



C.W. RUCKEL MIDDLE SCHOOL

PAUL WHIDDON

Dear Parents and Students,

I hope all of you are having a great summer. In just a short time August 10 will be here and we will all be back in school. I know we are all looking forward to having school with a higher level of normalcy. I would like to thank students, teachers, parents, and community for making last year a success. Even though we faced many obstacles, our students were resilient and their level of performance in the classroom, concert arena, and sporting venue was phenomenal. This resolve and dedication by students, faculty, staff, and parents, led Ruckel to a banner year.

For the upcoming year, we will be returning to some of our established routines and we will also have some newly incorporated strategies in place. I thought it might be helpful if I outlined what we have in place:

Readiness Day – We will be able to have Readiness Day this year and it will be on August 5th. Look on our website or Facebook for a schedule. This will be helpful because you will be able to get your child's schedule and purchase items such as lockers and planners.

Lockers – There was debate over the use of lockers because not using them prevented body-to-body congestion throughout the day. But at the end of the day, students need a safe and secure place to keep their personal belongings and students do not need to lug around 50-pound backpacks all day. Therefore, locker rental will be available for \$5.00.

Bell Schedule – We have modified the bell schedule by adding an extra minute in between classes. This will allow students a reasonable amount of time to get across campus. We ask that students not socialize in the locker hall to help minimize congestion. The bell schedule is slightly different for 6th graders in order to accommodate the 4 lunch rotations.

Backpacks – Students will be allowed to use backpacks throughout the day and they will be able to carry them to their classrooms. Students should use their lockers to cut down on the size and weight of their backpacks. It will be helpful if particularly 7th and 8th graders prepare their backpacks for two consecutive classes. This could help on locker hall congestion.

Cell Phones – Ruckel follows the district policy for cell phone and device usage. Upon arriving at school, a student's cell phone must be turned off and put away. Cell phone use before 7:45 and after 2:20 will be allowed in the cafeteria or gym only. Students may only use cell phones if given permission by a teacher or administrator. If a student needs to get in touch with a parent, they may ask to use the teacher's school phone or permission to use their cell phone. Misuse of a phone will result in confiscation and returned at the end of the day. Multiple misuse of phone will result in confiscation, parent pick up and punishment. If a parent cannot be reached, the phone will be given to the student before school ends.

Masks – Masks will be optional this year.

Social Distancing – Social distancing will not be required but we will have routines in place to create the optimal learning environment.

Desk Carrels – Desk carrels will be optional, but if there is a need for a student or teacher, they can be utilized.

Sanitization – We will continue the practice of sanitizing the cafeteria tables between groups in the lunch rooms. Desks and rooms will be sanitized at the end of each school day.

Restrooms – Restrooms are important to the success of Ruckel. All restrooms will be supplied with soap and sanitizer. We ask that all students are respectful to their restrooms and help keep them clean. We also demand that students do not vandalize the restrooms.

Planners – Planners will be on sale during Readiness Day for five dollars. Planners are a helpful tool for keeping up with daily schedules, assignments and upcoming tests. You can also purchase a planner in Student Services.

Cafeteria – We will again have 4 lunches and we will use the pavilion along with the cafeteria to minimize congestion. The pavilion students will use the gym on inclement weather days. The construction of our new cafetorium should begin this school year.

Buses – Bus schedules and bus numbers can change from year to year, so make sure you look in the local newspapers and confirm your bus schedule and bus number. Make sure that you write your bus number in your planner so that you will know what bus to get on in the afternoon. Your bus will either be assigned to the gym or the cafeteria and you will go to one of these designated areas to listen for your bus number to be called out over the bullhorn.

RAM Class – We will have our advisory class this year. We will have this class most Fridays. This class is designed to help students get ready for high school. Teachers will help students plan a curriculum path, and check grades to make sure they are on track academically. Units such as core value characteristics, civic responsibility, dangers of vaping, bully prevention and other topics will be studied.

SPP Theme – This year we are required to have a theme for our School Performance Plan. Our theme will tie into three important elements for successful schools. Those three elements are attendance, behavior and learning gains. Our motto will be “Get Here” (coming to school, being on time and being prepared); “Be Nice” (treating all people with respect and following all school and class rules); and “Work Hard” (stretching yourself from where you are academically and striving for learning gains)

PBIS – Ruckel will have a **Positive Behavior Intervention System** this year. We have always recognized students for demonstrating core values and rewarded students for hitting benchmarks for their teachers. New this year, we will have a designed system by which teachers recognize and reward students for demonstrating positive behavior. This support system will also be tied to our School Performance Plan. Each quarter, we will reward the **RAM** classes that have the best performance as a class in the areas of attendance, behavior and learning gains. This is also tied to our SPP. Individually, the teachers will reward students that demonstrate an increase in positive behavior. We will also include a system by which parents are notified about positive behavior gains and the parent will be able to reward the student at home. We will also continue the practice of electing, selecting, and honoring students who best represent our core values. This year we will also select and honor “**turnaround students**” those students who show a significant increase in grades, behavior and attendance. We are also looking for partners in our community who are interested in helping support this program.

MTSS – Multi-Tiered Support System – A support system that is used by teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists and administration that monitors and supports your child’s progress with academics, attendance, behavior, emotional and social areas. Through this system, a plan will be created for those students that need support.

New Faces – We lost some great teachers last year due to retirement and military moves. We have hired some great teachers in their place. These new teachers bring much experience and value to Ruckel. They are as follows:

Ms. Evans – 7th grade regular and advanced Math

Ms. Clarke – 7th grade regular and advanced Math

Ms. Randall – 8th grade Pre-Algebra

Ms. Vargo – 7th grade advanced and regular Language Arts

Ms. Moses – Science, Compass and Critical Thinking

Ms. Nichols – ESE resource teacher

Ms. Fisher will be moving from 6th grade math to 6th grade regular and advanced Language Arts.

We also welcome **Kayla Nutt** as our new Assistant Principal. Ms. Nutt is replacing Dr. Small, who will now be leading Destin Middle School. We are excited about all that Ms. Nutt will bring to Ruckel.

Open House – We will host an Open House (TBA) within the first 2 weeks of school. The Open House will be in the evening and give you a chance to follow your child’s schedule and meet their teachers.

PTO – Parent Teacher Organization has supported both students and teachers over the years with technology and student and teacher resources. We will have a table set up at both Readiness Day and Open House for you to become a member. We are also looking for volunteers to help with our RAM JAM fund raiser.

Volunteers – We are so glad that our volunteers will be back. Volunteers are so important to our success. If you are interested in volunteering at Ruckel please contact Susie Watson at Ruckel. You can register to become a volunteer through the OCSD website.

Mentors – We are also glad to have mentors be able to come to the school site next year. You can make a difference in a student’s success. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, please contact the Ruckel Guidance department.

SAC – School Advisory Council meets on the third Wednesday of every month. These meeting are open to the public and all stakeholders. The SAC monitors and advises on all areas that lead to the success of a school.

August 10th will be here before we know it. I am so proud of what our students, teachers, and staff did to make last year successful. I am excited about our 2021-2022 school year and am looking forward to working with you to make this one of our best school years ever.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Whiddon", written in a cursive style.

Paul Whiddon
Principal