



STUDENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024



Gunston Middle School

Home of Hornet Nation

**2700 S Lang Street
Arlington, Virginia 22206**

www.apsva.us/gunston/

@APSGunston

**Carolyn R. Jackson
Principal**

Office Hours: 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

School Hours: 7:50 a.m. - 2:35 p.m.

Main Office: 703-228-6900



Greetings Gunston Students!

As the new principal of Gunston Middle School, I extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you. I am excited to introduce our updated handbook, a valuable resource designed to ensure your success and well-being in our school community.

Middle school is a time of incredible growth, encompassing social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. This handbook is a crucial tool that will empower you to make informed decisions, take ownership of your learning, and embrace responsible behavior.

At Gunston, we value positive relationships among students, teachers, families, and administrators. Our guiding principles, encapsulated in the acronym PRIDE (Preparation, Respect, Integrity, Determination, and Excellence), are the pillars of our academic journey. By embodying Gunston PRIDE, you will become more self-directed and self-disciplined, fostering a vibrant and supportive school environment.

I urge you and your families to carefully review this handbook, familiarizing yourself with important information on student attendance, behavior expectations, and the wealth of available school resources. Should you have any questions or require assistance, our dedicated teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and staff members are here to support you.

As we embark on this exciting new school year, I am filled with enthusiasm and confidence in your potential. Together, let us make this a remarkable and fulfilling year of growth and achievement.

Warm regards,

Carolyn R. Jackson
Principal



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OFFICE LOCATIONS

Principal	Carolyn R. Jackson	Main Office
Assistant 6 th Grade Principal	Ms. Sanchez	W136
Assistant 7 th Grade Principal	Mr. Burnett	101C
Assistant 8 th Grade Principal	Dr. Hudson	G13
Director of Counseling	Dr. Bruce	121E
Dean of Students	Mr. Stewart	129A
Facilities Manager	Ms. Harris-Thomas	127
Activities Director	Mr. Matos	G47
Instructional Technology Coordinator	Ms. Parquet	G23A
Principal's Admin Assistant	Ms. Gant	Main Office
Registrar	Ms. Ford	Main Office
School Treasurer	Ms. Rector	Main Office
Administrative Assistants	Ms. Bellounis	Main Office
	Ms. Chapman	Main Office
	Mr. Borruto	127
<u>School Counselors:</u>		
Sixth Grade	Ms. Carr	121D
Seventh Grade	Mr. Williams	121F
Eighth Grade	Ms. Gibbs	121B
Immersion Counselor	Ms. Kolody	121G
Intervention Counselor	Ms. Holland	G53
EL Counselor	Ms. Cordero	121A
	Ms. Ramirez	121C



PROGRAMS AT GUNSTON

Gunston is home to three academic programs: the Traditional Middle School Program, the Spanish Partial Immersion Language Program, and the Montessori Middle Years Program. All three programs provide academic excellence in a challenging and nurturing environment.

Traditional Program

Gunston offers a variety of traditional middle school courses in math, language arts, science, social studies, and electives. Students are also encouraged to participate in the numerous clubs, sports and after school activities.

Spanish Partial Immersion

The Arlington County Middle School Spanish Partial Immersion Program is offered at Gunston Middle School as a continuation of the elementary programs offered at Key and Claremont Elementary Schools.

The program is designed to continue the development of Spanish language proficiency. The skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are taught specifically through the language arts, science, and social studies content instruction.

Language of Instruction in Immersion

Courses taught in Spanish:

Social Studies
Science
Spanish Language Arts

Courses taught in English:

Math - English - Electives - P.E.

Montessori Program

The Arlington County Middle School Montessori Program offered at Gunston is a continuation of the elementary program offered at the Public

Montessori Elementary School.

The program is designed to continue the educational methods based on the work of Maria Montessori. Instruction is offered in an environment that encourages students to learn independently and work at their own pace.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

After School Activities

As a Gunston student, you are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities offered after school. We offer lots of opportunities to support you academically, encourage your creativity, and develop your talents and leadership skills. The different after school activities and clubs are announced at the beginning of each school year.

After school activities are divided into two periods. PM 1 runs from 2:35 to 3:20 and PM 2 runs from 3:25 to 4:20.

Check-In (Extended Day)

The Extended Day program requires students to check-in at the end of the school day and goes until 6:00 p.m. Students who are in Check-In may also participate in any Gunston after-school activities.

Community Center

The recreation center located in our building also provides after school activities through the Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation. Programs are open to all Gunston students. Late buses are provided for students who attend activities in the recreation center. For more information, click [HERE](https://registration.arlingtonva.us) or visit <https://registration.arlingtonva.us>



PROCEDURES FOR AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

- You are expected to leave the building at the end of the school day, if you are not staying for after school activities.
- ALL students staying after school must be under the direct supervision of a staff member.
- Students participating in PM1 activities only, must leave the school building and grounds by 3:20p.m. No bus transportation will be provided.
- Students participating in after school events and activities for both sessions will be provided transportation at 4:30 p.m. Late buses will be available on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- **Once students leave the campus, they may not return unless accompanied by an adult.**
- Special sports buses will be provided for athletes on event days.

INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS PROGRAM

At Gunston, you have the opportunity to try out for the different competitive sport teams. The sports program is available to 6th, 7th, and 8th students.

SPORTS INCLUDE:

Boys' Basketball	Girls' Basketball
Boys' Ultimate	Girls' Ultimate
Co-ed Swimming*	
Boys' Soccer	Girls' Soccer
Co-ed Tennis	Co-ed Track

Co-ed Wrestling

*must know how to swim

Practices are usually after school Monday through Thursdays from 2:35 - 4:10 p.m. However, coaches will give a specific practice schedule at the start of the season.

SPORTS FOR 8TH GRADERS

Eighth graders are eligible to try out for high school freshman football, field hockey, volleyball, JV Baseball, Crew, JV Softball and JV Lacrosse.

SPORT PHYSICALS

In order to participate in a sport, students must have a completed physical form dated after May 1, 2023, on file at school. See the activities director, Mr. Matos, for the [physical form](#).

SPORTS CALENDAR

Tennis	September 11
Girls' Soccer	October 18
Ultimate Girls	October 5
Ultimate Boys	September 11
Girls' Basketball	January 2
Boys' Soccer	September 11
Wrestling	January 2
Boys' Basketball	October 18
Swim	TBD
Track	March 11
Cheer	TBD



DAILY ROUTINES

[Policy J-7.4 Student Code of Conduct](#)

[2023-24 APS Student Code of Conduct](#)



ARRIVAL TO SCHOOL

Students riding the bus are reminded that bus pick up may start as early as 6:40 a.m. (and for some students, even earlier). The regular school buses leave Gunston at approximately 2:45 p.m. every day; however, there are late buses provided Monday – Thursday at 4:20 p.m., for students that stay after school for sport practices and other school related activities. Students participating in after school events and activities for both sessions will be provided transportation at 4:20 p.m.

School Bus Conduct

Riding a school bus is a privilege. In order to make all bus rides pleasant and safe, it is expected that students be polite and also that they read and follow the bus regulations. In addition:

- Students must ride their assigned buses.
- Students must follow the school rules while riding the bus.

*** Failure to comply with bus rules may result in the loss of bus riding privileges and/or further disciplinary action.**

[Policy Implementation Procedure E-5.1 PIP-1 Pupil Transportation](#)

ATTENDANCE

Attending school regularly is essential to be a successful student.

Attendance is taken every period of the day.

Tardiness to class and frequent absences will have a negative effect upon your achievement and grades. **Students are responsible for making up missed work when absent.** [Policy J-5.1.30 Attendance](#)

TARDY POLICY

1. Teacher Warning
2. Tardy Reflection Form
3. Lunch Detention
4. Tardy Reflection Form and Parent/Guardian Phone Call
5. Administrative Referral

SKIPPING CLASS

Skipping class is a serious offense. Students should not at any time skip class. If there is a problem, please reach out to your teacher, counselor or administrator. Skipping class will result in:

1. Parent contact
2. Administrator referral
3. Writing a behavior reflection
4. Temporary loss of school privileges

EXCUSED ABSENCES

The following are considered excused absences from school (all others reasons are unexcused):

- Illness, doctor or dentist appointment
- Death in family
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Summons to a court of law
- Suspensions
- Severe family emergency

You must bring a note from parents in order to excuse your absences from school and tardiness to school.



EARLY DISMISSALS

Your parents/family must come to the main office to sign you out of school early. You are not able to leave until your family arrives.

BICYCLES & SKATEBOARDS

Students may ride bikes to school. Any person under the age of fifteen years of age must wear a protective helmet. There are bike racks located near the bus ramp entrance of the school for bike riders. Students are responsible for securing their bike. The school is not responsible for the damage or theft of a bike on school grounds. Skateboarding or rollerblading is not allowed on school grounds.

CAFETERIA

Breakfast is served from 7:20-7:50 a.m. For lunch, the cafeteria provides hot and cold items. You may bring your lunch. Students can apply for free and reduced lunch, speak with your counselor to see if you're eligible. Students cannot at any time during the day order lunch from outside vendors.

CELLULAR PHONES

APS is committed to assisting students and staff members in creating a 21st-century learning environment. To support this progress, APS issued an iPad to each student. **Gunston has a "Phone Away for the Day" policy. Cell phones should not be visible during the instructional day, between the hours of 7:50 am to 2:35 pm, and kept in student lockers if brought to school. Students are prohibited from using phones (as well as tablets, and other mobile devices) in restrooms and locker rooms unless there is a medical necessity or emergency.** Parents/Guardians, multi-disciplinary team members, or other persons with knowledge of students who require access to personally owned devices as an accommodation shall make requests for such accommodations through their respective multi-disciplinary teams. APS is not

responsible for loss or damage of students' APS issued or personal devices. Parents are responsible for damages, repair costs, and loss as described in the APS Acceptable Use Policy.

A personal cell phone does not replace a school issued electronic device. Gunston Middle School is not responsible for any lost or stolen personal devices. **Cell phones will be confiscated if these expectations are not followed, and a parent/guardian will have to come retrieve the device the next day. Additionally, recording others and posting on social media is not allowed.**

[Policy Implementation Procedure I-10.30 PIP-1 Support for Students -Wellness](#)

DEVICE USE

All students are provided with an iPad. Students are expected to use the devices responsibly. Devices should not be misused or decorated in any way. Families may be charged a fee to repair the damage or loss of a device. Students will receive training on Internet Safety and Computer use at the start of the school year. School assigned devices should be charged and brought to school daily. Students' personal electronic devices will not be allowed to be used as a substitute for an issued school electronic device.

Regardless of the device, personal or school-issued, all students are to abide by the Internet policy, [Section M-8 of the Policy Implementation Procedure.](#) [APS Acceptable Use & Responsibility Agreement for Students and Families with Digital Learning Devices](#)

*** Students who violate these guidelines may receive consequences or loss of privileges.**

Students are expected to:



Use technology for educational purposes

For the purposes for completing assignments and or research directed by a staff member.

Conserve Resources

Print only with a teacher's permission.

Protect Yourself

- Never give out personal information on the Internet.
- Never share your login and password.
- Never use someone else's login or password.

Obey Copyright Rules

Use proper citation and documentation.

Respect Privacy of Others

Photographs or videos cannot be taken without the permission of students and staff.

Technology Safety

- Cyber bullying is a violation of the APS code of conduct..
- Cyber bullying can include “repeated” negative behaviors using communications technology such as text messages, chat rooms, e-mail, and instant messaging. Never use electronic media negatively in a way to harm or frighten.

<http://www.apsva.us/digital-learning>

COUNSELING SERVICES

Your counselor works to make sure you feel connected and supported as a student at Gunston.

If you would like to meet with your school counselor, make an appointment through the counseling department office or the Gunston Student Canvas Portal.

CLINIC PROCEDURES

If you are feeling ill at school, your teacher must first call down to the clinic to speak with the nurse or clinic aide. The clinic is located in the main hallway.

MEDICATIONS

All medications, both prescription and

over-the-counter, must be brought to school by the parent/guardian and left in the nurse's office. Misuse of medications and substances is prohibited.

GUNSTON LIBRARY

The library hours are 7:30 a.m. – 2:35 p.m. Additional after school hours are often held on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, as noted in the weekly after school activities list, for students to read, research, study, and complete homework. When classes are not being held in the library, students with a lunch pass are welcome to eat in the library as space allows as long as they clean up after themselves.

HAZARDOUS WEATHER & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Schools Closed - All school buildings are closed. Extended Day and Check-In are also closed. All school activities are canceled unless otherwise announced.

Delayed Opening - Schools will open two hours later than usual. The morning bus route schedule is also delayed by two hours. Field trips are canceled. **Breakfast is not served.**

Early Dismissal - Schools will dismiss two hours early if conditions require. Extended Day will close at 4 p.m., extracurricular activities, interscholastic contests, team practices, field trips, and recreation programs in schools and on school grounds are canceled.

GRADING

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Student grades reflect student achievement and not student behavior. Student grades will reflect their level of mastery by standard using the following scale:

Reporting Grade and Percentage Equivalency	Grade Descriptor
A: 90 - 100	Excellent Achievement - Demonstrates accurate and thorough understanding of course content; Creatively applies and extends knowledge and skills in content area; Consistently meets course standards; Overall performance and student products reflect a deep level of analysis of the content and critical thinking.
B+: 87 - 89	Good Achievement - Demonstrates an accurate understanding of course content; Applies knowledge and skills in content area; Consistently meets course standards; Overall performance and student products reflect a consistent understanding of the content and critical thinking.
B: 80 - 86	
C+: 77- 79	Satisfactory Achievement - Demonstrates acceptable understanding of course content; Consistently demonstrates basic knowledge and skills in content area; Meets course standards; Overall performance and student products reflect a consistent understanding of most of the content and reflect some degree of critical thinking.
C: 70-76	

D+: 67 - 69	Unsatisfactory Achievement (Passing) - Demonstrates limited understanding of course content at this time; Inconsistently demonstrates knowledge and skills in content area around some standards; Inconsistently meets course standards; Overall performance and student products reflect an inconsistent understanding of the content.
D: 60 - 66	
E: 50 - 59	Unsatisfactory Achievement (Failing) - Demonstrates minimal understanding of grade level content at this time; Inconsistently demonstrates knowledge and skills in content area around most standards; Overall performance and student products reflect minimal understanding of the content

LOCKERS

You will be assigned a locker during the first week of school. If you lose or forget your combination, ask your homeroom teacher. **DO NOT share your locker or give your combination to anyone else. Failure to comply with locker expectations may result in the loss of your locker privileges and/or further disciplinary action.** Administrators have the right to inspect lockers. Be sure you lock your locker every time you use it.

[Policy Implementation Procedure J-6.7 PIP-1 Student Searches and Confiscation of Student Property](#)



PE POLICIES

The following are guidelines established by the Physical Education Department: Students must dress for PE each day.

- Students must wear their Gunston PE uniform to participate in all aspects of class.
- Backpacks and coats are not allowed in the gym area or locker rooms.
- Students will be assigned a PE locker and lock to secure belongings.
- Students are responsible for their lock, locker and its contents.
- Replacement locks are \$7.00.
- Use of electronic devices is not permitted in the gym during class. Devices must be locked away in the student's hallway locker during the school day.
- PE uniforms are \$25 (\$13 for the shorts and \$12 for the shirt). If a student cannot purchase a uniform, that should be communicated with their teacher at the beginning of the year and we will provide one for them.

LOST AND FOUND

The lost and found items section is located in the school cafeteria. Valuable items such as money, eyeglasses, cell phones, keys, and jewelry should be turned to the main office.

REPORT CARDS/GRADING PROGRESS

Report cards will be distributed on a nine-week basis. It is important for you to be responsible for your learning and academic growth. We will work with you to establish short and long term goals. You should regularly check your grades and assignments through StudentVue.

HONOR ROLL

At the end of each nine-week grading period, students will be recognized for their achievement.

1. **A Honor Roll:** A student who has achieved all A's.
2. **A's & B's Honor Roll:** A student who has achieved all A's and B's.
3. **GMS PRIDE:** Demonstrating positive student values and behaviors.

SCHOOL VISITORS

Parents and visitors must sign in at the main office. **No student visitors** will be permitted in classrooms during the regular school day. **Permitting unauthorized visitors into the school is a major safety concern and a violation of the APS Student Code of Conduct.**

TEACHER ADVISORY PROGRAM (TA)

This is a period that provides an opportunity for you to be a part of a supportive classroom community. On some days, your TA teacher will help with organization. Other days are designated for DEAR (Drop Everything and Read), Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) activities, bonding activities, and for watching *Good Morning Gunston*.

A Guide to Success at Gunston Middle School



The Gunston staff is here to provide you with the opportunity to get the best education possible for your future. The result, however, is in your hands. Demonstrate GMS PRIDE and you are guaranteed a successful school year.

PRIDE

#GUNSTONPRIDE

PREPARATION:

The action or process of getting ready. Coming to class prepared with materials, being ready to learn, and arriving on time to class.

RESPECT:

A feeling or understanding that someone or something is important, serious, etc., and should be treated in an appropriate way

INTEGRITY:

The quality of being honest and fair.

DETERMINATION

A quality that makes you continue trying to do or achieve something that is difficult.

EXCELLENCE:

Extremely high quality.

HALLWAY BEHAVIOR

Students are expected to move through the halls in a polite fashion.

Students will:

- Walk on the right at all times in the hallways.
- Keep their hands to themselves.
- Speak using a pleasant tone “indoor voice.”
- Respond with respect when addressed by a staff member.

- Profanity and other offensive language are not appropriate and will not be permitted.

APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT

- Students are expected to be polite and to touch others only in appropriate ways.
- There will be no fighting, pushing, kicking, shoving, horsing around, play fighting, “dunk” or “head-top” on others, wrestling, or any other type of inappropriate physical contact.
- Students will not engage in public displays of affection, such as kissing.

KIND & CARING

Gunston is a wonderful place to learn. Just as students learn to care for themselves and others, they are also expected to show care towards school property and the property of others.

See Anti-Bullying Pledge at the end of this handbook

HONESTY

Students are expected to demonstrate integrity in their actions. The following behaviors are not acceptable:

- Cheating- either giving or receiving information on tests and assignments.
- Plagiarism- copying information from books, the Internet, or other people and claiming it is your own work.

DRESS CODE

We expect our students to be dressed for an academic atmosphere of purposeful learning and responsible citizenship. These guidelines will help you make good choices about what to wear to school. The guidelines exist to ensure a safe learning environment.

The following guidelines for apparel and appearance are to be adhered to:

- Garment for students will fit in a manner as to allow appropriate ease of movement and comfort.



- Clothing should reflect PRIDE values.

These items SHOULD NOT be worn at school or school-sponsored trips:

- Shirts with oversized armholes
- See-through garments
- Shoes with wheels
- Clothing or jewelry promoting drugs, profanity, alcohol, death, inappropriate language, violence, or sex.
- Bare feet or stocking feet while at school
- Fanny Packs/Cross-Body Bags

**** If a student is not in compliance with the dress code, their Parent/Guardian will be called to bring appropriate attire for the student. Repeated violations of the dress code may result in further disciplinary action.**

[Policy Implementation Procedure J-2 PIP-2](#)
[Policy Implementation Procedure J-7.4 PIP-3b](#)
[Student Code of Conduct](#)

PROHIBITED ITEMS

The following items are never allowed at school, on school grounds, or on buses:

- Matches, lighters, alcohol, and tobacco products
- Laser pointer pens
- Items for sale not sponsored by Gunston Middle School
- Large amounts of money
- Weapons (knives, pocket knives, firearms, bombs, bullets, etc.) or “look alike;” weapons (any item that looks like a weapon, including toy guns and knives);
- Alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, drugs, or

“look alike”. Refer to [Policy J-6.3.6 Prohibited Substances](#)

- Stink bombs, explosives, poppers, or fireworks.

Students should report any information they have about such items to an adult. Students who withhold information about a dangerous situation become part of the problem and may face severe consequences.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

APS School Board policies govern student behavior, [Policy Implementation Procedure J-7.4](#)

DISCIPLINARY REFERRALS

When a student has violated the Code of Behavior, the teacher takes the first step in addressing the observed behavior. The teacher works with the student, parent, dean and counseling staff in reaching an understanding of the student's responsibility in changing their conduct.

When a student is referred to an administrator for a violation of school conduct, the following corrective action(s) may be taken:

- Warnings (verbal or written)
- Parent phone call
- Lunch detention
- Parent conference
- Community Service
- A fee charged for repair of damages
- In-School Alternative Program
- Out of school suspensions
- After school detention
- Other appropriate action as determined by administration



CAFETERIA BEHAVIOR

Students are expected to:

- Walk to the cafeteria
- Wait patiently in line
- Be respectful to cafeteria staff
- Clean up after themselves
- NO cut or hold places in line.
- Finish all food and drink in the cafeteria or outside eating area, unless students have a pass to eat in a teacher's room.
- Students talk with peers using appropriate inside voices.
- Students remain in their seats during lunch.
- All trash should be removed from lunch tables and the floors.
- Recycle trays and empty food trash cans
- Students may only be excused from the cafeteria by the adult on duty if they have a written pass from the teacher.
- Students may carry clear plastic water bottles outside of the cafeteria.

CONFLICT	RUDE	MEAN	BULLYING
Occasional	Occasional	Once or Twice	Is REPEATED
Not planned; in the	Spontaneous;		Is planned and done



Gunston Middle School is Anti-Bullying

Make a Difference!

At our school, we want everyone to feel happy and safe. It doesn't matter what you look like, where you're from, or what you're good at – we all deserve respect. Bullying is when someone is mean on purpose and keeps doing it. It can be physical, like pushing, or words that hurt, or even making someone feel left out. It can happen in person or online.

Let's Take Action: When we sign this pledge, we promise to:

1. Be kind to everyone, no matter how different they are.
2. Learn about the school's rules and ways to stop bullying.
3. Tell a teacher if we see someone being bullied.
4. Support friends who need help with bullying.
5. Talk to grown-ups if we're worried about bullying.
6. Never join in or laugh when someone is being bullied.
7. Be a good role model and help others if they're bullied.
8. Treat our school, classmates, and adults with respect and always do our best.

I understand that if I don't try to stop bullying, I'm letting it happen. Let's all work together to make things better.

Student Name (Printed): _____ Grade: _____

Student Signature: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Gunston Middle School Code of Behavior



Student Agreement

I have read the Gunston Middle School Student Handbook. I understand that it is the expectation that each student at Gunston abides by the behavior expectations and school policies.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

PLEDGE

I pledge to take responsibility for my actions at Gunston Middle School. I understand that by following the guidelines contained in the handbook, I will enjoy all the privileges of a student at Gunston Middle School and will be helping to create a safe learning environment for all.

Student Name (Printed): _____ **Grade:** _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____