



*Excellence in all Endeavors*

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**PARENTS TO PARENTS HANDBOOK**

**JOINING THE  
ROCKY RUN COMMUNITY**

**2006 - 2007 SCHOOL YEAR**

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## Parent Contacts

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*See inside back cover for important school staff  
and administration points of contact.*

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Rocky Run Middle School: (703) 802-7700  
Attendance Recorder: (703) 378-4103  
Attendance Officer: (703) 802-7782  
Parent Information Line: (703) 802-7790 ext. 3500  
[RockyRunMS.Attendance@fcps.edu](mailto:RockyRunMS.Attendance@fcps.edu)

## Principal

Dan Parris. . . . . (703) 802-7700

## Assistant Principals. . . . .

Cynthia Atiyeh (7th grade). . . . . (703) 802-7777

Dallas Washington (8th grade). . . . . (703) 802-7704

## Director of Student Services

Jackie McKeown. . . . . (703) 802-7742

## Counselors

David Paganin. . . . . (703) 802-7738

Maria Lopez. . . . . (703) 802-7737

Kathy Palmer. . . . . (703) 802-7741

## School Resource Officer

Bill Goulart. . . . . (703) 802-7705

## Administrative Staff

Principal's Assistant

Yvonne Frye. . . . . (703) 802-7702

Receptionist

Joan Fontz. . . . . (703) 802-7700

Receptionist

Cheryl Doerr. . . . . (703) 802-7700

Finance Assistant

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Attendance Assistant

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## Clinic Aide

Sandra Johnson. . . . . (703) 802-7710

~ NOTES ~

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## WELCOME! ROCKY RUN NEEDS COMMITTED PARENTS

Starting Rocky Run is a big step, not only for students, but also for parents. Since the move from an elementary to a middle school program is a major adjustment, the Rocky Run PTA believes it would be helpful to provide information about middle school procedures and events. The idea for this parent handbook comes from past experience. We hope even those parents who have had students at the school can benefit from these pages.

Please take a few moments to read this handbook and feel free to call the PTA officers or school administration if you need more information. We are committed to helping you become a part of the Rocky Run School community.

A Volunteer Form for parents can be found in your Opening Day packet. It offers a number of opportunities for you to participate in your child's school community. In addition, the school/PTA newsletter, the ***Rocky Run Ramble***, provides a valuable source of volunteer information. The PTA and Rocky Run need your assistance to continue to provide the programs and events that are so much a part of the coming year. Please volunteer just a few hours or days towards enriching your child's middle school experience. No investment of your time pays such lasting and rewarding dividends. No amount of time or effort is too small – WE NEED YOU!

Please join the dedicated staff and administration of Rocky Run Middle School and the PTA in our combined effort to lay a strong foundation for our children's education.

***Rocky Run Middle School PTA***

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## FUND-RAISING ~ WHAT'S THE DEAL?

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The PTA and Rocky Run School together strive to enrich the learning experiences of our students. Sometimes in order to do the extras we must raise additional funds. Understanding that there are financial and time commitments placed on today's families, we keep the number and type of fund-raising activities during the school year to a minimum. Here is some information about the different fund-raising activities at Rocky Run:

~ The PTA funds its programs and activities through membership dues, miscellaneous donations, and the "No-fuss" fund-raiser (no time spent selling anything; just write us a check in any amount you wish.)

~ Rocky Run school has fund-raisers of its own (magazine drive, book fair, school photos, music/band) that go towards student support. The PTA provides the school with *volunteers* to help coordinate these fund-raisers. The PTA manages the book fair. However the book fair is not part of the PTA budget. The funds go directly back to the school and the school determines where the funds are most needed.

~ *What is the difference, you ask? It all goes to the same place in the end – to the school, doesn't it?* Yes, the majority of it does, but the difference is that both the PTA and the school have different restrictions on how the funds can be spent. The PTA and the school complement each other in ways to benefit the students, parents, and staff.

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## ONE LAST THING

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PTA Board meetings are usually the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the school. We welcome your attendance and input at any PTA Board meeting. Please call Mary-Lee Hood at (703) 378-6640 or email [thehoods86@cox.net](mailto:thehoods86@cox.net) for more information.

## STAY INVOLVED: NOW MORE THAN EVER

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- **End-of-Year Awards.** This is a time for teachers to reward students deemed to be outstanding in academic areas, elective areas, citizenship, and club participation. If your child receives an award, you will be notified by mail as to date and time.
- **8th Grade Dance.** There is no graduation ceremony from the eighth grade, but there is a special dance held near the end of school. It is a dress-up evening celebration for those going on to high school in the fall. The school will send home specific information regarding acceptable dress and appropriate behavior for young people attending. You may hear it referred to by your child as the "eighth grade formal," but it is **not** a time for formal attire and limousines; rather, it is a dance and party with parents and teachers chaperoning a nicely dressed class of eighth graders.
- **Field Trips.** There are some field trips taken during the school year. Specific information, including permission slips, will be sent via your child. Each team usually takes one trip each year.
- **Course Selection for the Upcoming Year.** In the spring, rising 8th graders will choose elective classes for the next school year. There will be an evening meeting for parents to learn about geometry, algebra, and foreign language courses in the 8th grade.
- **High School.** 8th graders will plan their high school course curriculum. There are open house for rising 9th graders and their parents at Chantilly, Centreville, and Westfield High Schools. Some students will attend Robinson, Fairfax, and Thomas Jefferson. Open house at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology for 8th graders and their parents is held in October; the admissions test is held in December, with final decisions being made in early April. Applications are available in the guidance office, from the Director of Guidance. There are strict deadlines for submitting applications and a fee.

Now, more than ever, stay involved for the sake of your child. This is a very busy and changing time-new school, changing classes, lots of new people, lockers, etc. The students learn quickly and always do better when parents are involved.

There are lots of ways to stay involved. Read everything that comes home, ask questions, call a parent of another child, participate in all the activities that you can, and join the PTA. Middle school PTA is different from that at the elementary level. We rely on "community" involvement and "volunteer-raising" –we do little fund-raising (see page 9. It's a way to be involved in your child's life at a critical time.

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## COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

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A major means of communication is the monthly **Rocky Run Ramble** newsletter sent by the PTA. The **Ramble** provides important information about the school and school events. It includes articles from the principal and the PTA. It also provides information about your child's team, subject areas, general Fairfax County school information, and a calendar of upcoming events. The newsletter is available on-line (sign-up form included with Back-to-School packets) and can be mailed home per a written request. In addition, copies will be available in the school office for pick-up. Rocky Run does not send a "weekly packet" home, although ask your child on Thursdays for any information that may have been given to them, as this day has been designated for "take home information" when needed.

Another line of communication is the general message available on the Rocky Run Parent Information Line (703) 802-7790, ext. 3500. The system also delivers recorded messages to your home. Many teachers use *Blackboard*, an on-line service. Go to [www.fcps.edu](http://www.fcps.edu), click on 24-7 learning. Enter your student's identification number and password. You can also sign-up for **Keep In Touch**, a service provided by FCPS to deliver messages directly to your home or office e-mail. Go to [www.fcps.edu](http://www.fcps.edu), click on Keep In Touch, and follow the instructions.

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## ACADEMIC TEAMS

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A team is a group of students (135 to 145) paired with a group of teachers. It is a way of breaking down a large population of students into smaller groups so the teachers can get to know your child individually during the course of the year. A math, science, social studies, English, and resource teacher make up the core of the teams. Some teams produce a monthly calendar with major projects and test dates.

Students are placed on a team each year for the entire school term. For core subjects, your student will share the same teachers with the other members of their team. For elective courses, all teams are integrated to better accommodate choices with schedules.

There are several ways you and your child benefit from the team concept. From the child's perspective, Rocky Run is less overwhelming in terms of numbers. Students see familiar faces far more often than if all 380+ classmates were randomly assigned to classes. The teachers see the same kids every day and can compare notes on progress or challenges. Teaching teams also work together on integration of the academic areas. Projects or themes are often incorporated into all disciplines with the teachers working together.

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## STUDENT PERFORMANCE

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As parents, student performance is one of our main concerns. Changing classes, teachers, and expectations require strong organization skills. Rocky Run issues each student an **Assignment Book** (Agenda). It contains daily, weekly, and monthly calendars to keep track of assignments and schedules. The **Student Assignment Book** also contains important school procedures (i.e., Student Rights & Responsibilities and safety), rules about attendance, and the passport point system. Students are required to have their **Assignment Book (Agenda)** with them at all times. Some teachers ask for parent signatures early in the year to promote parent involvement. Teachers may use this vehicle to write you notes. Checking this book regularly is a good way to know what is going on in your child's classes.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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Rocky Run students are part of the Chantilly High School Pyramid. The high schools and all their feeder schools try to coordinate calendars to minimize events occurring on the same evenings. You will be notified (via voicemail callout and/or the Ramble with any changes.

Here are events in approximate chronological order:

- **Back-to-School Night.** Similar to those you have probably experienced in elementary school with a twist - you get to change classes and meet many more teachers. This is a good time to try to meet some of the parents of the new people your child is talking about.
- **Dances.** Dances are held immediately after school on late bus days. There are several throughout the year, usually one just for 7th grade, one just for 8th grade, and some joint dances. There is a DJ and food, along with parent and teacher chaperones.
- **Concerts.** Music is a very big part of Rocky Run. All the singers and musicians will share their talents throughout the school year, in the evening. The music department sets the times for the concerts. Flyers are usually sent home with your child.
- **Spring Play.** This is an **event** around Rocky Run. If you have never seen a spring play, don't miss the next one. Students and staff invest a lot of talent and hard work to put together a musical play that is always a sell-out.
- **Busch Gardens Music Department Spring Competition.** In late spring, several choirs, bands, and the orchestra travel by bus to a music competition. The students perform and then spend time at a nearby amusement park, returning late in the evening.

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## LOCKERS

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Your child's main locker is located in a row in a sea of blue lockers that look exactly the same. If your child has never used a combination lock before, you might want to help them practice on one to get used to turning right and left and past zero. Students should NOT share their locker combinations with ANYONE!

Students must keep their backpacks in their lockers during the school day. Backpacks increase the overcrowding in hallways between class periods and can be a safety issue.

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## EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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Students may take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities which take place immediately after school on days when there are late buses. Students who normally walk home can do so, or be transported by a parent. The list of activities is long -- tutoring, sports, clubs, academic, social--a complete list will be published. Students are dismissed at 4:00 and buses depart at 4:10 on Mondays and Thursdays. On Wednesdays, students are dismissed at 4:30 and buses depart at 4:40.

Students are issued a pass that allows them to be in the building after normal school hours. "Hanging around" the school after the normal school day is not permitted.

Course goals, objectives, and requirements are sent home for each class. **Homework is given on a regular basis at Rocky Run.** It is designed to foster the student's ability to work independently. Homework is the student's responsibility. Parents should be positive, interested, and provide encouragement. Reviewing assignments will help you keep in touch with your child's academic progress.

**Report cards** are issued four times per year. **Interims** are issued mid-way into each quarter. Both report cards and interims are mailed home. If you have any concerns or questions about your child's progress or course requirements call the teacher or team guidance counselor. Parents can request a progress report at any time. Grades are reported as A (94-100), B+(90-93), B (84-89), C+ (80-83), C (74-79), D+ (70-73), D (64-69), F (below 64).

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## GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

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Each team has a guidance counselor assigned to it. Guidance counselors provide:

- Individual counseling, both academic and personal. Students can make appointments in the office.
- Group counseling. Various groups are formed periodically.
- Parent conferences. Parents can discuss their academic or personal concerns for their child.
- Parent/teacher conferences. These can be arranged and coordinated by the counselors.
- Permanent record maintenance.

The guidance counselors' names and phone numbers are listed in the back of this handbook for your convenience. Please contact them with any concerns you may have.

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## SCHOOL OFFICE

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Rocky Run Middle School's **Principal, Dan Parris**, oversees the entire school operation. Each grade level also has an **assistant principal** (see back cover) who stays with their students through 7th and 8th grade. This provides continuity over the two years. The assistant principals are the direct administrators of their two-year class.

There are several administrative assistants in the school office who will very patiently help you try to find a solution to your questions and needs. All principals' offices, guidance counselors' offices, and the clinic are located in the school's front office. You can reach a teacher by voicemail or email. A list of staff email addresses is issued in September.

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## DAILY SCHEDULE

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The school day runs from 7:55 a.m. until 2:50 p.m. There are seven academic periods of approximately 46 minutes each, with 4 minutes to change classes. Usually the core subject teachers on a team will have their classrooms close to each other. There is a five-minute homeroom period during first period in the morning for administrative business including daily attendance and general announcements..

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## LUNCH

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Lunch periods are 30 minutes long. They start as early as 11:00 a.m. and finish about 12:30 p.m. As with all other aspects of middle school, lunch presents more choices--standard lunch, a la carte, etc. A detailed information sheet with prices will be sent home in September. To make purchases from a lunch account your child will only need to know their lunch number and punch it in for payment. Lunch lines can be long the first few weeks.

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## REACHING YOUR STUDENT DURING SCHOOL

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If you need to reach your student, in the event of an emergency, please call in your message to the office (703) 802-7700 before lunch. Messages, homework, books, and lunch money are all delivered in the cafeteria during their lunch period. Visits to classrooms should be pre-arranged to avoid disruption. Students are not permitted to use cell phones during the school day.

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## PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

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Students must wear PE uniforms. Uniforms can be purchased from the PE department at the beginning of the year. After the first few days of class, students will be required to "dress out". The students are assigned separate gym lockers for storing physical education clothing, gym shoes, and appropriate toiletry articles. Showers are provided but not mandatory. Teachers expect the students to bring their PE uniform home to be washed weekly. Health education is taught throughout the year.