



*How to be successful in  
7th and 8th Grade GATE  
at Alice Vail Middle School*

**Follow two rules for a safe, comfortable, and effective learning environment.**

1. **Work hard.** Maximize your educational opportunities. Bring all your supplies and be in your seat before the bell rings, notebook open, following the Bell Work directions on the board. Pay attention; do your best work; and turn in your best work *on time*.

Eliminate distractions. Your GATE class time must be spent doing work for that GATE class. Socializing, doing work for other classes, drawing, grooming, writing personal correspondence, and texting are prohibited! Water is encouraged; gum chewing and eating in class are not. Cell phones, iPods, and other electronics should *not* be seen and *not* be heard – unless their use has been endorsed for a specific educational purpose.

2. **Be nice.** Treat others with respect and courtesy. Keep your hands to yourself: no touching, grabbing, poking, thumb wrestling, hugging; no kissing in class or in the halls. Be careful with school property and other students' property. Talk when it is your turn to talk, not while someone else – teacher, guest speaker, or designated student – is speaking. Be considerate of your classmates' feelings, because all students have the right to learn without threats or ridicule. There will be no physical or emotional bullying *at any time!*

*Of course there are consequences for choosing to break the rules, including:*

- Completing a *Student Action Plan*
- Serving lunch or after-school detention
- Earning a "T" or "U" or undesirable comment on your report card
- Meeting with parent, counselor, and teacher to correct the situation
- Having your parent sit with you during class
- Being removed from the classroom learning environment

<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Joe Student</i> <i>Period 6</i> <i>8-31-14</i> Title of Assignment</p>
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**Do your best on all your assignments.**

The appearance criteria for assignments are nonnegotiable!

- Neat, clean, not crumpled or torn; no spiral edges; no doodles or messy scratch outs
- Heading: ***first and last name, period, and date*** in the upper right hand corner. **If your paper is typed, your heading must be typed too!**
- Title centered, below the heading
- Format appropriately: One-inch margins, one-and-a-half- or double-spaced body, written on only the front of the paper, a standard font in size 10 to 12. If you have only a sentence or two spilling onto a second page, adjust your formatting to make it fit on one page.
- Print your work in black or handwrite in black or conventional blue ink.

Use a computer whenever possible: Your assignment will look better, you can spell-check, and, most important, revising your work is so much easier than rewriting it by hand. If you don't have a computer at home, take advantage of the computer lab or library media center at school. Of course, informal work, like in-class note taking, may be written in pencil. But make sure even informal work is neat, legible, and organized. If you can't read your notes, what good are they?

### **Late work**

Assignments are due when they are due. Make sure you put your work in your backpack when you finish it. If you leave your assignments in your printer or on your desk when you are getting ready for school in the morning, *they are late!* In the real world, life is full of interruptions. But the plane still takes off, the income tax gets filed, and the credit card bill is paid. Your late work will be penalized! Penalties are unique to each teacher, so make sure you consider the costs of late work.

If a *significant and unplanned* event occurs (not a paper cut and not a vacation!), and you feel your situation requires extra consideration, come talk to your teachers and we will figure out what is fair.

### **Homework is important to your learning and your grades.**

Homework will never be busy work; we do not assign homework just because we can. (There may actually be weeks without homework in some classes!) Homework could be reading, writing, computing, studying, and/or working on projects. Budget your time so you can produce your best work, ace your tests, *and* fulfill your other obligations.

When long-term projects are assigned, they require work outside of class. Generally, the project pieces are your homework and additional homework will not be assigned. Planning sheets will be provided for long-term projects, breaking the task into smaller pieces, with interim due dates. Projects, unlike weekly assignments, cannot be accepted late.

### **Regular and on-time attendance is critical to success**

Of course you should stay at home when you are truly ill, but recognize that chronic absenteeism will sabotage your success. Checking your class websites for homework information is helpful, but a brief summary cannot replace missed instruction. The very day you return to school, turn in work that was due and find out what you need to do to catch up. Being absent does not excuse you from work and tests you missed. Any missed quizzes and tests **MUST** be made up within a week of your return to class. Catching up is your responsibility; your teachers will not track you down for missed work.

### **Grades indicate how well you are doing.**

Your grade reflects your individual work – written, oral, tests, classwork, homework, and projects – and your performance in activities, simulations, and small group projects. All work is evaluated for both substance and style. Missing work is worth zero points – a grade-devastating consequence. You are in middle school, not elementary, and your work ethic is reflected in your grade.

There is no last-minute emergency extra credit. When an extra credit opportunity is offered, grab it! But it won't make up for weeks of shoddy work; extra credit is a booster for a few points lost here

and there. And extra credit will not make up for missing work; everything assigned must be done before extra credit is accepted.

Take charge of your education and maximize your potential! Grades are posted regularly; check them and compare them to your records. If you have questions about your grades or work, be sure to ask. Take advantage of revision opportunities – professional writers become better through revision and so will you! Not only that, but if you revise, do extra credit when it is offered, and turn in all your work on time, a borderline end-of-quarter grade may be bumped up from a C+ to a B or from a B+ to an A!

Speaking of grades, recognize that a merely-completed assignment is C work, not A work. A work goes well beyond expectations, in quality, creativity, and higher level thinking. B is better; D indicates you did something (which is a bit better than doing nothing!); and F is a failure to try.

Be sure to keep your graded work in a folder at home at least until end-of-quarter grades are posted. (You might find some of it valuable to save for future reference!)

**Procedures let you know what to do and how to do it.**

*During direct instruction and presentations*, be an active listener: Remain seated, listen, and take notes. Raise your hand to ask a *relevant* question or make an *appropriate* comment. You may not leave the classroom without permission.

*During class work time*, you may sharpen your pencil, obtain materials, and consult references or the teacher as needed.

*During tests*, you must observe test-taking etiquette. This means you will have only test-taking materials on the table and that there will be no talking or moving around the classroom. You may not leave the classroom without permission.

*Academic ethics*: Academic honesty is nonnegotiable. The work you take credit for must be your own! That means when you get ideas and research and notes from other sources (e.g., books, magazines, brochures, websites, online articles, friends), you must credit those sources in your paper. Plagiarism is deceitful and illegal and will earn you an “F” and a “U.”

And on a happier note, ask if you need help. **Help is free!**

**Your GATE Teachers**

*Please sign, date, and detach the strip below, and return to your language arts teacher*

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We have read and understand the information regarding expectations for GATE students at Alice Vail Middle School. I commit to sharing my teachers’ goals for my education.

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I will support my child's success in the GATE program to the best of my ability.

Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_