

January 19, 2018

Hello North Albany Middle School families,

Welcome back and happy 2018. I hope this letter finds you well, recovering from the holiday craziness, and hopeful for the new year. We are closing in on the half-way mark of the school year, which seems amazing already. I have some information to share with you about some items we have been working on, some changes ahead, and some changes that are currently in place.

Let me start with a current change. Unfortunately, I found myself having emergency surgery during the holiday break. It was not life-threatening, but a situation that needed to be addressed urgently. I am currently out and will be for some number of weeks, I just don't know how long.

During my absence, Superintendent Golden has moved Tristan Heisley into the position of Interim Principal. I wholly support this move. Tristan is an experienced Middle School Administrator who has been serving as the Assistant Principal of Timber Ridge for the past four years. He has also served as a High School Principal in Arizona. Mr. Heisley has a very good understanding of the Albany School District at large, and a strong understanding of middle school students. I trust his judgement knowledge, and his ability to support the NAMS community. I know you will find him very personable and easy to work with.

As many of you may know, a group of parents, teachers, and middle school administrators have been discussing a change to the way we report grades to you. One of the first issues brought to me this year, was the report card. Specifically, the concerns are that it was failing as a communication tool for parents and students and that our grading system was different from the high schools. There is concern that this may be an obstacle preventing some of our students from making the transition from 8th grade to high school as successfully as possible. These issues are concerning, and we are hoping to have a District-wide system change in place for next school year.

However, until this system can be replaced, we as a staff have been looking at ways we can help address the issue this school year, with the intent to help support our current 8th graders make that high school transition successfully. We have been meeting to discuss our grading practices and how we report grades to students and parents. We have received feedback from our high school colleagues and identified key areas we feel we can change to better align with high school grading practices. Our goal is to get our 8th-grade students used to these practices now before their high school transcript and career is impacted. Please look for the specific changes on an enclosed page.

Other areas that we have been looking for creative ways to improve are our student to student interactions, student to adult interactions, and overall school culture. Early in the year, we made changes to our schedule, creating a Student Leadership class as a full class period, not a hit and miss class occurring during Pride period. I would like to commend Mrs. Grimm and her

students for the work they have already done to create fun and inclusive activities and events for the students. These activities and assemblies have been exceptionally well received and enjoyed by our students, and some staff who have been here for years, have commented that this is the most unified they have seen the kids in quite awhile. This is great to hear and I think reflects a positive trend in our culture.

To address person to person interactions we have also adopted the Expect Respect curriculum. This is a program developed through the University of Oregon as an extension of their Positive Behavior System (PBIS). PBIS is practiced not only throughout Greater Albany schools but throughout the state. We will be looking to roll out additional staff training and student lessons as the year goes on. We are hopeful that the ongoing discussion around respecting oneself and others will have a positive impact on our students as people, not just in school. In addition, our PTA has really stepped up this year, supporting our Positive Incentives program by running the student store daily, and holding class competitions. The students love to earn Tiger Eyes to use at the store and are always excited to see it open. Thank you to those parents for making this happen for our students.

Hopefully, in the coming weeks, we will also roll out a new program involving our parents. Working with a small group of volunteer fathers, we will be experimenting with an idea around having these men become a presence in our student body during our long unstructured times, before school and during lunchtime. The goal is to have these fathers be a visible adult presence that is interacting in a positive way with our students, adding an additional set of adult eyes, but also sending the message that they do care about our student's success. The idea comes from a national organization (Dads of Great Students/DOGS) that is in many schools. We are not affiliating ourselves with this group, but rather we want to test drive the idea first. If this presence of dads proves successful, we will look to expand and a possible look at becoming part of the organization. For now, we will be calling it the Dad Squad.

As always, we appreciate the support of our families and community. On behalf of the North Albany Middle School staff, thank you.

Marshall Jackson

Enclosed: grading practices doc

## NAMS 8th Grade Semester 2 Grading policy changes 2018

Parents and students,

Below are three areas of grading practice and policy that we will be adopting for semester two, to better align with our high school's policies/practices. The goal is to acclimate our 8th-grade students to the expectations they will be having from day one of high school. By making them familiar with these, and helping them develop the habits necessary to be successful, our intent is to set them up for an easier transition to high school. Please be sure and discuss these changes with your student

**Late Work:** We will accept late work up to one day after due date, with no penalty. After one day late, the teacher has the discretion to reduce grade by points or percentage. No deduction will be made that makes the assignment less than a 1 if it is turned in by the last deadline. Late work will be accepted up to the day of the Unit/Chapter test/assessment, it will not be accepted after.

**Test Retakes:** Students who take and complete a test/assessment on time, and have demonstrated a *true effort* on the assessment, but who still score below a 3 on this assessment, may be allowed to take a re-test.

A retake system will be established by each teacher. This system may include test corrections, a relearning opportunity, or both. There will also be a deadline for those retakes. No retake will earn a score higher than 3. The higher score from the original assessment or the Retake will be recorded in the grade book.

**Decimals in the grade:** For ongoing record keeping and feedback on student work, we will use a decimal system in the grade book to give students and parents a more clear picture of how individual assignments are in comparison to meeting the standard for that grade level. *In some cases, in order to receive a 4, students must be completing the honors level work.*

- 4.00 Excellence in understanding/demonstrating material/concepts of Standard
- 3.75 Mastery of understanding material/concepts of Standard
- 3.50 Strong understanding of material/concepts of Standard
- 3.25 Strong grasp of material in the Standard
- 3.00 Meets understanding of material in the Standard
- 2.75 Nearly Meets
- 2.50 Area of improvement needed
- 2.25 More than one area of improvement needed
- 2.00 Below grade level of Standard
- 1.00 Student work submitted well below grade level