



Rupert A. Nock Middle School

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NEWBURYPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we near the end of the first trimester, we want to share just a few dates and notes:

- November 21, 10:45 AM--early release for Thanksgiving holiday
- November 28--end of trimester one; report cards to come in the mail by 12/10
- November 28, 6-9PM--Newburyport Youth Services Craft Fair (selling student created crafts, support our budding artisans and entrepreneurs!)
- November 29, 6:30 PM--NHS showcase for current grade 8 parents and guardians

Many thanks go to the PTO and the whole parent/guardian community for the *Teachers are Souper* lunch earlier this month! Please look for information from homeroom teachers on a new PTO fundraiser with Newburyport.com VIP cards.

Thanks also go to our many student groups for their service to the school and community through student-directed plays, attendance at the Principal breakfast, participation in New England League of Middle schools' leadership training, volunteering at the Bresnahan Boo Bash, creating and running an afterschool mindfulness club and a diversity club, singing and speaking at our Veteran's Day assembly, to name just a few.

Finally, we continue to work with our student community to build a positive culture. Toward this end, it is important for young people to understand the impact of their actions and their language. It can be confusing for students to find that language used casually in a YouTube video, a video game or a viral meme is language that in a school, on a playing field, or in conversation with a friend can be considered harassing or bullying.

We will continue to have these conversations with students at school and hope that our parent/guardian community will also open this conversation at home. Below are some suggestions for topics and resources for talking about language and actions with young people in your life.

Students in our Nock community show us daily their many assets--they are problem solvers, healers, writers, musicians, athletes and, most importantly, leaders. We are thankful for their joyful ideas and energy!

Wishing you all a warm and safe Thanksgiving break next week, Lisa Furlong and the Nock Staff

Talking with Students about the Power of Words, Actions and Gestures

- **Help your child with school definitions...**
 - What is harassment? Any use of language, symbols or gestures that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. These actions do not need to be directed at a particular person to be found offensive and in violation of the harassment policy.
 - What is bullying? The repeated use of written, verbal, or electronic communication or a physical act or gesture directed at a person that causes physical or emotional harm to the person or the person's property.
- **Explore outside resources**
 - "I Didn't Mean it Like That" or "Responding to Jokes and Slurs" from the Anti Defamation League: <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/challenging-biased-language#.VQrEJ47F To>
 - "Speak up" from Teaching Tolerance https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/speak_up_handbook.pdf
- **Identify and discuss specific examples...**
 - Jokes about sexual orientation or body type, anti-semitic gestures, and racial slurs can all be considered harassment.
 - Threatening language, threatening to destroy a possession, or spreading rumors through technology or social media can all be considered bullying.
 - Swearing, although more casual and accepted in conversation outside of school, is not allowed in school.
 - Joking about drug or alcohol use are also in violation of the student code of conduct.
 - Any physical interactions like shoving, slapping, or pushing are in violation of the student code of conduct.
- **Discuss the school code of conduct** and potential disciplinary responses...
 - The complete Student Handbook can be found on the website at <http://nock.newburyport.k12.ma.us/documents/HAndbook/Handbook%209.18.pdf>
 - Our response to student mistakes will include learning opportunities *and* disciplinary consequences. Both are an appropriate and important part of the school response.