

MS 354 Spring Newsletter 2026



Hello Spring

"Spring Forward:
Roots, Shoots, and Success"



DR. MONIQUE CAMPBELL, Principal
KIMANI SMITH, Assistant Principal
CYLANN PHILLIPS, Assistant Principal
MAXINE GRIFFITH, School Counselor
ELROY CORMACK, Parent Coordinator
HANDEL BARCLAY, NY Edge Director
GARFIELD GRANDISON, Child Center

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE VISIT OUR
WEBSITE OR CALL US
MS354.COM,
718-774-0362**



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@
MS354BROOKLYN**

Principal's Message

Welcome to the Greenhouse!

As the days get longer and the jackets get lighter, there is a distinct energy buzzing through our hallways. We have officially entered the "Greenhouse" phase of our school year—a time when all the hard work we've put in since September finally starts to bloom.

It is a beautiful time of year, but as any gardener knows, this is when the real work happens! I know the sunshine is calling your name through the classroom windows (trust me, I feel it too!), but this quarter is our most important stretch. It's the time to take those "roots" of study habits you've built all winter and turn them into the "shoots" of final projects, performances, and personal bests.

Our goal for this spring is simple: Stay focused, stay kind, and finish strong. Whether you're gearing up for state testing, preparing for the spring musical, or hitting the field for a new season, let's channel that spring energy into everything we do.

Let's keep growing, MS 354!

Warmly,

Dr. Monique Campbell



Principal's Corner



Hey there, rising freshmen.

First of all, congratulations! You made it through middle school, which—let's be entirely honest—is culturally and socially the weirdest three years of your life.

You survived the awkward phases and the growth spurts. As a middle school principal, I have watched hundreds of students walk out of my doors and into the high school in NY City. I've seen what makes them fly, and I've seen what makes them stumble.

High school is a massive, exciting upgrade, but the rules of the game change. Here is my unvarnished, principal-tested advice for making a smooth transition.

1. The Academic Reality Check

In middle school, we sometimes gave you a safety net. In high school, that net gets a lot thinner.

- **The GPA is Real (and It Starts Day One):** Every single quiz, homework assignment, and project from your first semester of 9th grade goes onto your permanent transcript. You cannot "fix it later." It is exponentially harder to pull a low GPA up in 11th grade than it is to keep it high in 9th.
- **The "Freshman Forgiveness" Myth:** High school teachers are generally fantastic, but they will treat you like young adults. They will not hunt you down for missing work. If you miss a deadline, it's a zero until you take the initiative to fix it.
- **Advocate for Yourself:** If you don't understand a concept, don't sit in silence. Go to the teacher before or after school. Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness; it's a sign of maturity.



Principal's Corner



2. Navigating the Social Shift

You are about to go from being the "kings of the castle" as 8th graders to the absolute bottom of the food chain. Don't panic—it's actually a good thing.

- **The Seniors Don't Care About You (In a Good Way):** Movies make high school look like a war zone where seniors torment freshmen. In reality? Seniors are thinking about college, graduation, and themselves. They barely notice you. Relax.
- **Your "Crew" Will Change, and That's Okay:** You might drift away from your middle school best friends. This isn't a tragedy; it's growth. High school brings people together based on shared interests, not just because you happen to share a locker row.
- **Get Involved Immediately:** Join a club, try out for a sport, or sign up for theater. The quickest way to make a big school feel small and welcoming is to find your niche.

3. Mastering the Mental Game

The biggest hurdle in 9th grade isn't the difficulty of the math; it's the management of your time.

- **Ditch the "I'll Remember It" Strategy:** You won't. The workload multiplies. Use a digital calendar, an old-school paper planner, or a reliable app. Track your deadlines the day they are assigned.
- **Protect Your Sleep:** I know the temptation to stay up until 2:00 AM on your phone is real. But a sleep-deprived freshman is a freshman who fails tests and snaps at their friends. Protect your peace.
- **Character Matters More Than Clout:** High school offers a lot of temptations to alter who you are to fit in. Don't trade your integrity for short-term popularity. The kids who are respected in the long run are the ones who are kind, reliable, and authentic.

A Final Note From the Main Office:

We didn't just teach you academics over the last three years; we taught you how to learn. You are ready for this next step, even if your stomach is doing flips right now. Take a deep breath, walk through those high school doors with your head up, and make us proud!



GOLDEN APPLE

STAFF SPOTLIGHT SPRING 2026

AWARD



JANICE AIKEN

Ms. Aiken, has long been the heartbeat behind every beautiful space in this building—not merely a decorator, but a visionary artist who transforms ordinary rooms into extraordinary experiences through her creativity and skill. From unforgettable themed celebrations like the enchanting Under the Sea and whimsical Winnie the Pooh baby showers to breathtaking balloon installations that rival professional event spaces, her work consistently inspires awe and joy. Whether elevating graduation ceremonies into elegant tributes, turning prom into a magical evening, or creating vibrant, welcoming environments for Community Day, Welcome Back events, and parent celebrations, she brings beauty, intention, and excellence to every occasion, leaving a lasting impact on all who experience her work.

Staff Spotlight Spring 2026



Kitoko St. Furcy

Ms. St. Furcy is one of the creative geniuses at MS 354. The “Cruise Ship Integrated” Teacher Appreciation themed event was her mastermind. She was responsible for giving us all a visionary, culturally rich experience from start to finish, transforming our space with thoughtful details and a week-long journey that honored the diverse identities within our community.

Each day’s themed celebration reflected intentionality and care, making staff feel seen, valued, and connected. From the interactive appreciation stations to the personalized touches and the incredible effort she poured in—including giving her time, resources, and even involving her family—this was far beyond going above and beyond; it was an extraordinary act of generosity and love. By bringing together so many members of our community to create such a joyful and meaningful experience, she ensured that this week will be remembered long after the decorations come down.



THE POLLINATOR PRAISE

COMMUNITY BUILDERS



KEISHA RAMRATTAN

Shout-out to Ms. Ramrattan, thank you for your thoughtful planning of trips that meaningfully support students.



MAXINE GRIFFITH

Shout-out to Maxine for her dedicated support of our 8th graders through the articulation and high school selection process, as well as her leadership in organizing Career Day.

TRACEY DELAHAYE

Shout-out to Ms. Delahaye for her exceptional coordination of testing and for supporting our multi-tiered systems of support which ensure students receive the academic assistance they need to succeed.

YOLANDA TAYLOR-BURRISON

Shout-out to Yolanda for spearheading our debate team and for her dedicated support of our Step, spelling, Bee and cheer teams.



THE POLLINATOR PRAISE

COMMUNITY BUILDERS



DR. DARLINE ATKINSON

Shout-out to Dr. Atkinson for spearheading the iReady Challenge and for her continued support of our STEM team.



MICHAEL ST. ROSE

Shout-out to Mr. Mike for spearheading our Spring Showcase and for his leadership in developing our Modeling Academy.

DIANGELO THOMAS

Shout-out to Mr. Thomas for his outstanding coaching of our basketball team—his leadership and dedication have propelled the team to numerous league victories.

MS. SMITH-GREEN

Shout-out to Ms. Smith-Green for spearheading our Book Fair—her leadership and attention to detail made it a resounding success for our school community.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

SPRING 2026



JAYDA N.

Grade 6

Hobbies: Dance, Gymnastics, and Art

Favorite Subject: I like PE because I like movement and it's fun. I also like ELA because I am good at it, and I learn a lot in my class.

Future Career: I would like to become a professional dancer.

Grade 7

Hobbies: I am passionate about playing basketball and spending time with my sister.

Favorite Subject: I like Science - I like learning while doing experiments, and this year I am learning new things while having fun.

Future Career: I would like to become a day trader because I would have the flexibility of working from anywhere.



Grade 8

Hobbies: I love playing basketball

Favorite Subject: PE - I like that we get to move around and do endurance exercises.

Future Career: I would like to become a professional basketball player.



ALEX W.

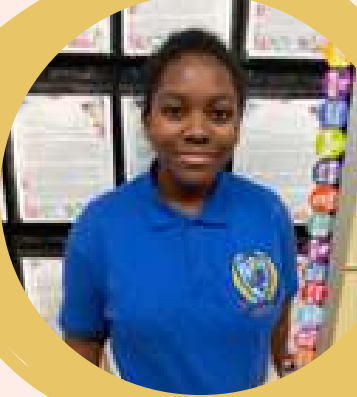


JESUS M.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT MOST IMPROVED



KIMORA W. 611



SUMMAH J. 603



DYLAN D. 610



DALIYAH W. 704



MESSIAH H. 711



ELIANA T. 702



ANGEL P. 811



REON S. 802



JANAYA E. 804



FEEAZ K. 803



M.S. 354

The School of Integrated Learning



A Middle School of Choice for Your Child

At M.S. 354, we don't just educate students—we *develop scholars, leaders, and innovators*. Our school delivers a rigorous, engaging, and future-focused experience that prepares students for success in high school, college, and beyond.



Our students demonstrate consistent annual academic growth in both **ELA and Math**—positioning M.S. 354 as one of New York City's highest-performing schools, outperforming both public and charter



Advanced Academic Programs

- ★ International Baccalaureate (IB) Program
- ★ Phoenix Academy (Screened Accelerated Program)
- ★ Regents Track Curriculum (up to 5 high school Regents exams)
- ★ Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) Prep



Career & Technical Education

- ★ **Technology:** Coding, Robotics, 3D Printing, Virtual Reality
- ★ **Performing Arts:** Dance, Violin, Steel Pan, Visual Arts, Film
- ★ **Home Economics:** Culinary Arts, Food Science & Nutrition
- ★ **Athletics:** Basketball, Football, Track, Soccer, Swimming, Volleyball, Cheerleading



Signature Programs & Opportunities

- ★ **Virtual Learning (SBVL)** — 1 of ONLY 2 middle schools in NYC
- ★ **Extended Learning Time (ELT)** — 1 of ONLY 8 schools citywide
- ★ **Saturday Academy** (tutoring & acceleration)
- ★ **Partnerships** with NYTT, Urban Advantage, Brooklyn Botanic Garden



High School Readiness

- ★ Access to AP/college-level exposure
- ★ SHSAT prep partnership with Brooklyn Technical High School
- ★ Proven track record of SHSAT success
- ★ **Partnership with MEDGAR EVERS PREPARATORY H.S.**

- 📍 Tue, 5/12 @ 5:30 pm
- 📍 Sat, 5/16 @ 10:00 am
- 📍 Thurs 5/21 @ 5:30 pm
- 📍 Sat, 6/30 @ 10:00 am

Join Us at
Our Open House!

M.S. 354 | Where Growth, Opportunity, and Excellence Meet

1253 Sterling Pl Brooklyn, NY 11213 • 7187740362

Classroom Updates – ELA

Discovering your voice

Grade 6

Grade 6 is exploring ways that they can make themselves be heard.

Text: Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson

Text: Selfie: The Changing Face of Self-Portraits by Susie Brooks

Text: What's So Funny, Mr. Scieszka? by Jon Scieszka



Grade 7

Reality Check

Grade 7 is exploring what can blur the lines between what is real and what is not.

Text: Mirror Image by Lena Coakley

Text: Not Everything It Seems by Arnetta Carter

Text: Two Legs or One? by Josepha Sherman



Gadgets and Glitches

Grade 8

Grade 8 is exploring whether or not technology is improving or controlling our lives.

Text: The Brave Little Toaster by Cory Doctorow

Text: Are Bionic Superhumans on the Horizon? by Ramez Naam

Text: Interflora by Susan Hamlyn



Classroom Updates

Social Studies



Grade 6

Grade 6 students are engaged in a Social Studies unit on global conflicts, with an emphasis on understanding the causes, key events, and impact of World War I.

Grade 7

Grade 7 students are engaged in a Social Studies unit on human rights, with an emphasis on examining the historical context and impact of the Holocaust.

Grade 8

Grade 8 students are engaged in a comprehensive Social Studies curriculum that includes U.S. History topics such as Reconstruction and the Great Depression, as well as Global History units focused on World War II and the impact of globalization.





Custom Gardens

Vertical Gardens

**Classroom Updates
Science**

Growing plants isn't just a hobby; it's a fundamental part of human survival and environmental health. In a world where more people are moving into cities, learning how to grow life inside a "concrete jungle" is a critical skill.

This spring at MS 354 we encouraged our students to design and grow vertical gardens.



CLASSROOM UPDATES MATH

GRADE 6

Grade 6 students are engaged in a Mathematics unit on describing data, where they develop skills in interpreting, representing, and analyzing data sets.

GRADE 7

Grade 7 students are engaged in a Mathematics unit on measuring circles, where they explore concepts such as radius, diameter, circumference, and area.

GRADE 8

Grade 8 students are engaged in a Mathematics unit on scientific notation, where they develop skills in representing, interpreting, and performing operations with very large and very small numbers.



Art Class

UPDATES



6th and 7th Grade students have been working on creating giant sculptures of their favorite snack foods inspired by the art of Claes Oldenberg. Students created realistic large scale drawings of their foods, painted them with acrylic paints, and then stuffed their sculptures with recycled paper.



NEURO GRAPHIC ART



Elijah L.



Karishma D.



Samiyah L.



Timothy R.

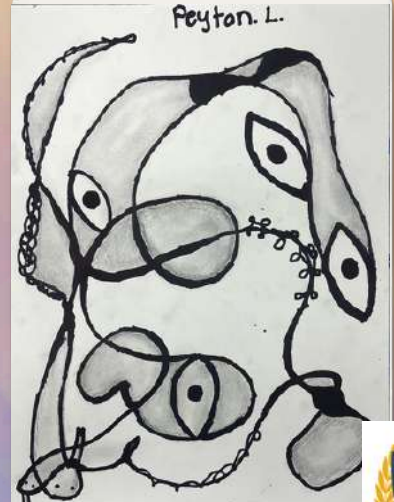
May is Month Health Month. Students created Neurographic Art, a method of making abstract art that expresses thoughts and feelings through freeform lines and colors.



Amarii M.



Christian F.



Peyton L.

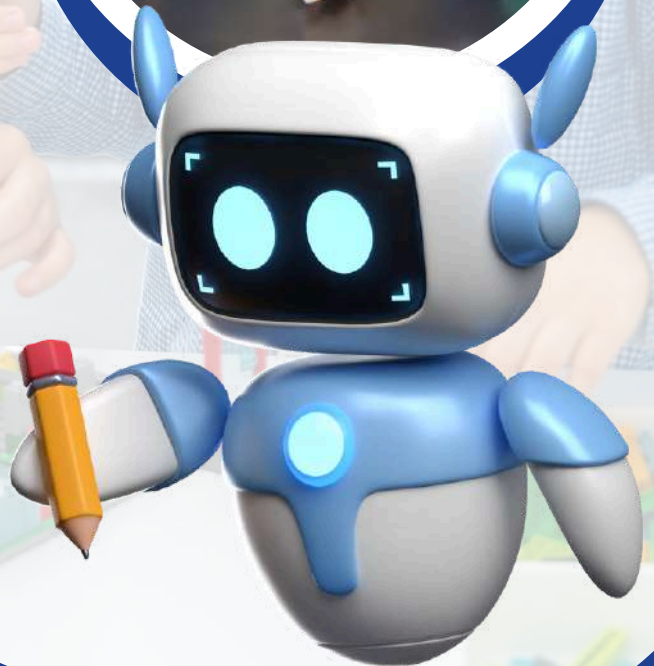
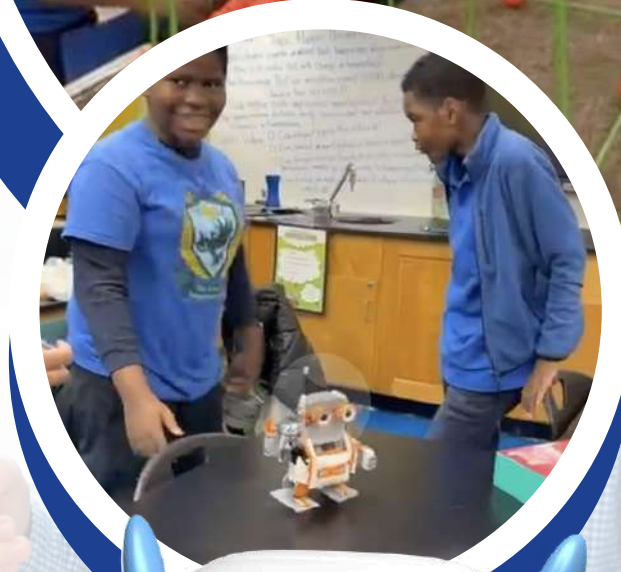


ROBOTIC CLUB CLUB UPDATES

Students participated in hands-on learning and interactive projects, geared towards nurturing creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork in a fun and supportive environment.

Class Focus

- ✓ Coding Classes
- ✓ Beginner Robotics
- ✓ Intermediate Robotics



TRACK

& FIELD

UPDATES



The Track and Field Club has participated in a variety of activities throughout the year, engaging in athletic contests that emphasize running, jumping, and walking.

June 3, 2026

SPRING SHOWCASE

Fashion Academy

What to expect: Displays in fashion design, modeling, and production.

**STEP & CHEER
DANCE**

STEEL PAN

VIOLIN

DJ PHENOM



BASKETBALL AT MS 354

GET READY FOR ACTION!!



**MS 354 Basketball Team is on a winning streak!!!
They are the leaders in their league.**



URBAN ADVANTAGE Plans for Family Engagement SPRING

Nature is deeply connected to our cultures, traditions, communities, and everyday family experiences. In the summer, families take the opportunity to explore parks, gardens, neighborhoods, beaches, and outdoor spaces. During these outings, these experiences can be connected to family life and traditions.

Families, please spend some time observing the natural world together and talk about the ways plants, weather, animals, water, and other natural elements connect to memories, traditions, foods, celebrations, and community experiences.

SOME NATURE EXPERIENCES FAMILIES CAN DO

- Visit a local park, garden, or waterfront
- Talk about plants, trees, or foods that are important in family traditions
- Share stories and experiences shared by family members in nature places
- Photograph, draw, or write about natural objects that feel meaningful or familiar

FAMILY DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What does nature remind you of?
- What outdoor places are important to our family or community?
- What plants, animals, or natural spaces are meaningful to our family?
- How do people in our community care for the environment?
- What changes in nature do you notice throughout the summer?

These conversations help students understand that science is not separate from everyday life; it is connected to culture, identity, memories, and community experiences.



Teacher Appreciation WEEK



MAY 04 - 08



• *Monday*

Meet & Cheese

Port: MS 354

• *Tuesday*

Tiki Bar & Haittian Snacks

Port: Haiti

• *Wednesday*

Yard Lunch

Port: Jamaica

• *Friday*

Ice cream Bar & Sweet treats

Port: MS 354

• *Thursday*

T & T Snack boxes

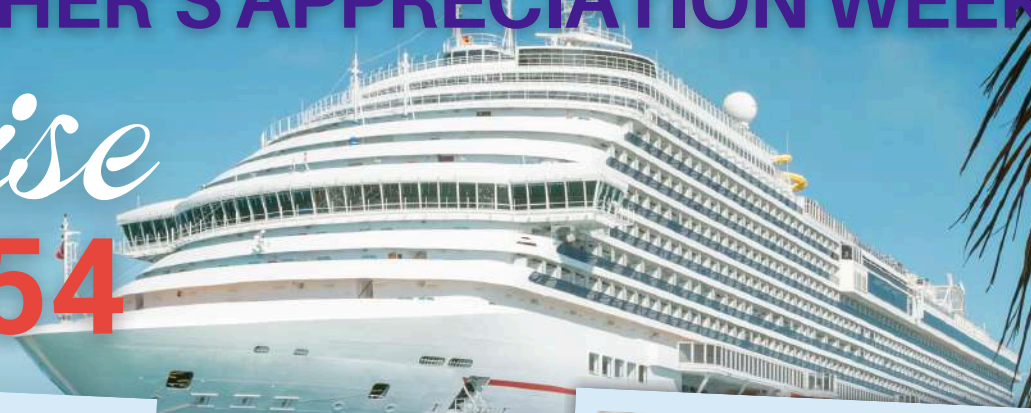
Port: Trinidad & Tobago

THANKS NY EDGE PTA



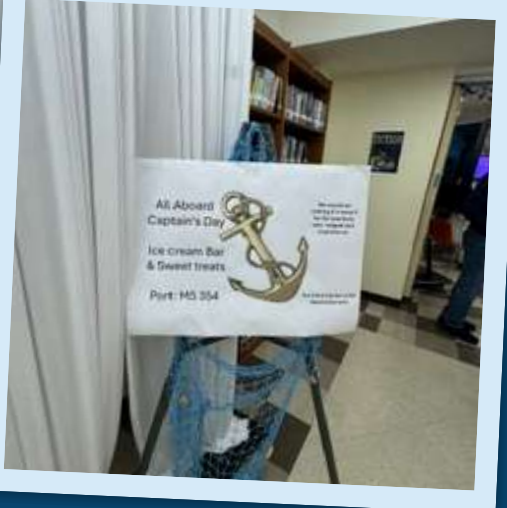
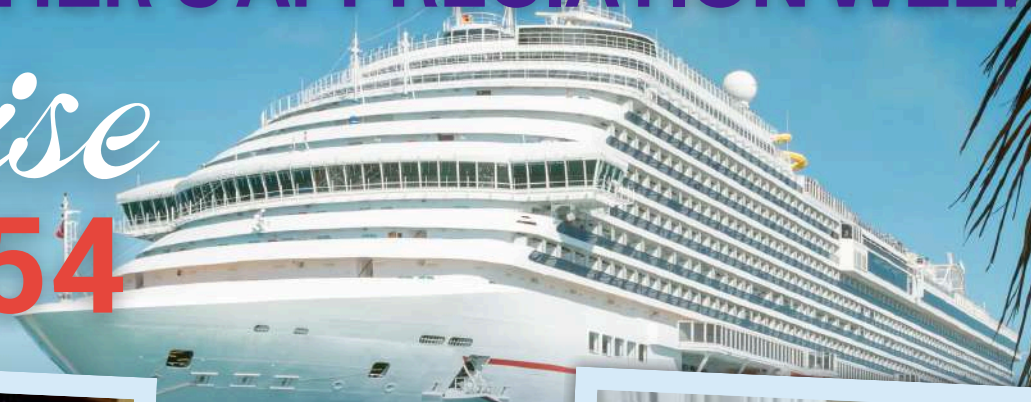
TEACHER'S APPRECIATION WEEK

Cruise MS 354



TEACHER'S APPRECIATION WEEK

Cruise MS 354





Cruise MS 354

SPECIAL THANKS

- MS 354 PTA
- MS 354 UFT
- The Child Center of New York
- NY Edge
- Chef Monifa
- Mr. Kirk "THE JUICE GUY"
- THIS IS US JUICE
- Marie Wiggins
- Mom Dukes
- Mr. Thompson
- MS 354 Administration

Dr. Capbell, Mr. Smith, Ms. Phillips





Mindfulness Minute

The 5-Finger Breath

Between classes, homework, and busy schedules, our days can get a little hectic. Taking just one minute to pause and reset can lower stress, calm the nervous system, and help your brain refocus.

Try this simple, kid-approved grounding exercise with your family this week!

How to Do It:

- Step 1: Hold out one hand in front of you, fingers spread wide like a starfish.
- Step 2: Take the index finger of your other hand and place it at the base of your thumb.
- Step 3: Breathe in slowly through your nose as you slide your finger up to the top of your thumb.
- Step 4: Breathe out gently through your mouth as you slide your finger down the other side.
- Step 5: Repeat this for all five fingers until you've traced your whole hand.

Why it works:

This exercise combines deep breathing with tactile touch, which double-teams stress to quickly ground your mind in the present moment. It's perfect to use right before a big test, after a high-energy recess, or right before bed! Have a calm and focused week ahead!



Managing "Spring Fever"

It is late May, the sun is blazing, the temperature is finally perfect, and the view out the classroom window looks infinitely better than the whiteboard. As a middle school principal, I know exactly what happens to the adolescent brain right now: it completely checks out. "Spring Fever" is a very real biological phenomenon. Your energy levels are spiking, your attention span has shrunk to the size of a TikTok video, and summer vacation is tantalizingly close.

But here is the hard truth: the school year isn't over yet. Failing a final project or bombing a late-May exam can tank a grade you worked hard to build all year.

Instead of fighting the spring fever, you have to learn how to manage it. Here is how to survive the final stretch without losing your focus (or your mind).

1. Work With the Sun, Not Against It

If you try to lock yourself in a dark bedroom to study for two hours while it's 75°F outside, you will fail. Your brain will mutiny.

- Take Your Work Outside (Strategically): Read your English assignment on the back porch or review flashcards at a park picnic table.
- The "Sunlight Rule": The catch is that the phone stays inside, or face down. If you are outside "studying" but actually just scrolling Instagram in sunglasses, you're fooling yourself.
- Change the Scenery: Move your indoor study spot next to a window. Just getting natural light can boost your mood and focus without the distraction of being fully outdoors.

2. Burn the Restless Energy First

Middle schoolers in the spring are like energetic puppies—if you don't wear them out, they are going to tear up the furniture (or in this case, completely lose focus).

- The Pre-Study Burn: When you get home from school, do not immediately sit down to do homework. Your body has been cooped up all day. Go for a run, ride your bike, or skateboard for 30 minutes.
- The Science of Focus: Getting your heart rate up pumps oxygen to your brain and releases endorphins. It actually resets your nervous system, making it much easier to sit still and focus afterward.

3. Gamify the Finish Line

When motivation dies—and it will die in late spring—discipline and rewards have to take over.

- Create "If/Then" Contracts: Make deals with yourself (or parents, make them with your kids). "If I finish this history outline, then I can go to the pool for an hour." * Visual Countdowns: Keep a visual calendar of the remaining days of school. Cross off each day. Seeing the finish line get physically closer provides a psychological boost to keep pushing.







BOOK FAIR

