



Middle School Update

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Timing is everything. That phrase applies to just about everything and certainly to the months and days of the Middle School calendar. At this point of the year, academic classes are running at full speed. Students should understand their teachers' expectations very clearly and hopefully have developed comfortable relationships with peers and adults who can help them reach those expectations. Areas of academic difficulty have been identified and opportunities to improve are abundant. Even the weather helps as cold days and nights are perfect times for reading and studying in a warm and comfortable school or home.

As you know, our school year is divided into three trimesters, and we have just shared grades from the midpoint of Trimester 2. Hopefully, your child has a strong understanding of where they are and where they want to be as we work toward a positive conclusion to T2 on February 24. There's still a lot of great learning and work we do in the spring trimester, but we'll also be navigating spring break, school trips for grades 6-8, multiple field trips, and the natural impact of spring weather and the approach of summer vacation on young adolescents. Please encourage your child to make the winter choices of good work to set up a spring trimester that is the conclusion to a great year and the preamble to a strong start in August.

At the same time, winter days and nights can sometimes drag as gloomy weather and short visits with the sun can add up. Our amazing Athens Academy teachers are well aware of this fact and work to bring energy and excitement to every day and every class discussion while also doing some unique projects that energize both the students and their teachers. There are many examples, but perhaps one of the best is *The Outsiders* trial in sixth grade. In the book, two competing groups of students have situations that get beyond their control, resulting in the death of one of the characters. Our students are asked to step into their shoes and role-play the characters in the book, working with their teachers and classmates to understand the characters and their motivations. With support from parents with expertise in the legal profession, our students take on the roles of lawyers, prosecuting their classmates/book characters, and a jury of sixth-grade students determines guilt or innocence. Sixth-grade imagination is still alive and well and the students dress for their parts on trial day, but the best imagination booster comes courtesy of the generosity of the UGA Law School which allows us to use their mock courtroom each year. Then when they return to campus, another great group of parents has turned a classroom into a 1950s diner for lunch where the verdict of the trial is always the hot topic of conversation.

I hope your student will take full advantage of the winter opportunities to get great work done while their teachers also pay careful attention to the doldrums of the season, finding many ways, as they always do, to make our challenging academic work engaging, creative and interesting. Thank you, parents, for supporting all that we do, and especially the extra support you give to teachers for these special and important events.