, student-athletes, student body and adult followers never act in a manner, which would reflect negatively on Sparta Area Schools.
- 3. Success or failure of our athletic programs will be evaluated in light of our educational goals and general guidelines.
- 4. The athletic program at SMS must reflect school and community values.
- 5. We will provide our student-athletes with the best teaching and coaching personnel available.
- 6. We will provide our student-athletes with the best facilities and equipment that are available in relationship to the financial conditions, which exist at the given time.
- 7. We will provide all spectators an opportunity to support the interscholastic teams of Sparta Area Schools.
- 8. Our athletic program will strive to provide all student-athletes an opportunity to grow physically, socially and emotionally, establish positive values and provide for a meaningful experience.

### **Overall Athletic Program Goals**

Research tells us that the most important reasons why students participate in athletics are for:

- 1. Enjoyment (FUN!)
- 2. Participation (in practice and contests)
- 3. Personal improvement (skills of the sport and in performance)

Therefore the primary goals of the SMSI Athletic Program are to:

- a. Offer students an enjoyable experience;
- b. Provide the greatest opportunity possible for athletes to participate in both practice and competitions;
- c. Promote personal improvement in skills, physical condition, performance and knowledge of the sport;

- d. Promote programs of excellence, which will accomplish the above, and lead to success on and off the playing field.
- e. Our teams shall also pursue excellence at all times.

We desire a Program of excellence and strive to win every contest in which our teams compete. Central to the goals of Sparta Area Schools is the belief that interscholastic athletics can and should enhance the character of our youth. We put forth the following as the positive character expectations we hold for the primary stakeholders in our Athletic Program.

### **The Four C'S**

The 4 C's were developed to help develop character through sport. Beyond the basic skills taught, it is our goal to develop the character of our youth through our athletic program. We know that less than 2% of high school athletes go on to play team sports at the collegiate level. Therefore, we understand that high school athletics provide a unique opportunity for the development of not only physical conditioning and athletic skill, but also character traits essential for success in life. To that end we challenge every athlete to strive for the following:

1. **Competence:** The necessary level of knowledge and skill to sufficiently train and compete
  - To develop the skills necessary to participate competently in the game.
  - To demonstrate knowledge of the rules and conventions of the game.
  - To demonstrate knowledge of the strategies of the game.
  - To demonstrate a level of physical conditioning and fitness sufficient to participate competently in the game.
  - To demonstrate knowledge of healthy behaviors including nutritional issues.
  - To understand the necessity of abstaining from the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs in order to achieve the positive benefits of interscholastic athletics
2. **Character:** The pattern of beliefs, attitudes and therefore behavior that relates to moral strength, constitution and essential qualities that embrace the positive values of SMS and the Community
  - To be dependable in fulfilling obligations and commitments.
  - To accept responsibility for consequences of actions and not to make excuses or blame others.
  - To strive to excel.
  - To be committed.
  - To persevere, give 100% effort and not give up in the face of setbacks.
  - To demonstrate truthfulness.
  - To play by the rules of the game and not cheat.
  - To control anger and frustration and refrain from displays of temper and bad language.
  - To accept losing and winning graciously; to congratulate opponents, not sulk, or display other negative behaviors.
3. **Civility:** To demonstrate behavior that exemplifies appropriate respect and concern for others.

- To practice good manners on and off the field.
  - To refrain from trash talk and other put- downs of opponents and teammates
  - To treat all people respectfully regardless of individual differences and to show respect for legitimate authority (e.g. Coaches Officials Captains).
  - To be fair and treat others as one wishes to be treated.
  - To listen to and try to understand others.
  - To be compassionate and sensitive to others.
  - To actively support teammates and others.
4. **Citizenship:** Social responsibility as part of a 'community'
- To be faithful to the ideals of the game including sportsmanship.
  - To keep commitments to the team.
  - To show team spirit, encourage others and contribute to good morale.
  - To put the good of the team ahead of personal gain.
  - To work well with teammates to achieve team goals.
  - To accept responsibility to set a good example for teammates, younger athletes, fans and school community.

## **General Eligibility Regulations**

### 1. *Forms:*

A student-athlete is not permitted to participate in interscholastic competition until the following items have been completed and are on file in the Athletic Office:

- A physical examination by a physician.
- The physician and parent or guardian must sign the physical form. The physical form is available in the Main Office. The physical must be current. A new physical is needed for each school.
- Injury Waiver Form which is part of the physical form.
- Emergency form for all sports which is part of the physical form.
- Pay the activity fee by the appropriate date. The current fee is \$75 per student per year with a \$200 family maximum, which includes students at both the high school and the middle school. The fee does not guarantee a player "playing time," participating means being a member of the team. Signatures on all forms that acknowledge the athletic code has been received and read.

### 2. *Injuries:*

- The certified athletic trainer, physician and/or qualified health care provider can prohibit any student-athlete who sustains an injury from returning to participation until evaluated and released.
- Any student-athlete that sustains an injury is prohibited from returning to participation until the certified athletic trainer has had either written or verbal communication with the coaching staff.
- Any student-athlete who has been attended to by a physician and has been denied participation must have written release from the physician in order to return to participation.



- A parental medical release or waiver is not acceptable for a return to participation following an injury.
- If any healthcare provider involved in the care of the student-athlete feels the student-athlete is unfit to participate, the certified athletic trainer will not allow the student/athlete to participate.
- If a student-athlete is restricted in any physical education class, that student-athlete may not be allowed to participate in interscholastic athletic activities. The certified athletic trainer reserves the right to make exceptions to this rule

### **Academic Eligibility for Student-Athletes**

- Eligibility checks will be completed on a weekly basis for all student-athletes starting on the first Monday of the first week of competition in each season.
- If a Student-Athlete has below a 70% in two or more classes that student will be placed on an “Academic Warning” list. Students with an “Academic Warning” clearance in Final Forms are eligible to practice and compete. That student, as well as their parents and coaches, will be notified via Final Forms.
- The first week a Student-Athlete has below a 60% in two or more classes they will be placed on “Academic Probation” for a one week period—Monday through Sunday. During that week, student-athletes failing more than two classes will be eligible to practice and compete. Students are only allowed one Academic Probation period per season. That student, as well as their parents and coaches will be notified via Final Forms.
- If a student-athlete is below a 60% in two or more classes AND has already used their one-week probation period in that sport that season, that student will become immediately ineligible for competition and placed on Academic Suspension each week they are below a 60% in two or more classes. That student, as well as their parents and coaches will be notified via Final Forms.

### **Attendance Regulations**

1. A student-athlete must be present the full school day on the day of interscholastic competition in order to compete in that day’s activities (i.e. practice, games, etc.) The Principal or Assistant Principal may grant exceptions (i.e. doctor appointments, funerals, family emergencies, etc.).
2. If a student-athlete goes home sick, she/he will not be allowed to participate in practice or competition for that day.
3. An athlete who is suspended from regular classroom attendance for four (4) class periods or longer (out-of-school suspensions) may not practice or take part in interscholastic competition during said suspension.

4. Athletes must have excellent attendance in school. If absenteeism from class becomes a problem, the Principal or Assistant Principal can deny the athlete the privilege of attending practice or games.
5. Coaches may impose their own consequences for players missing practice or games.
6. If the absence is inadvertently overlooked and the student-athlete participates in a contest, s/he must miss the next scheduled practice or contest.

### **Equipment and Uniforms**

1. A student-athlete is financially responsible for all issued equipment.
2. Destroyed, lost, or stolen equipment must be paid for, or the student-athlete will:
  - Not be allowed to participate in the next sport she/he goes out for in middle school.
  - Not receive their athletic award.
  - In the case of seniors, may not participate in graduation.
3. School issued warm-ups and/or jackets are to be worn for games and practices only. They are not to be worn as general clothing items to school. Game uniforms are to be worn for games only.
4. School issued uniform shirts; sweaters or traveling outfits may be worn to school on game days only or as directed by the coach. Only shirts that are appropriate school attire will be allowed.

### **Transportation**

1. It is required that all student-athletes travel (when applicable) with the team on school provided transportation. Exceptions may be granted by the principal, athletic director or his/her designee and will follow the Board of Education transportation policies.
2. If a student-athlete will not be returning with the team, the following steps must be taken:
  - a. Written approval of the coach is obtained before or at the away contest.
  - b. Signed permission statement by a parent/guardian and returned to the coach.

### **Conduct and Values of a Student-Athlete**

The community, school administrators and the coaching staff feel strongly that high standards of conduct and citizenship are essential in maintaining a sound program of athletics. The health, safety and welfare of the student, is our major consideration and transcends any other consideration.

All athletes shall abide by a code of conduct, which will earn them the honor and respect that participation and competition in the interscholastic program affords. Any conduct that results in dishonor to the athlete, the team or the school will not be tolerated. Acts of unacceptable conduct, such as, but not limited to theft, vandalism, disrespect, immorality or violations of law, tarnish the reputation of everyone associated with the program and will not be tolerated.

The conduct of a student-athlete is closely observed in many areas of life. It is important that the student-athlete's behavior be above reproach in the following areas at all times:

- A. In the classroom, the student-athlete should work hard and have good study habits and good behavior. A student-athlete must notify each coach of a disciplinary consequence, which always takes precedence over practice or games.
- B. During competition, a student-athlete must always exhibit good sportsmanship. Use of profanity or illegal tactics is strictly forbidden and will not be tolerated. Student-athletes are not to argue with or show disrespect toward officials, coaches, teammates, opponents or any adult personnel. Disciplinary actions may be left up to the discretion of the coach.
- C. On trips, student-athletes directly represent the community, school and coaches. Therefore, it is expected that all concerned will dress in an acceptable manner when traveling and conduct themselves on the bus in a respectful manner.
- D. A student-athlete must respect school property and equipment at all times. If the student-athlete destroys, loses or steals equipment, s/he is taking from themselves, teammates and the school, entity or person that owned the equipment. Each student-athlete is financially responsible for destruction of equipment or loss of property. Student-athletes and parents will be notified by the coach within two-weeks upon the completion of the season, of any item that is missing or that needs to be replaced due to loss or destruction. Student-athletes, who intentionally destroy or damage school property or equipment, are subject to disciplinary sanctions up to and including loss of the privilege of participating in athletics, suspension or expulsion from school and/or referral to appropriate law enforcement authorities.
- E. There will be occasions when there are conflicts of responsibilities. We will not excuse athletes from practice for routine conflicts, which, with prior planning can be scheduled around practice sessions and contests. Academics are most important, however, every attempt must be made to arrange obligations so that conflicts do not exist.

### **Disciplinary Actions**

All current student-athletes and potential student-athletes shall be considered under the jurisdiction of the athletic code, upon enrollment in the Sparta Area Schools. It is understood that the principal, designee or other administrator may suspend from athletics a student-athlete at any time when the student-athlete's conduct may have a detrimental effect upon the image of Sparta Area Schools.

- A. These regulations are in effect throughout the calendar year, summer months inclusive.
- B. When serving a team suspension, a student-athlete must attend all practice sessions and (unless excused) must be present (not in uniform) at all contests. The only exception to this rule would be if a student-athlete were suspended for the full season in one sport. The student-athlete would not be allowed to participate with the team.
- C. If a second consequence is imposed while a previous consequence is being served, the consequence for the second offense will not begin until the consequence for the first offense has been served.
- D. If a consequence is not completed during a given sports season, the portion not served will be carried over to the next sport that the student-athlete previously participated in. (This would apply to student-athletes who are going into the 7th and 8th grade).

- E. If a student-athlete transfers into Sparta Area Schools while having a suspension from the school s/he is transferring from, that suspension will be upheld.
- F. Student Athletes receiving an In School Suspension (ISS) will be expected to participate in all practices and be present at all athletic competitions but will miss a portion or the entire next competition. The amount of missed competition(s) to be determined by SMS administration in consultation with the Athletic Director in consideration of the SHS Athletic Code of Conduct section 5.23 *Disciplinary Actions* and all subsections of this section.
- G. Student Athletes receiving an Out of School (OSS) will not be allowed to participate in any school and athletic activities for the days of the actual suspension and will miss a competition or more. The number of missed competitions to be determined by SMS administration in consultation with the Athletic Director in consideration of the SHS Athletic Code of Conduct section 5.23 *Disciplinary Actions* and all subsections of this section.

## **SELF-DISCLOSURE**

1. An athlete who, by him/herself or together with his/her parent or legal guardian, voluntarily discloses his/her violation of the substance abuse policy under this Code prior to any reports, charges, or complaints shall be referred to a counselor, and will be required to complete a program as recommended by the counselor. However, loss of eligibility can be modified as hereinafter provided in this section. The specific provisions for self-disclosure, as stated above, are as follows:
  - a. Self-disclosure, whether by the student alone, or together with a parent or legal guardian, may be made to a coach, or to the athletic director or principal of the school, which the athlete attends.
  - b. Self-disclosure, where appropriate in accordance with this Code, shall affect only the appropriate penalty for the violation and shall not affect the status of the violation itself. Self-disclosure, which meets the requirements of this section, shall apply only to an athlete's first offense. Upon a first violation, where there is appropriate self-disclosure as defined above, the athlete or participant may be referred to a counselor and the counselor will recommend programs.
  - c. Self-disclosure shall not modify the penalties or sanctions for second or subsequent violations. In a first violation situation where an athlete has, as a result of self-disclosure, received the reduced penalty under the provisions of this section, any failure by the athlete to comply with the required program arranged by the counselor or with any other recommendation of the counselor shall result in immediate termination of the reduced penalty status. The penalty for the original violation shall be the same as though there had been no self-disclosure.

**Student Valuables: Sparta Middle School strongly recommends that students leave all valuables (including unnecessary amounts of cash, cell phones, iPods/mp3 players, phones, jewelry, etc.) at home. Sparta Middle School is not responsible if these types of items are lost or stolen.**

### **Cooperation During Investigation**

It is important for all student-athletes to understand that involvement in our athletic programs is a privilege. With the responsibility of being an athlete, come commitments, which are the conditions of this code of conduct. In the event that a student athlete comes under investigation for possible violations of the provisions of this code, it is expected that:

1. The student-athlete be truthful.
2. That the student-athlete be forthcoming with information.
3. That the student-athlete not be deceptive or untruthful.
4. That the student-athlete be cooperative during the investigation of any student-athlete violation. The student-athlete must be truthful and forthcoming with information or the athletic director has within his/her power to impose a greater level of consequence if it is determined that the student-athlete has lied, been deceptive or untruthful prior to or after the determination of guilt and or consequences. Great weight must be placed on the privilege of representing our community outside the confines of our community and any student-athlete that would fail to be truthful and/or cooperative would jeopardize the perceived character of our programs. Failure to comply with the above conditions may result in full expulsion from the athletic program for the duration of the student-athlete's future career.

### **Additional Rules and Regulations for Student-Athletes**

Each coach has the authority and responsibility, with the approval of the athletic director, to establish his/her own rules and regulations as they pertain to his/her sport. No team rule however, may have as a consequence, one that will be in greater degree than what is allowed in these rules and regulations. All team rules must be in writing and clearly communicated to each team member and his/her parent(s) at the beginning of the season. Coaches have the right to dismiss participants for conduct considered detrimental to the team. To assure that such decisions by individual coaches are reasonably just and fair, any decision can be appealed.