

August 22, 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians of Incoming Eighth Grade Students:

This fall, students will have a unique opportunity to spend a week focused on ecosystem dynamics, which will give real life context to many of the key principles of science. The study of ecosystems is an essential element of our science curriculum and provides a rich variety of connections to the math, language arts and social studies curricula as well as to STEM education.

As in past years, our eighth graders will enjoy a week-long residential experience in Maine. We have developed our current program in cooperation with [The Ecology School](#) in Saco, Maine. This year's program will be based out of the River Bend Farm campus located along the Saco River. The program is designed to meet our curriculum goals and offers a varied, interdisciplinary, hands-on approach to the study of science. In small groups of 10-11, led by enthusiastic, well trained instructors, students will experience and study tide pools, beach and dune habitats, coastal forests, fresh water sources and other fragile ecosystems.

This fall's Ecology School trips are scheduled for the weeks of **September 25th-29th** for one eighth grade team and **October 30th November 3rd**, for the other team. Since team assignments will not be finalized until the summer, please mark all of these dates on your family calendar to avoid conflicts.

#### Online Registration and Health Form Completion

**You must complete the registration and health online for your child prior to Friday, September 15th.** Parents/Guardians will need to create an account and profile for their child in our **Campwise system**. Once they have done this, they will need the Group Hold ID listed below to enroll for your school's program. The link to this can be found on our [School Resource Page](#) (top left column titled "Student Registration").

**The Group Hold ID for Amherst Middle School's September 25-29 program is: 8th1Amherst23 (Reynolds Team)**

**The Group Hold ID for Amherst Middle School's October 30 – November 3 program is: 8th2Amherst23 (Griffiths Team)**

The total cost of the trips, which includes tuition, room and board, and bus transportation, is **\$452.00**. You can be assured that every effort is being made to keep costs to an absolute minimum. In order to secure a discounted rate, we had to pay 50% of the tuition before July 1. **Thank you for submitting the first deposit of \$226 during the summer.**

The balance of \$226.00 (or full amount if you did not submit the first deposit) will be due **Friday, September 22nd**.

The Ecology School has a very informative website, which we encourage you to visit at [www.theecologyschool.org](http://www.theecologyschool.org). It has information about their program, facilities, staffing, supervision and a number of other topics. Although the great majority of our students usually participate in this exciting opportunity, a full program of eighth grade studies is provided at AMS for any student who does not accompany us. If serious **financial hardship** is the only reason your child will not attend, please contact us to request a financial aid form **as soon as possible**, using the email addresses listed below. Requests for financial aid are held in strict confidence.

We look forward once again to a positive and richly rewarding experience. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns.

Mr. Geoff Griffiths - [ggriffiths@sau39.org](mailto:ggriffiths@sau39.org)

Ms. Jenna Reynolds - [jreynolds@sau39.org](mailto:jreynolds@sau39.org)

Grade 8 Science Teachers