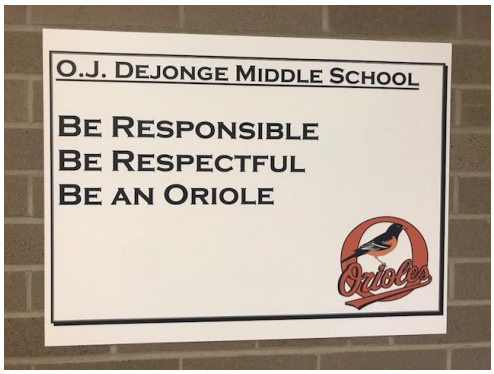
OJ Journal

Our Vision:
The O.J. DeJonge Middle School community inspires learning through inquiry, relationships, and self-awareness in an experience-rich environment that promotes independence and responsibility.

From the Principal's Desk: Be Responsible, Be Respectful, Be an Oriole!

Welcome to the 2018-2019 school year! Ms. Abby Schaperkotter, our new assistant principal, and I are excited to welcome our student body and families back into our school community. We are incredibly proud of our students, faculty, and staff as well as our incredibly supportive Ludington community.

Our year has been off to a fantastic start! Our main initiative for the 2018-2019 school year involves the implementation of a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system. Our PBIS system involves teaching students our building-wide expectations and emphasizing them on a daily basis. This approach is proactive rather than reactive and allows our staff to recognize positive behavior and identify students that live up to our expectations.



Throughout the building, our three expectations for students and staff are to Be Responsible, Be Respectful, and Be An Oriole. Being responsible and respectful are self-explanatory, but we have gone to great lengths to identify what it looks like to be an Oriole. An Oriole is kind and accepting of others, does their best on their school work, is helpful, and takes great pride in our school community. To promote the work of being an Oriole, students that are "caught" living the Oriole way may have their photo taken and placed on our Be An Oriole bulletin board along the main hallway in our building. Staff have also been proactive in making positive phone calls and other forms of communication home to recognize the good work of our students.

We also continue to emphasize our greater Ludington community within our school walls. One way that we are emphasizing our school as a community is through our community road sign initiative. Each hallway corridor has been named as a roadway that also correlates with an identifiable landmark in our community. For example, the main hallway connecting OJMS and LHS has been named Ludington Avenue while the front hallway where the main office is located has been named Lighthouse Way. We look forward to enhancing our school community in a variety of ways.

Communication within our school community is also paramount to our success. Students are able to communicate with the school counselors and administration using the "OJ Reach Out" icon on their iPad. When a student completes a Reach Out Google form, the administrators and school counselors are notified via email and either Ms. Marsh, Mr. Hull, Ms. Schaperkotter or I will meet with the student to ensure that they are supported. We will also continue to use Canvas to communicate daily learning targets and assignments as well as using PowerSchool to communicate student grades. Ms. Schaperkotter and I run a Twitter page to highlight the many great things our students and staff do on a regular basis. You can follow the OJMS Admin Team on Twitter using the handle @OJ_Orioles. You can also get important updates from our OJMS Parent Facebook page that is managed by our Parent Advisory Group. We look forward to communicating the great things that happen at OJ every day!

We hope that the 2018-2019 school year is the best yet for your child. Thank you for being an integral part of our school community!

With Oriole Pride,

Mike Hart

Responding to Relational Aggression

by Amy Marsh, school counselor

I've recently talked with a number of middle school parents about how to help their child respond to relational aggression. While this type of peer aggression occurs among both boys and girls, it is often thought to be more common and more complex among groups of female friends. For that reason, I choose to focus on female relational aggression in this article, even though many of these patterns manifest differently, but apply to boys as well.

Some of the best resources I've found to address this issue for parents and students alike are from The Ophelia Project (theopheliaproject.org). According to their research, "Relational Aggression (RA) is behavior that is intended to hurt someone by harming their relationships with others. It is often covert and subtle and requires careful observation." In other words, relational aggression is using your relationship as a weapon to hurt another person. The tools of relational aggression are often eye rolling, tone of voice, acts of exclusion, forming alliances, spreading rumors and gossip, and controlling another's friendship choices.

What makes relational aggression so maddening is it's invisible quality. Girls who are masters of this form of harm, also known as "Queen-bees" know exactly when and where and how to act so as not to get caught. To an outside observer, these Queen-bees often appear to be sweeter than honey. Only the target of her aggression really knows the depths of her cruelty. This sneakiness leaves the adults involved feeling powerless to intervene and the target feeling painfully alone.

If your daughter is caught up in the mean girl trap, here are some important things to consider:

All girls can be mean girls at times. It's important to consider that every kid has the capacity to make the wrong choice at times. Sometimes, girls will report to me that another girl in the group is the "mean girl," only to learn upon further exploration that the aggressive acts have been more mutual than originally thought. If your daughter talks with you about her frustrations with an aggressive friend, listen well and be slow to draw conclusions. Create a safe place for her to tell you the full truth. I often find myself opening this door by saying to a student, *"I know that when I'm feeling frustrated or hurt, I'm often not my best self. Sometimes I do things that I know I shouldn't. Sometimes I cause harm when I didn't really mean to."* Often, what follows is a deeply honest conversation about each person's contributions to the problem, and a clearer path to the solutions.

Watch for relational aggression among siblings. Sometimes, girls who are feeling hurt by relational aggression in one context, will turn and become the aggressor in another context. If you notice a change in your daughter's behavior toward her siblings, this is an opportunity to open up a conversation about what might be going on with her friends. If relational aggression is identified and redirected at home, then kids have a chance to practice how to respond to these situations in other contexts, such as school.

Being nice doesn't mean you have to be a doormat. This is a very difficult line for many girls to draw. Being assertive often doesn't feel "nice." Facing conflict and dealing with it directly is often uncomfortable, but it is an essential life skill. When you remember that this dynamic is all about power and control, a friend who's willing to stand up for herself is a mean girl's kryptonite. Practice handling these uncomfortable situations with your daughter. Give her actual words to try out, and rehearse being as firm and matter-of-fact as possible:

"I have the right to choose my own friends."
"Just because you don't like (so & so) doesn't mean that I can't like her."
"We haven't been getting along very well lately, I don't think I want to go with you."
"I'd rather spend time with friends who don't call me names."
"Nothing personal, I just want less drama today."
"Believe what you want to, but that's not true."

At the same time, it's important to help girls recognize the boundary between assertive and aggressive. If she is tempted to fight fire with fire, help her to see that retaliating only escalates the situation and makes the misery last longer.

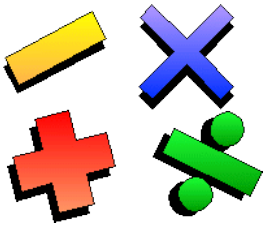
If necessary, offer to be her excuse. For many girls, it's easier to say, *"My parents won't let me come over this weekend,"* than it is to say, *"I don't want to come over."*

Encourage her to seek a supportive ally. Often, there's another girl in the group who is feeling the same way. Without bashing anyone, calling any names, or intentionally excluding anyone, encourage your daughter to reach out to that ally. If they can have each other's backs by agreeing to help each other escape a difficult situation or by promising to stand up for each other, the Queen-bee loses some of her self-proclaimed power. If your daughter is ready to break away from a toxic friend, it's often much easier to do if she's not doing it alone.

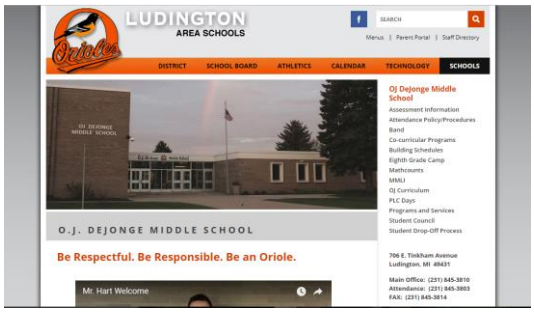
Encourage her to come to the school counselor. Sometimes, it's good to hear more than one adult saying the same thing. Mr. Hull and I have had many conversations with kids in this position and we can help her to develop some new skills for dealing with difficult friends. Let your daughter know that it's ok to seek some confidential help at school.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

Do you need help with your math homework? We've got you covered! Math Help is available after school Monday through Thursday from 3:00-3:45. It is run by the OJ Middle School Math teachers. Posters are all around the school that tell you which teacher is hosting Math Help that day, and it's also in the daily announcements. Even if you don't need help, Math Help is a great place to get your work done and there is support if you get stuck. We hope to see you there!



TECH TIPS



LASD.NET - A great resource for families to keep up on all of the school activities is the district website at lasd.net. The website has the calendar for all of the school events, the daily schedules, the student handbook, and much, much more! Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the website because many parent questions can be answered there.

Reminder from the Athletic Office

Please remember that students are required to have a current sports physical on file in the athletic office and have paid the athletic fee in order to participate in any school sport. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the athletic office at 845-3811.

Bus Passes

Please remember that we use bus passes. This means that when you send your student to school with a note to ride a bus not assigned to them or to ride home with a friend on the bus, your student must take your note to the office to receive a pass for the day. The bus drivers will ONLY accept bus passes for students to be able to get on an unassigned bus. Should you have any questions, please call the school office or the Transportation Office at 845-3890.

Immunization Reminder

The State of Michigan has immunization requirements for all children entering 7th grade or those who change school districts. Vaccinations are available through your family doctor, your local office of District Health Department #10, and many local pharmacies. Your family doctor or health department can provide more details on the different vaccines and requirements. You can also visit www.dhd10.org.

BPA - TOGETHER, WE CREATE

Students grades 6-12 are welcome to become part of one of Michigan's most distinguished groups of young men and women in either the middle or secondary levels. The Ludington Business Professionals of America program would like to invite middle school students to explore a student organization that can support you through your middle and high school years, help prepare you for the world of work or acquire further training. BPA is involved with school and community through real activities and events that strengthen and enhance leadership, planning, and organizational skills that helps you build your own network of professionals to promote more and more future career opportunities.

Sounds BIG for a middle school student; but Together, We Create many new experiences and opportunities to help you build lifelong skills for a successful career! Together, We Create is the National BPA Theme this year. Over the summer, national BPA officers worked together to bring us a bunch of new and exciting experiences that can be shared in every chapter across America, involving charitable organizations and academic excellence. Together, they planned and prepared for a great year with and for us. Together, we create, no matter where we are or what we're doing. The middle school BPA program will be venturing into new projects and activities this year. Listen to the announcements for our "Meet & Greet" Informational meeting coming in October to find out more information. Our regular bi-weekly membership meetings are held two Tuesdays of each month and will begin after the Meet & Greet Welcome party.

Happy 50th Anniversary to 8th Grade Camp!!

158 OJ DeJonge Middle School eighth graders participated in our 50th annual 8th grade Outdoor Education camp. Ludington Area Schools' 8th grade Camp is held at Grace Adventures on Upper Silver Lake and is a week-long experience focused on cooperation, team building, class unity, new experiences, trust in self and others, independence and interdependence, and leadership. During the week, students took part in individual and group experiences and adventures including: a high ropes course, rock climbing wall, zip-line, horseback riding, sailing, canoeing & kayaking, archery, Mock Rock skit creation, fire building, and more. Students ventured beyond their comfort zones, encouraged others, and cooperated in order to achieve success in the tasks they attempted.

The tremendous support from staff, parents, and community members continues to make this experience possible. **A special thanks goes out to Steve Hull for graciously donating his truck to haul luggage to and from camp, to The Liekert Family for lending their golf cart for the camp staff, Dale Fitch and the Ludington Yacht Club for providing sailing skills, and Peterson Orchards for the week's supply of apples for the students!** We also had an

amazing group of dedicated individuals who forfeit their personal lives for the week in order to make 8th grade camp possible. This year's camp staff:

JR Schoon, Director
Judy Bussey, Assistant Director
Eileen Kline, Waterfront Area Director
Adam Knudsen, Music/Skit Director
Renee Malburg, Sports Area Director
Mike Nichols, Science Area Director
Erika Etchison, Arts Area Director
Steve Hull, Counselor

Cabin Counselors (Staff):
Lynette Keillor, Ben Teske, Shelby Schittenhelm, Bonnie Hackert, Wade Knoll, Karen Shineldecker, Kara Jensen, Mike Reilly, & Carl Lindenau

Cabin Counselors (Community Volunteers):
Cathy Dalton Andy Hamilton
Elise Manier Tim Bryant
Travis Erdman Josh Buck

We also need to thank the volunteers who come out for a few hours in the evenings – we couldn't do this without you: Cindy Hill, Lauren Schipper, Mary Klemm, Susan Shoup, Missy Bansch, Mike Hart, Abby Schaperkotter, and Jesse Moser.

A heart-felt thanks to all who made this amazing experience possible for our 8th graders!

2018-19 Student Council Members Announced!!

6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
Jennah Skiba	Kylie Saylor	Emma Teske
Will Ruboyianes	Anna Burton	Rebecca Szoboslay
Kylee Johnson	Reya Dila	Kaylee Malt

Congratulations to our amazing students!!