

Brown County Middle School Student Handbook 2025-2026



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**Brown County Middle School
2025-2026 Student/Parent Handbook
BROWN COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL
STAFF**

Superintendent
Principal
School Secretary
Athletic Director
Transportation Secretary
Athletic Secretary

Dr. Lan Eberle
Alex Ebbing
Cathy Kendrick
Alex Ebbing
Casey Perry
Melissa Markert

**BROWN COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL
CERTIFIED STAFF**

Ms. Whitley Walters	5 th and 6 th Grade
Mr. Christian Kennedy	Social Studies
Mr. Aaron Llewellyn	6 th Grade/STEM
Ms. Jennifer Keller	6 th Grade
Mr. Tom Moran	Math and Social Studies
Ms. Julie Kallenbach	ELA
Ms. Molly Burton	ELA
Ms. Lori Jackson	Math
Ms. Jenna Harrelson	Science
Mr. Nick Vorhies	Physical Education
Mr. Darrell Cearlock	Special Education
Mr. Darin Craven	Special Education
Mr. Wyatt Gard	Band
Mr. Joseph Feenstra	Vocal Music
Mr. James Planting	Art
Ms. MacGregor	Spanish
Mr. Dave Woodruff	8 th Grade Health
Ms. Jami Schuwerk	Special Education
Ms. Ashley Long	Speech Therapist
Ms. Megan Woodward	FACS
Ms. Teresa Bauer	8 th Grade Math 1
Ms. Tiffany McClintock	MS Title 1
Ms. Holly Acheson	Counselor

SUPPORT STAFF

Ms. Addie Thomas	Day Custodian
Ms. Jackie Mitchell	Cafeteria
Ms. Tammy Kendrick	Cafeteria
Mr. James McKay	Head of Maintenance
Mr. Johnthan Thomas	Maintenance
Ms. Deb Cooley	Paraprofessional
Ms. Courtney Bereta	Paraprofessional

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Brown County Middle School Student and Parent Information

Dear Parents and Students of Brown County Middle School,

The teachers and administration extend our sincere welcome to all Brown County Middle School students for the 2025-2026 school year. We look forward to this new year and want it to be one in which you grow not only intellectually, but socially and emotionally as well. Success and growth in these areas this year will be contingent, to some degree, on the information contained within this handbook. Please read it thoroughly. It contains policies and rules designed to create a safe and productive learning environment for all students.

The handbook serves as a guide and is not meant to be all-inclusive. Rather, it represents the current status of the rules, practices, and policies at Brown County Middle School and is subject to change. We expect each student to abide by these rules and policies that have been established for the benefit of all who attend BCMS.

Have a great year and I look forward to working with you as the Brown County Middle School Principal.

Alex Ebbing
Principal

BROWN COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

To develop a well-rounded student who is eager to learn, self-confident, and a productive member of society. We will pursue this mission by challenging each student to reach his/her potential while promoting a safe and caring environment. Our staff, in cooperation with parents, will prepare students for success in today's and tomorrow's world.

BCMS SCHEDULE OF CLASS TIMES

REGULAR DAY WITH 3:00 PM DISMISSAL		2:00 DISMISSAL DAY		11:30 DISMISSAL	
5 TH – 8 TH GRADE		5 TH – 8 TH GRADE		5 TH – 8 TH GRADE	
PERIOD 1	8:00-8:47	PERIOD 1	8:00-8:39	PERIOD 1	8:00-8:27
PERIOD 2	8:50 – 9:37	PERIOD 2	8:42 – 9:21	PERIOD 2	8:30 – 8:57
PERIOD 3	9:40 – 10:27	PERIOD 3	9:24 – 10:03	PERIOD 3	9:00 – 9:27
PERIOD 4	10:30 – 11:17	PERIOD 4	10:06 – 10:45	PERIOD 4	9:30 – 9:57
PERIOD 5A (1 ST HALF)	11:17 – 11:47	PERIOD 6	10:48-11:27	PERIOD 6	10:00-10:27
PERIOD 5B (2 ND HALF)	11:47 – 12:17	PERIOD 5 (1 ST HALF)	11:27-11:57	PERIOD 7	10:30 – 10:57
PERIOD 6	12:21 – 1:08	PERIOD 5 (2 ND HALF)	11:57 – 12:27	PERIOD 8	11:00 – 11:20
PERIOD 7	1:12- 1:59	PERIOD 7	12:30 – 1:09		
PERIOD 8	2:03-2:50	PERIOD 8	1:12 – 1:50		

ACADEMICS

Academic Dishonesty/Cheating/Plagiarism

Cheating is misrepresenting another person's work as one's own or allowing one's work to be used in such a manner. Students are expected to perform their own work. Any situation where a student is found to be cheating or plagiarizing may result in no credit for the particular test/assignment and the administrator and parents will be notified of each incidence of cheating. Repeated cheating/plagiarism incidents may result in a failing grade for the course and/or administrative imposed consequences and may impact participation in school activities/athletics. Additional consequences will be administered if continued incidents occur.

Grades

It is important that students get off to a good start academically. You can help your child develop good learning and homework habits by providing him/her with a quiet time and place to study and read.

We are here to help your child become prepared for life's challenges. We will go to great lengths to help our students, but the responsibility is ultimately his/hers. Failure to assume this responsibility and complete the assigned work is the leading cause of failure. Please create a partnership with your child's teacher which will help your child succeed.

Our grading system is as follows:

A	94-100	C+ 77-79	D-60-62
A-	90-93	C 73-76	F- 59 & Below
B+	87-89	C- 70-72	
B	83-86	D+ 67-69	
B-	80-82	D 63-66	

Note: The grade given at the end of the semester is the grade that will be recorded on the permanent record. Students who continue to perform below-average work with unsatisfactory effort and poor attendance may be considered for retention in the same grade for the next school year.

All students are required to successfully pass an examination on the Constitution of the United States and the State of Illinois before being promoted to high school.

The above requirements may not apply to students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an Individualized Education Program.

The district provides 5 days advance notice to parents before offering any class or course in sex education and/or recognizing and avoiding sexual abuse to pupils in grades Kindergarten through 8th grade. The district provides that such pupils shall not be required to take the course if their parent/guardians submit a written objection.

Math I taken during the eighth grade year will appear on the high school transcript and count toward a student's high school G.P.A. If a semester grade of B- or above is not attained in Math I, the course will be retaken in

high school. All students completing Math 1 in their 8th grade year are eligible to retake the course their freshman year if they feel it would be beneficial.

Brown County Middle School Promotion Policy

The Illinois Promotion and Retention Policy prohibits social promotion. Accordingly, a student shall not be promoted based upon age or any other social reasons. The decision to promote a student to the next grade level shall be based on the successful completion of the curriculum and the requirements as outlined in this policy.

A final passing grade (A, B, C, D) in 4 of the 4 core classes (Math, English Language Arts (Literature & Writing), Social Studies, and Science) is required for promotion to the next grade level. A final passing grade will be based on the average score of a core class each semester.

Example:

1st Semester-50 %

2nd Semester-62%

Average final grade-56%

- 1. Students not passing at the end of the 1st semester progress report will be placed on an “At-Risk” list.*
- 2. Attempts will be made to monitor and implement strategies to help the child improve his/her grades during the rest of the school year using Response to Intervention (RtI).*
- 3. At the end of the 2nd semester progress report, all students who are not passing will be placed on the final “At Risk” list.*

Transfer of Courses – Home Schooled Transfer Students

For home-schooled students transferring into BCMS, credits/courses will not be accepted for classes unless they are from accredited programs. Home-schooled classes taken from middle school textbooks that are not taken through an accredited program will not receive credit. BCSD #1 reserves the right to require students entering directly from a home-schooled educational environment to pass placement/proficiency exams to determine the appropriate grade level and/or courses.

Physical Education Uniforms

Students must purchase a gray, Brown County Physical Education shirt in 2025-26.

Exemption from Physical Education Requirement [K-8]

In order to be excused from participation in physical education, a student must present an appropriate excuse from his or her parent/guardian or from a person licensed under the Medical Practice Act. The excuse may be based on medical or religious prohibitions. An excuse because of medical reasons must include a signed statement from a person licensed under the Medical Practice Act that corroborates the medical reason for the request. An excuse based on religious reasons must include a signed statement from a member of the clergy that corroborates the religious reason for the request. Upon written notice from a student's parent/guardian, a student will be excused from engaging in the physical activity components of physical education during a period of religious fasting.

A student in grades 7-8 may submit a written request to the building principal requesting to be excused from physical education courses because of the student's ongoing participation in an interscholastic or extracurricular athletic program. The building principal will evaluate requests on a case-by-case basis.

Students with an Individualized Education Program may also be excused from physical education courses for reasons stated in Handbook Procedure 10.30.¹

Special activities in physical education will be provided for a student whose physical or emotional condition, as determined by a person licensed under the Medical Practices Act, prevents his or her participation in the physical education course.

State law prohibits the School District from honoring parental excuses based upon a student's participation in athletic training, activities, or competitions conducted outside the auspices of the School District.

Students who have been excused from physical education shall return to the course as soon as practical. The following considerations will be used to determine when a student shall return to a physical education course:²

1. The time of year when the student's participation ceases; and
2. The student's class schedule.

Requesting Teachers

Due to the difficulty of scheduling and the limited number of places available, students/parents may not request teachers.

School Day and Class Load

The regular school day for students is 8:00 a.m. – 2:50 p.m. A standard class load consists of six (6) academic subjects and physical education.

ATTENDANCE

ATTENDANCE/ABSENTEEISM

The **Illinois School Code** requires: Whoever has custody or control of any child between the ages of seven and seventeen years shall cause such child to attend some public school in the district wherein the child resides the entire time it is in session.

Section 26-2: "Any person having custody or control of a child who is below the age of 7 years or above the age of 17 years and who is enrolled in any of grades 1 through 12 in the public school, shall cause him to attend the public school in the district wherein he resides when it is in session during the regular school term." This statute defines a chronic truant as any child who has been truant from school 5% or more of the previous 180 school days.

It is difficult for a child to learn if he or she is not consistently in the classroom. The student who is absent, for whatever reason, misses classroom content and activities and no amount of effort can recreate these educational experiences for children. Therefore, careful consideration should be made before a child is absent from school and concerned parents should not allow their child to miss school except for unavoidable reasons. Removing students from school for any reason is discouraged. Careful planning in accordance with the school calendar will ensure that the student's best interests are being served. Attendance rules and procedures are designed to develop students' punctuality, self-discipline, and responsibility. School is the primary occupation of students, and, as in any occupation, regular attendance is expected.

The Brown County School District shall not be liable for the educational progress of students who fail to maintain regular attendance habits, nor for the progress of students who are removed from the school for extended periods of time contrary to law or good educational procedure.

In accordance with Policy 7:70, administrators may excuse students for up to 14 days annually which will be divided into 7 days per semester (includes single periods). Excused absences, pre-arranged absences (excluding allowable college and job-shadowing absences), unexcused absences, etc., are all included in the 14 days. Written notification will be mailed to the parents after the 6th absence each semester. Medical verification is then due on the 8th absence day each semester. Situations not included within these days are as follows: medically-verified absences, religious holidays, or a death in the immediate family.

Students are expected to be at school unless they are ill. If a student has a doctor appointment, or religious observance and cannot attend school for some specific reason, parents are to notify the office prior to the absence. If a student is absent for illness, the parent must call the office before 10:00 a.m. on the day of the absence. Failure to call to report an absence will cause the absence to be deemed unexcused. This will be an

“administrative unexcused absence” and may receive the penalty of a zero in each missed class and assignment of detention or suspension.

EXCUSED ABSENCES - Excused absences are absences for “valid cause”, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- o Personal illness (Parent Contact): Students are allowed 7 days/occurrences of absence per semester which can be excused with a parent phone call and/or note This includes up to five mental health days* per Public Act 102-0266. If a student reaches seven parent contact absences in a semester (a partial-day occurrence or a full-day occurrence will both be counted for purposes of personal illness/parent contact days as 1 day of absence), all subsequent absences will be considered unexcused.
- o Death in the immediate family;
- o Family/home emergency (approved by administrator/reviewable);
- o Court appearance (Court dates are excused absences if the student has a note from the probation officer or judge saying they were required to appear in court);
- o Religious observances;
- o Parent/Guardian indicating student is ill (reviewable);
- o Medical (a documented, health-related absence, i.e., medical or dental appointments);
- o school-sanctioned field trips;
- o Armed forces recruiter visit or enlistment-related activity (with official note)
- o Out-of-school suspension (Administrative removal from school property for a school day or portion thereof for violations of school disciplinary policies);
- o In-school suspension (an in-building administrative reassignment from a class period or periods for violations of school disciplinary policies).
- o Administrative approval;
- o Pre-arranged approved absences (see procedures below)

NOTE: The above absences are examples of “valid cause” absences, i.e., absences cited in the Illinois School Code and/or District #1 School Board policy.

PRE-ARRANGED APPROVED ABSENCES -Permission for a pre-arranged absence must be secured in the office at least **3 days** in advance of the absence. Pre-arranged absence could include the following:

- 1) Religious Program of Instruction or Conference – A parent/guardian must notify the attendance office approximately two weeks before the absences.
- 2) Family-Related/Family Time Absences – Parents/guardians should make every attempt to schedule family-related/family-time absences around the school schedule. However, when such trips must be made while school is in session, an application for pre-approved family-related activities will be reviewed and considered for excused status when students are absent from school. These absences are to be reviewed by, but not limited to the following: an assistant principal and principal. Pre-planned family-related/family time are limited to one per semester. Please refer to the school calendar if planning such an absence.

* Pre-arranged absences requested by the parents or guardians are not to exceed five days per school year and may be excused with the permission of the principal for family time. At least **three school days** prior written

notice is required to pre-arrange an absence. Schoolwork missed is to be made up according to the classroom teacher's policy. Only family time or family-related absence qualify as excused absence. **Failure to pre-arrange in the required timeframe will cause the absence to be considered unexcused and all attendance penalties will apply.**

* A day of school includes any part of a school day. For example, an excused absence under this section for an afternoon counts as one day of the five days allowed.

***Requests for an absence that would exceed five pre-arranged days in a school year, requests for students in danger of failing any class, and requests for absences for students who have extensive absences due to other reasons are not normally approved.**

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES/TRUANCY - An unauthorized absence is any absence caused by a failure to follow prescribed school procedures or reasons not accepted by the school. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- o No phone contact with parent
- o Oversleeping
- o Missed school bus or lack of ride to school
- o Car trouble
- o Undocumented health-related absences
- o Non-approved family-related activity or pre-approved family-related activity days exceeding the pre-approval limit
- o Shopping
- o Working
- o Passport appointments
- o Animal appointments or animal illness
- o Weather-related reasons (raining, etc.)

NOTE: Any unexcused absence is reviewable by the administration.

Attendance Required for School Activities

Students must be in attendance for their 1st period class (more than 10 minutes missed counts as an absence) and remain in attendance for the remainder of the school day in order to participate in/attend school sponsored activities that occur outside of regular school hours. The only exceptions are: medical/dental related appointments (when notification of reason for absence is made by parent AND verified with written confirmation from the doctor/hospital/dentist (with appointment time listed) prior to the end of the school day); funeral of an immediate family member that has been pre-arranged with administration; or court appearance (when verified by note from court official), or other emergencies as approved by the principal.

Dances

Throughout the school year 7th and 8th grade students may have an opportunity to have a school dance. Only 7th and 8th grade BCMS students and **7th/8th grade students from St. Mary's School in Mt. Sterling** will be allowed to attend. School appropriate dress is expected. School rules apply.

Students who have accumulated 2 or more days of OSS or 5 or more days of ISS and those who have missed 5% or more of school attendance days (unexcused absences) for the school year may not be permitted to attend school dances, at the discretion of the principal.

Library

The Media Center is a resource center for students and faculty members. We have two library collections, one suitable for Junior High students and one for High School students. In addition, there are materials available for use by teachers. Students are expected to return their books on time. Students may be subject to disciplinary action if books are not returned in 2 months. Parents will be required to pay a replacement fee for lost or damaged books.

Middle School students may check out books for four (4) weeks and may renew those books once unless someone else has requested them. There is not a limit to the number of books that students may check out, as long as books are returned on time. Reference materials are not checked out to students, but students may request permission to have copies made.

Students must have a pass to go to the library. Students not having a definite need for library materials should not go to the library. The library is not set up to function as a study hall, lounge, or detention center. Students without a purpose for being in the library will be instructed to return to class.

Students are not allowed to have candy, soda, food, or gum in the library at any time for any reason.

The library's computers are for research, not games. Students without a research need will be instructed to return to class. Students are NOT allowed to personalize the library's computers at any time for any reason. A student's library/computer privileges can and will be suspended for misconduct or abuse of the library or library materials.

Lost and Found

Students should bring any article found on the campus, in buses or at school-sponsored events to the office. A lost and found service will be maintained in the office. Items that remain in lost and found will be donated after Parent-Teacher Conferences in the fall and spring and at the end of the school year.

Lunch and Breakfast Programs

The cost for middle school breakfast will be \$2.25 and the cost for middle school lunch is \$3.25. Milk will cost \$.50. Additional milk at lunch or milk for students bringing sack lunches may be purchased. The classroom teachers and/or the office will collect milk/lunch money. Please send money in an envelope with the student's name stating what the money is for and the amount enclosed. Lunches and extra milk should be paid for in advance.

We encourage students to eat lunch as this is vital for effective academic performance in the afternoon. A student may participate in the hot lunch program or bring a sack lunch from home. Menus are available at the beginning of every month and can be accessed on the district website, to make it easier for parents. Sack lunches should include a main entrée (sandwich, cheese and crackers, cheese stick), fruits and veggies. A bag of chips and a small dessert are a nice addition but please make sure that those treats are not the main components of the lunch. Soft drinks are not permitted at lunch. **Also, please do not send peanut products to school in lunches as we are a peanut free building.** Do not send food items that require an adult to prepare at school. If you send an item that needs to be warm, please warm it at home and put it in a thermos to send to school. A school lunch will be provided if the teacher discovers a child's lunch is missing vital nutritious components.

A computerized lunchroom accounting system is used to manage student accounts. Money that is collected is credited to each student's personal account. Then the account is debited with each day's purchase. Students whose accounts have negative balances on Tuesday night will get an automated phone call stating the amount owed. Parents will also get an e-mail on Friday afternoon if their student owes money.

Parents may make use of our on-line payment method for either credit or debit card payment, which is accessible through our Skyward Parent Portal. This should allow an easier method of payment for those of you who may not remember to send a check or cash with your child.

*****The middle school handbook is an extension of the district handbook and includes other policies relevant to students. Brown County CUSD #1 district's handbook is located on the district's website.*****

Athletics

Participation in athletics is a privilege, not a right. The athlete must earn this privilege through dedication, desire and discipline. Without the pursuit of these, the athlete can in no way do justice to himself/herself or the school. The athlete must discipline himself/herself to be a good citizen and student in order to achieve athletic excellence. In order for the pursuit of athletic achievement and the character training of young people, the Athletic Policies need to be understood by the student athlete, parents, and school. These are found in the District Extra Curricular handbook.

Jr. High Athletic Participation/Tryout Policy

Softball and Baseball

Softball and baseball will be open to any 7th-8th grade students attending Brown County Middle School or St. Mary School. If there are fewer than 15 players, at the coach's discretion, a tryout with 6th graders may take place to fill the roster to the IESA post season maximum of 18 players. The coach also retains the right to not have a tryout and to play with fewer than 15 7th & 8th graders if he/she desires.

-If there are more than 18 7th/8th graders on the roster, the coach will be responsible for determining the 18 players that make the post season roster.

Girls & Boys Basketball

Boys and Girls Basketball will be open to any 7th-8th grade student attending Brown County Middle School or St. Mary School. If there are 11 or fewer 7th graders, at the coach's discretion, a tryout with 6th graders may take place to fill the roster to the IESA post season maximum of 15 players. The coach also retains the right to not have a tryout and to play with 11 or fewer 7th graders if he/she desires. The number of players on the 8th grade team will have no bearing on having a tryout for the 7th grade team.

If there are more than 15 players on the 7th and/or 8th graders roster, the coach will be responsible for determining the 15 players that make the post season roster.

Volleyball

Volleyball will be open to any 7th-8th grade student attending Brown County Middle School or St. Mary School. If there are 11 or fewer 7th graders on the roster, at the coach's discretion, a tryout with 6th graders may take place to fill the roster to the IESA post season maximum of 15 players. The coach also retains the right to not have a tryout and to play with 11 or fewer 7th graders if he/she desires. The number of players on the 8th grade team will have no bearing on having a tryout for the 7th grade team.

-If there are more than 15 players on the 7th and/or 8th graders roster, the coach will be responsible for determining the 15 players that make the post season roster.

In the event that the maximum number of players for an IESA 7th grade post season roster cannot be filled by having a 6th grade tryout, a tryout with 5th graders may take place with approval from the middle school administration and athletic director.

Track & Field

Boys and girls track will be open to any 5th-8th grade student attending Brown County Middle School or St. Mary School.

***The final roster must be submitted to the athletic director by 3:00 pm seven days after the first day of practice.

***Brown County Middle School principal and athletic director will have the final say on all matters pertaining to junior high athletics both covered and not covered in this policy.

Brown County Community Unit School District #1 Annual Asbestos Management Notification

Dear Parents:

This letter is to inform you of the asbestos management plan within Brown County Community Unit School District #1. It has been determined by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that asbestos is a potential health hazard, and precautions should be taken to avoid disturbing any asbestos containing materials.

As required under the AHERA regulations, our buildings were initially inspected for asbestos in 1988. The AHERA law requires that visual surveillance of asbestos containing areas be completed every six months, with a re-inspection conducted every three years. Any evidence of disturbance or change in condition will be documented in the Asbestos Management Plan as required.

The Inspection/Management Plans are available for public review in the District Office located at 502 E. Main Street, Mt. Sterling, Illinois 62353. Should you wish to review the plans, please call to make an appointment between 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Any concerns related to asbestos-containing materials should be directed to the district office at 217-773- 7401.

Dr. Lan Eberle, Superintendent
Brown County Community Unit School District
#1 502 E. Main Street
Mt. Sterling, Illinois 62353

Brown County Middle School
504 East Main Street
Mt. Sterling, Illinois 62353

Parent/Guardian Handbook Acknowledgement

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Please complete the following form and return to the middle school office by August 22, 2025.

To: Brown County Middle School

I have reviewed the Student/Parent Handbook with my child(ren). My signature below acknowledges my understanding of the Student/Parent Handbook for Brown County Community Unit District #1 and Middle School.

I understand that this handbook may be amended during the year without notice. This handbook, in the latest version, is applicable to all students upon the implementation of any change. The administration will notify all parents and students in writing, where possible, of any changes to the handbook.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Student Handbook Acknowledgement

I have received a copy of the Student/Parent Handbook. I have read the handbook and understand all the rules and expectations. I agree to be responsible for following all of the rules and expectations of the school and understand the consequences for failing to follow the requirements.

I understand that this handbook may be amended during the year without notice. This handbook, in the latest version, is applicable to all students upon the implementation of any change. The administration will notify all parents and students in writing, where possible, of any changes to the handbook as soon as is practicable.

Signature of Student

Date

Thank you.

Alex Ebbing
Principal