

To: Gorham Middle School Parents
From: Teresa Merrill R.N.
Date: August 5, 2014

Welcome to the 2014/2015 school year

I thought I would take time to jot down a few helpful suggestions as we begin our school year together:

- Be sure your child has had a physical exam (recommended annually) and immunizations are up to date. In order to play sports in Gorham, a physical exam report must be on file every 2 years. Outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness such as pertussis, chicken pox, and measles are on the rise across the country and in Maine. Again, please be sure your child is properly immunized.
- Establish a bedtime and wake-up time with your child and stick to it to ensure adequate rest. Children in middle school need 9 hours of sleep at night.
- Encourage a healthy breakfast, needed for learning. I see many students mid- morning with stomach complaints mainly because they did not eat breakfast and they are hungry. A healthy snack for mid-morning hunger is helpful. Did you know breakfast is available for purchase (or free-and reduce program) for students at school?
- Develop a reasonable schedule to balance after-school activities and homework time.
- Provide your school nurse with any changes in health as they occur with your child. If your child has an injury the nurse should be aware to assist the student during the school day. An example is to let the nurse know when your child has crutches to ensure safe evacuation from the building during a fire drill. Also please be sure I am told if your child is diagnosed with a concussion.
- Be sure your child is dressed for weather. Keeping a spare sweatshirt in the locker is a suggestion for when weather changes and a warmer covering is needed. Sneakers are necessary for PE class.
- If your child has plans to be outdoors for a class related activity or on a field trip, dress to protect from exposure to ticks and the sun!
- If your child needs medicine at school please be sure it comes in an original container and with signed medical orders from the doctor AND signed parent permission.

- Did you know I will work with your primary care provider to write a plan for the health needs for your child? See the nurse to sign a release form so she may communicate on behalf of your child to develop the best plan to attend school.
- If you need any health related forms you may find them on our website.
- If your child has a serious food allergy or diabetes, please know I must have up to date medical orders by the first day of school.
- If your child carries an inhaler, I still must have medical orders for the student to carry the inhaler. Please be sure the inhaler has the student's name written on it in permanent marker, that it is covered, and that it is not expired. I am happy to assist any child who is having difficulty with their asthma.
- Please note that we have students and staff who have weakened immune systems, making them more susceptible to illness. Please encourage good hand washing technique with your child, proper cough etiquette, and keep your child home if ill with a fever 100 degrees or greater, or if the student has vomiting or diarrhea. Students should be fever free without the use of anti-fever medicines, and should be free from vomiting or diarrhea symptoms for 24 hours before returning to school. Please review to the student handbook for more details about illnesses.
- The school nurse must attend to the surveillance of illnesses in our school. A suggestion to assist me, is to tell the office staff when your child is sick if they have something that is contagious (fever, vomiting, diarrhea etc.). If a child has a fever, I will see them on the morning of their return to school. It is helpful if you suggest to our child to stop in and see me on their way into the building. Also as you know, cell phones are not permitted for use during the school day. Often I find students have been dismissed without my knowledge due to a text to a parent who then comes in to dismiss the child. We discourage this and prefer they see me first. It is the only way I am able to accurately assess any outbreaks of illness in the building.
- I look forward to answering questions or speaking with you about your child's health needs.
- I am here to provide education to students about their health, to provide safe access to care while at school, and to communicate with staff how to plan for a safe day at school related to the many health conditions I see. You may reach me from 7:30 to 3:00 by dialing 222-1224. My e-mail is teresa.merrill@gorhamschools.org

