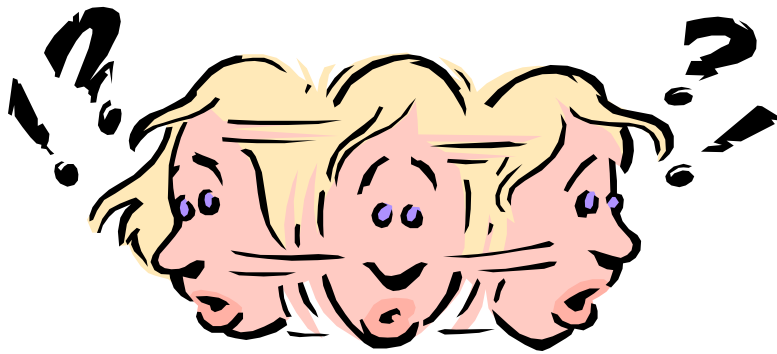


A Guide to Becoming a Fifth Grader at R.H. Brown Middle School

The Answers to Common Questions Asked
by Incoming Students



Prepared by Team 5-1
Spring 2005

How is middle school different from elementary school?

Middle school is different from elementary school in many ways. Instead of staying in one room for most of your day, you change from room to room and have a different teacher for each class. For example, your math teacher would not teach you science too.

Middle school also has better food, in my opinion. You can bring in one dollar and get a large chocolate chip cookie, a soft pretzel, a PowerAde, or a Snapple. In middle school, you can also sit wherever you like instead of sitting with your class at lunchtime.

During the school day, you are allowed to visit the school library/media center when you have free periods. It has a variety of books and computers you can use.

After a student's average day in middle school, there are many things that they can do. After School still exists in middle school, but there are also a variety of after school activities. There is a debate club, a group of students that go to the soup kitchen in Branford to prepare and serve meals, and lots of intramural sports. Intramurals are sports you may participate in, but you do not usually compete against other schools. There are many intramural sports you can sign up for such as soccer, track, volleyball, basketball, and much more.

So as you turn to another page in this book, remember that there are many more great differences between elementary and middle school that you will find out for yourself. Keep in mind that you are headed for a great year in fifth grade!

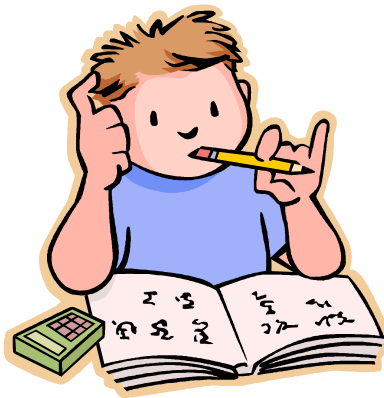
By: Sophie



Do you like the freedom and responsibility of middle school?

I like the freedom of middle school. We get to pick what we want for lunch. You also get to pick which friends you sit with. We don't need to ask for a snack in class. We can have a snack whenever we are hungry as long as it doesn't interfere with class. Another freedom we have is to go to the library whenever we want to check out a book. As part of the check out we get to stamp the books and fill out the check out form. Having a locker is another big responsibility. It is better than having a cubby, but you have to treat your locker with care and respect. The teachers give you freedom, but still have some rules. For example, during indoor transition you must stay in your homeroom. We would rather wander around the halls, but this wouldn't be safe. The biggest responsibilities students have at Brown Middle School are to do their best work and treat others respectfully. Overall, it is great to have the freedoms and responsibilities that middle school offers.

By: Brittany



How many teams are there?

There are four teams. Some teams have four teachers and some have three. It may sound confusing, but believe me you will catch on pretty quick. I found it quite easy to learn the names of my different teachers. It is fun having different teachers throughout the day. If you don't care for a teacher, you know you only have to see them for one class, not all of them.

Are all teams the same?

No. None of the teams are the same. They all have different teachers and do different things at different times. We all end up learning the same things. Some teachers teach units together. All in all, none of the teams are exactly the same, but they are all alike.

By: Kristen

Was it hard getting used to different teachers? How different are they?

It takes a little while to get used to different teachers, but once you know what they are like it is fun seeing all of them. Very few teachers at Brown Middle School are strict; most of them are very nice. They are probably like your teachers from past years. Most of the teachers have the same high expectations for you so they aren't very different. Of course they have different personalities. Some are cool, some are nice, some are strict, and some are a mixture of all of the above. It may be hard adjusting to different teachers, but you'll be glad you don't just have one teacher. If you have just one teacher and you don't like them, you are stuck with them all day. In the fifth grade if you don't care for a teacher, you know you only have them once a day. It may take a few weeks to get used to so many teachers, but you'll like having them all in the end!

By: Rebecca

How many classes are there?

In fifth grade, A day through F day there are eight periods; each forty to fifty-three minutes long. The day this year starts at 8:05 and goes until 2:55. This year the classes go in the following order: core, related arts, related arts, core, lunch, related arts, transition, core, core, and dismissal.

How many classes are there?

In fifth grade there are eight periods a day. The approximate format of the day is homeroom, core, related arts, related arts, core, lunch, related arts, core, core, and finally dismissal. The core subjects include math, science, social studies, and language arts, which occur every day for fifty-three minutes. You go to core classes with your homeroom classmates. This makes it more fun because you know your classmates well and feel comfortable with the. The related arts wheel includes French, Spanish, two art classes, health, and key boarding. These classes are fun because you are learning brand new things and you get to be with students from other teams.

What do teachers do if you are late to class?

If you are late for class most teachers are nice about it and say, "Just don't let it happen again." But some teachers may say, "If it happens again, I'll have to call your parents." You should not be afraid of your teachers if you are late unless you are very late (like half an hour) and you don't have an excuse. The best thing is to plan ahead and be on time. Teachers do expect their students to be in class on time.

By: Kelsey

Do people help you find your way around the school?

When you first come to Brown Middle School orientation, you meet the teachers and they give you a map. The map is all the classrooms with their numbers. Also, on your first day of school, your homeroom teachers show you around. After that, there are teachers always walking around so you can ask for help. Everyone is willing to help you get to where you are going.

Do you have to walk from one end of the school to another?

You usually don't have to go that far. All of your core classes (LA, math, science, and social studies) are in the same area. The related arts classes are spread out a little more. You might have to walk downstairs, upstairs, or to the other end of the school for band, gym, or art classes. When you have study halls you might have to walk far. Say if you had gym, then art, you'd be going across the school. At lunch time, you might walk to the other side of the school and downstairs. Don't worry, you'll get used to it after a while.

By: Schuyler

Do you get homework in every subject every day?

When I first went to fifth grade homework was one of my main concerns. In my experiences it has depended on the teachers you have. For instance, my friend almost always gets homework from every subject every night. I almost never have homework from every teacher in one day. That is because we have different teachers. A tip I would give you is to do your work well in class, but not take too long on your work. Sometimes what you don't finish in class becomes homework. Not all related arts teachers give homework. You'll have homework for health and Spanish,. Try not to worry about this because there are lots of fun things about fifth grade to keep you busy too. Also, make sure you use your study halls for completing work.

By: Charlie

What happens if you forget your homework?

If you forget your homework in fifth grade, more than one thing could happen to you. One of the things that could happen to you is that you might get lucky and your teacher tells you to bring it in the next day. Sometimes you won't be as lucky and the teacher puts a check mark next to your name in his/her grade book and later it goes into the computer as a zero. This will affect your grade big time, so you don't want to forget your homework assignments.

When you forget to have a parent sign a test or bring in a signed test late, the consequences are totally different. Usually the consequences are not as bad. For example, some of the teachers will only tell you to bring it in the next day signed and that will be it. But some teachers will tell you to bring it in signed the next day and he/she will also take at least two points off of your responsibility grade or the test grade. Most teachers have a responsibility grade as part of your total grade.

The bottom line is that you DON'T want to forget your homework. You need to be responsible.

By: Jason

How much homework will we get in fifth grade?

Everyone has this question and I'm going to answer it for you. Well, if you don't like math, that's bad because most of the homework is from math class. Language arts homework is okay because you don't get it often. Sometimes in L.A. you have long term writing projects that you work on at home. Social studies and science homework are the best. You almost never get homework in these subjects.



How hard is the homework?

L.A. homework is the hardest for me, especially the long-term pieces. Math homework is definitely the easiest for me because it is review and practice of what you did in class that day. Social studies and science homework are usually a breeze. Lots of the time you make posters for social studies homework. Welcome to fifth grade!

By: Chris

If you don't head your paper correctly, will teachers throw it away?

Don't worry about this unless you do it a lot. The teachers do have expectations for your headings on your papers and you will learn how to do it right away. It is your job to head your papers correctly and it shouldn't be a problem. Most teachers will just take points off your grade if you forget your heading again and again. But in some cases, the teacher can't figure out who a paper belongs to and you would not get credit for doing it. In case you are wondering what a heading is, it has your name, code, date, etc.

How strict are the teachers about handing in homework?

Many teachers want nice clean pieces of paper that are not torn or dirty. Teachers expect your homework to be your best work and easy to read. This means that it cannot be sloppy. Most fifth graders know what is expected and do the right thing.

Don't be scared about the work in fifth grade. You will love fifth grade!

By: Jessica

How long are the classes at Brown Middle School?

In fifth grade this year our days were very different from 4th grade. You have a quick homeroom period when you get off of the bus. Everyone has a locker that they put their belongings into and then go to homeroom. The bell then rings at 8:20 to let the students know that it is first period, a core class. Then at 9:17-9:57 you have second period, a related arts period. You have two minutes to get to every class, so your next class runs from 9:59-10:39, and that is a related arts class too. Right before lunch we have another core class from 10:41-11:34. Lunch goes from 11:36-12:01. At 12:03 sixth period begins and is a related arts period so it ends forty minutes later. Seventh and eighth period classes are your last core classes for the day. They run from 1:02-1:55 and 1:57-2:50. When the bell rings you head to your locker and pack-up. At 2:55 they announce the buses that have arrived. Once all the buses are called, the students are free to either go home or go to intramurals. This is a typical school day for the fifth grade students at Brown Middle School in 2004-2005.

By: Charlotte



What do you need to bring to class?

The supplies you need to bring to class vary from class to class and from teacher to teacher, and team to team. Normally the basic supplies you need are a notebook, a folder, and a supply of pens and pencils. Your teachers will let you know exactly what they want you to have for supplies at the beginning of the year. Some teachers give you a folder or a notebook if you need one. If you take band, the teacher will most likely give you a folder. It doesn't really matter if you have a Trapper Keeper or a binder to keep your folders and notebooks in, but remember it will have to fit in your locker. Another basic item a teacher will expect you to always have is a pencil and a pen (preferably green, red, or blue) for correcting and revising your writing. Carrying a pencil case is a good idea to keep your supplies organized. I recommend the kind of pencil case that fits in your notebook. If for some reason you do not bring any of the needed supplies to class, you might get points taken off of your responsibility grade. That won't happen if you are responsible and remember your supplies.

By: Kimmy



Do you have study halls?

Yes, but not every day. It depends on your schedule and you really should plan to do work at them. The teachers make sure you do work. It is not time to socialize. Once you get used to doing work on your own, it is very helpful getting your homework done. You can also ask the duty teacher for help on your work if you need it. Some students go to the library-media center during study halls to do research or check out books. Study halls are great if you use your time wisely.



How many long-term projects do you get in 5th grade?

In fifth grade you will have many long-term projects. There will be at least one long term project each trimester in science, language arts, and social studies. Long-term projects give you a chance to show the teachers what you know and be creative.

In the first trimester we had a project in science that was about friction and sports. In L.A. we wrote a paper and our teacher gave us more than three weeks to complete the research and write the essay. For social studies, our first project was to work cooperatively to write and perform a play about the Louisiana Purchase.

The most important thing to remember about long-term projects is to plan out your time carefully. You should not wait until the day before a big project is due to work on it. Being responsible for your work is the key to success with projects.

By: Tucker

How do you take notes?

Taking notes can be fun and is definitely helpful. If you do it right, it is very simple. In your classes you take notes often. The teachers write down information on the boards and you copy it down in your notebook or summarize it for yourself. Be sure to write neatly though, because it is important for you and others to be able to read your notes. Notes are very often the tools you need to study for a quiz or a test. Teachers know that note-taking is a new skill for most fifth graders and they go slow at the beginning of the year. Some teachers will give you copies of the notes just in case you need them.

In order to do well on a test or quiz, it is important to be organized. If your notes are clear and understandable, it makes it easier for you to follow them and study. When you take notes, be sure to use bullets, numbers, or letters before each fact or category. Remember to skip a line between questions, answers, facts, and bullets. That way it is easy to read.

Sometimes you may have to take notes the hard way. When the teacher does not write anything on the board and explains a lesson verbally, you are going to need to take your own notes. Right now you are probably thinking, "Well, how do I know what to write down?" Try to listen carefully as the teacher speaks and write down a few key points or facts as reminders. Leave some space between each fact you write down. Later, when you have a chance, fill in more information below each fact as you remember what the teacher said.

So as you can see, not taking is not very complicated and is the way to go!

By: Libby

How do you stay organized?

One of the best ways to stay organized is to get a thick, strong binder. You need more than a regular binder. You need one with a zipper to protect everything that's inside. When you pick out your binder, make sure you get one that is big enough to hold everything. You don't want to have a bunch of little binders because you will be late for class if you are always trying to get things out of your locker.

Students also use a planner to keep organized. You need to know what assignments you have and when they are due. Each teacher puts the assignments on the board and it is your responsibility to write them in your planner.

Keeping your locker and notebooks cleaned out is very important. Most of the teachers tell you what to get rid of at the end of a unit. You shouldn't be carrying around papers in May that are from September.

Where are the lockers?

The lockers are located in different places around the school. One set is near the cafeteria. You see them when you walk in the front door. The second location is near Mrs. Shaver's music room and Mrs. Smith's art room. The third location is by the 5-1 and 5-2 classrooms.



What if you forget something in your locker?

If you forget something in your locker, some teachers will let you run back and get what you need. This might affect your responsibility grade. You need to plan ahead so that you have everything that you need for your classes. If the class hasn't started yet when you remember you forgot something you might have enough time to run and get it. You are only allowed to go to your locker before school, at lunch time, during transition, and after school. It is important that you know your schedule and plan ahead.

By: Carlin

What is the honor roll?

When a student enters fifth grade, they will try their best to do well in school, because they want to make the “honor roll.” The honor roll is a list of students who have done well in all of their classes and have achieved a certain grade point average. To get honors, your grade point average should be between 9.00 and 9.99. To get high honors, your grade point average must be between 10.00 and 12.00.

Once you get to fifth grade, you will have core classes. There are four core classes that students have all year long, every day of the year. You usually have a related arts course for about six weeks, and then you will move on to the next related arts course.

Here is how you can get honors-or even better- high honors. In the example below, your courses are language arts, math, science, social studies, PE, music, and computers. You are given a letter grade for each course. Each letter grade is given a grade point value. Courses that meet every day (core courses) are given one credit. Courses that do not meet every day (related arts courses) are given .5 credits. The grade point value is multiplied by the number of credits for each class. They are then totaled up. Once you have your total, you divide it by the number of credits, to get your grade point average. If your grade point average falls within the honors range then you have made honor roll...Congratulations!

Confused yet? Ok, there is an example-

COURSE	GRADE	GRADE POINT VALUE	CREDITS	GRADE POINT X CREDITS
Language Arts	A+	12	1	12
Math	B+	9	1	9
Science	A-	10	1	10
Social Studies	A+	12	1	12
PE	A-	10	.5	5
Music	B	8	.5	4
Computers	A	10	.5	5
TOTALS			5.5	57.00

57.00 divided by 5.5 = 10.36 (High Honors!)

By: Matt

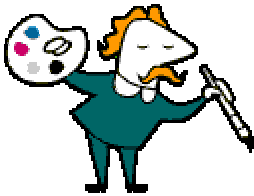
What do you take to related arts classes?

On the first day of related arts classes you do not bring anything. On the second or third day your teacher will tell you what you need for their classes. For almost every related arts class you will need a folder. For Spanish and health you will also need a notebook. Sometimes the teachers hand these out to you.

Do you get to pick your related arts classes?

No. You do not pick your related arts classes. You get assigned to your first related arts classes and then rotate through all of the others. You will be in related arts classes with students from other teams. Every six weeks you rotate to a new class. The related arts classes for this year include French, Spanish, health, art 1, art 2, and computers/keyboarding.

By: Jessica



How long will lunch be?

According to Ms. Phelps, the assistant principal, lunch will be from 25-30 minutes for fifth and sixth graders next year. There is not a definite decision for this new change, but it is an expected amount of time for students to chow-down their lunches.

Can you choose which table you sit at?

Yes. You have three sections to choose from. There will be round tables with actual chairs to sit on. Each table is allowed a total of 8-10 students. The Brown Middle School students enjoy this responsibility.

Do all grades eat lunch together?

No. Each grade has a different grade schedule. The fifth graders usually have lunch first. Your team of teachers will decide if you are allowed to have a snack in class, so don't worry about starving.

By: Julian

Do you take showers after PE classes?

You do not take showers after PE classes. There are locker rooms, but they are used for storage. Most kids bring a water bottle to school and wear lots of deodorant on PE days since the showers aren't used.

Can you wear shorts for PE in the winter?

The answer to this question is that it is up to you. The only thing you have to worry about is the cold weather. You will be outside only to come to school and go home. You would be better off wearing comfortable pants and sneakers.

By: Karina

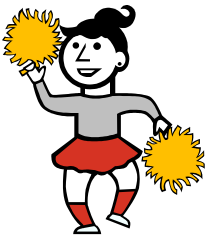


What are intramurals?

Intramurals are after school sports. They go throughout the whole school year. There are three seasons for intramurals; fall, winter, and spring. In the fall co-ed cross country, soccer, and co-ed Ultimate Frisbee were offered. In the winter both boy's and girl's basketball were offered along with cheerleading and volleyball. The spring intramurals offered are softball, flag football, cross country, and baseball. All of the intramurals run from 3:00-4:30.

So if during the week you just go home and are bored, make sure you sign up for intramurals. But you have to sign up quickly because it is first come, first served. If you love cross country, soccer, Ultimate Frisbee, basketball, cheerleading, volleyball, softball, flag football, and/or baseball, sign up!

By: Morgan



Does everyone have to take chorus?

No, but everyone has to take band, orchestra OR chorus. The following is my experience with fifth grade chorus. Since the beginning of September, I have been in a chorus class. Chorus is very fun. The first thing I do is go to my seat in the auditorium (where chorus is held). The teacher has us do warm-up exercises. We always use our lips, teeth, tongue, and vocal chords. These exercises help you upper body adjust to begin singing. We sing jazz songs, classic songs, Hebrew songs, and many other types of songs.

Chorus has turned out to be one of my favorite subjects. I think it is fun doing the warm-up exercises. I never knew we had to stretch our mouths so much to sing. It takes a lot of hard work and a lot of practice to sing properly. I look forward to learning new methods and songs in sixth grade.

By: Julia

How often do you have band?

There are lots of days and periods that you could have band, strings, or chorus. If you play an instrument or sing in the chorus you would have lessons three days out of the six day rotation. Some kids might have more lessons if they play an instrument and sing in the chorus. Lessons last for about 45 minutes. You might have band and chorus on the same day, but during different periods if your schedule works out that way. If you decide to play an instrument and sing in the chorus you will have fewer study halls. This is something important to think about.

By: Eddie

Where do I keep my instrument?

All band players must put their instruments in a cubby in the band room. This room won't be hard to find because you take band lessons and you'll know where it is. Once you get dropped off at school by your bus or your parents, you go upstairs to the band room to drop your instrument off just as if you were dropping your kids off at a nursery school, only you don't have a million goodbyes. At the end of the day, you just go and get your instrument before you get on the bus or get picked up. That's how easy it is.

Fiddlers, or should I say string players, do something very similar with their instruments. You don't have to walk up as many stairs as the band players, you lucky ducks. Anyway, very soon you will know where your strings lessons are and that is where you drop off your instruments. You drop it off in the morning like the band kids and pick it up in the afternoon.

You will have a great music year!

By: Kendall

What is a yearbook?

Do you want to know what a yearbook is? It is a book with pictures of people from Brown Middle School and Polson Middle School. Teachers take pictures of funny stuff that happens throughout the year and save them for the yearbook. Different intramurals and teams are included in the book too. The eighth graders get their pictures in color and the fifth, sixth, and seventh graders are black and white pictures. Some people get extra candid pictures in the yearbook. This year the yearbooks cost \$27.00 and has a hard cover. Your name is stamped on the front cover in gold letters. You don't get your yearbooks until the end of the year, but then you have all of your friends sign it.

By: Chris l

When do you get detentions?

There are three different kinds of detentions. They include office detentions, teacher detentions, and lunch detentions. A lunch detention is not as bad as a teacher or office detention. A lunch detention is given when you aren't behaving like a fifth grader should during lunch time. That might include throwing food or running around to other tables instead of eating your lunch. Another way a lunch detention could occur is if you are acting badly outside the classroom, like at the lockers or in the bathrooms. When you have a lunch detention you eat in the office or with the teacher that gave you the detention. Another kind of detention is the teacher detention. A classroom teacher would be the one to assign it to you with a minimum of 24 hours notice to you. You get a teacher detention for fooling around or misbehaving in the classroom. The last type of detention, and most serious, is the office detention. It would be given to you by an administrator and served after school until 3:50 PM. The students with office detentions report to the media center to the duty teacher. If you fail to report to an office detention, you would get another detention. If you failed to report to the second detention, then you would receive an in-school suspension. So after hearing about when you could get a detention, I hope you try hard not to get one.

By: Joanna

Where do you get picked up by a parent at the end of the day?

If you are going to be picked up by a parent to take you home at the end of the day you would go outside near the cafeteria. To get there you walk out the front door of Brown Middle School and turn left. There is a big paved area at the end of the school where teachers will dismiss you to your parents. Your parents don't get out of their cars; you go to their cars when the teacher on duty tells you to go.

Where is the After School program?

All you have to do is go through the door to the lunch room and go check in with the teacher in the back cafeteria. That is all there is to it.

By: Jon

How do you find your bus at the end of the day?

At the end of the day, after your eighth period teacher lets you out, you go to your locker and pack up your personal belongings. Then you go to your homeroom and listen for the loud speakers to go on. When the speaker turns on you listen carefully for your bus to be called. When you hear your bus called you walk down the ramps to the platform in the front of the school. You walk on the sidewalk around the circle to get to your bus. The buses are lined up in the order that they were called in. For example, if bus 6 was called before bus 10, then that is how they are lined up. When you get to your bus you get on and sit where you want to sit. After all the kids are loaded on the buses you go home.

By: Caroline



Can you get into trouble on the bus?

If you are wondering what will get you into trouble on the bus, I have the answers for you. There are many things that will get you into trouble while riding a school bus. Screaming and yelling, standing, and eating or drinking are some of the most common things that will get you into trouble on the school bus.

If you are screaming and yelling, the bus driver can get distracted. If the driver is distracted they can get into an accident. The bus driver has a very important job. He or she has to get us to school and back home again safely.

Another thing that can get you into trouble is standing up on the bus. It is not safe to stand on the bus. If the driver has to stop suddenly, you will be thrown into the aisle or into the seat in front of you. That is why the bus drivers are very strict about standing up.

Eating and drinking on the bus can also get you in trouble. You aren't supposed to eat or drink while the bus is in motion. If you are eating a snack while on the bus and the driver slams on the brakes, you will probably choke. The driver shouldn't have to pick up the mess from food and drinks at the end of the day either. That would not be fair.

Well, now you know how to avoid getting in trouble on the bus. If you do any of these things now, it is my advice to stop now.

By: Nina

This book was written by fifth graders on team 5-1 at R.H. Brown Middle School. They hope that this answers many of your questions as you prepare for fifth grade. Just remember that the teachers will be there to help adjust to the new building and understand that it takes time. We all look forward to meeting you and having you join us at Brown School in the fall.

