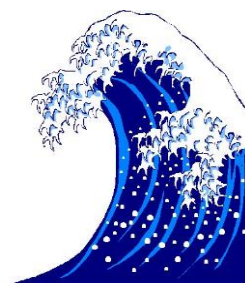


# Welcome to Bernice Ayer Middle School

January 2026

Nick Stever, Principal



## Our Commitment to You

Bernice Ayer Middle School is dedicated to providing a happy, enriching, and highly effective learning experience for your child during their three years here. Our sixth-grade teachers are experts in their subjects and focus on ensuring a smooth transition from elementary to middle school. We are committed to academic excellence and student-centered learning.



We believe that successful schools thrive as a community where students, parents, and teachers work together to support student success. This is a great opportunity to set the tone for your involvement as a parent over the next three years.

Together, we will create a positive partnership where the school and family work together to ensure the success of all students. Success will be reflected in the achievements, big and small, of our students every day.

## School-wide Goals

Our staff is committed to providing the best possible learning experience for your child. Our primary goal is to help every student feel connected to the school—challenged academically, comfortable socially, and engaged intellectually and emotionally. This connection leads to happy and successful students.

We emphasize and reward key behaviors that foster success:

**Be Ready.**  
**Act Respectfully**  
**Make Good Decisions**  
**Show Integrity**

## The Transition to Middle School

Our staff understands that sixth grade is a year of transition, and we work to make it as smooth as possible for students and their families. During the first month, we help students adjust by assigning an eighth-grade mentor to each sixth-grader. These model students provide guidance throughout the year. We also teach students how to use lockers, model expected behaviors and recognize solid role models to surround themselves with.

A key to a successful transition is developing effective work habits. Teachers support this by:

- Recording assignments on the whiteboard and/or Canvas.
- Teaching students to log assignments in a daily planner.
- Providing class time and SWELL periods to begin homework and ask questions.

If you already have a Canvas account, no action is needed. If you are new to CUSD, you will need to create a Canvas account after the first day of school.

## Parent Portal

One or both parents **MUST have a Parent Portal account**. This is different from a Canvas account. To register for these accounts, you will need the Student's Name, Student ID number, and Student Verification

passcode. If you do not know your student's Verification passcode, please ask his/her current school. To register, go to [portal.capousd.org](http://portal.capousd.org). Click on "Create a New Account" and follow the instructions.

## Core Classes

Sixth-grade students take six classes daily: an elective, P.E., and four core subjects—math, science, English, and social science. They will have up to four different teachers for core classes, plus separate teachers for P.E. and their elective.

## Daily Schedule

- **Regular Schedule:** 8:45 a.m. – 3:25 p.m.
  - **Late-Start Monday:** 9:45 a.m. – 3:25 p.m.
- Students may not arrive on campus before 8:20 a.m. (or 9:20 a.m. on Mondays). A detailed bell schedule will be included in your registration packet.

## Late-Start Monday

To ensure a high-quality education, teachers meet for curriculum collaboration and staff development every Monday from 8:30–9:30 a.m. Students begin school at 9:45 a.m. on these days, with regular dismissal at 3:25 p.m.

## Home-to-School Communication

We offer several ways for parents to stay in touch with teachers:

- **Student Planner:** Each child receives a planner to record homework and stay organized. Parents and teachers often use it for notes.
- **Phone:** Call teachers directly at **366-9607** or request a conference through the guidance staff.
- **Email and Canvas:** Teachers use email and **Canvas** to share homework and updates.

Unlike elementary school, we do not schedule parent-teacher conferences at the end of grading periods.

## School Communication

- **Website:** Visit [bams.capousd.org](http://bams.capousd.org) for up-to-date information.

- **School Messenger:** Weekly "Breaker Blast" emails provide important updates.
- **Talking Points:** This app sends translated text messages to families in their preferred language.
- **Automated Calls:** The Principal sends phone updates as needed.
- **Canvas** – Messages are posted in student's Advisement tile or in Canvas email.

## Report Cards and Grades

The middle school year consists of four nine-week grading periods, with report cards issued quarterly. Midway through each period, progress reports are provided for students earning D or F grades, indicating a need for improvement. Teachers post grades on Canvas for students to track progress. Parents can securely view their child's report card grade and progress reports via the Parent Portal at [www.portal.capousd.org](http://www.portal.capousd.org).

## Homework

Homework reinforces classroom learning and helps students transition to middle school. It is important for students to develop the habit of completing and submitting homework on time. Homework is assigned daily, and students have time to check with teachers for clarity. A typical 6th grader spends about an hour on homework each night, though this may vary. Teachers understand the importance of balancing homework with family time and other after-school commitments.

## Lockers and Backpacks

Sixth grade students are provided with book lockers, some shared with a partner, to store library and textbooks. We aim to place lockers in areas designated for sixth graders. During orientation, students will learn how to use their lockers. The school is not responsible for theft or damage to items in lockers.

Students will also have a PE locker for storing clothes during PE classes. PE uniforms, required for class, can be purchased at summer registration.

Teachers will guide students on what to carry in their backpacks. We aim to avoid overburdening students with heavy backpacks. Lockers are for books, and teachers and parents should monitor backpack weight. If your child's backpack feels too heavy, please email the teacher for assistance.

## Lunch

Sixth grade students share lunch with seventh and eighth graders at BAMS. They can choose from food provided by the kitchen or bring a brown-bag lunch. During the first week, we ensure all students have enough time to eat, even with longer lunch lines. Students eat outdoors at lunch tables or indoors in the multipurpose room on rainy days. They can participate in ball games and sports tournaments, with equipment available for checkout.

## Seventh and Eighth Graders

Many parents worry about their child's interactions with older students in grades seven and eight. Our staff is mindful of this concern and works to ensure sixth graders feel comfortable. Most sixth graders interact primarily with other sixth graders, and at BAMS, older students take pride in helping their younger peers.

## School Safety

At BAMS, student safety is a top priority. We have a comprehensive safety plan covering areas such as earthquake preparedness and fire drills, and practice fire, earthquake, and lock-down procedures monthly. **All visitors must check in at the front office with a picture ID and receive a pass for campus access.**

Three campus supervisors monitor the campus during class and lunch periods, while administrators supervise lunches and passing periods. A school-wide discipline plan, which includes high expectations for student behavior and a dress code, is introduced during our Wave Day event. The dress code is listed in the student planner and on our website under "BAMS Info". We take pride in our positive school climate, where students are respectful, tolerant, and well behaved.

In partnership with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, BAMS provides a hotline for students, staff, and parents to report safety concerns, vandalism, bullying, or suspicious activity. The hotline number is 1-844-5-Saynow, and the website is [www.saysomething.net](http://www.saysomething.net). Students are encouraged to report concerns either before or after school, or during the day by coming to the office. We encourage the community to use this program to help keep BAMS a safe and supportive environment.

## Curriculum

Bernice Ayer Middle School offers a rigorous curriculum based on Content Standards, with a child-centered approach that focuses on strategies to help each student reach their full potential. Teachers collaborate in grade-level and subject-area teams to plan the best curriculum and learning activities. They meet regularly to discuss and implement effective teaching strategies. Your child's teacher will provide more details about the curriculum at Back-to-School Night in August.



## Support Staff

At BAMS, our Guidance Team works closely with teachers, parents, and students to monitor progress. They track grades, manage schedules, and alert administrators to potential concerns. The team meets with students facing academic, social, or emotional challenges and includes two full-time counselors, a Guidance Tech, and a school psychologist.

Ms. Soboleski and Ms. Brucato, our assistant principals, handle many administrative tasks, but their primary role is ensuring students feel safe at school. They manage discipline and ensure students get to class on time. Our administrators collaborate with parents to promote good behavior.

Parents are key partners in this process. We also have a librarian available daily to assist with reference questions and computer access. Our custodian ensures the campus stays clean, and our community liaison supports Spanish-speaking families with student services.

## SWELL Time

SWELL time offers students the opportunity for extra help, such as re-teaching, re-taking tests, making up missed assignments, or improving failing grades. It also allows students to participate in an activity of their choice if they do not need extra help. Students must bring their planner to school daily. If students require additional support, their teacher will stamp the planner, and the student is mandated to attend the assigned class during SWELL time. If multiple stamps are given, the student will attend the class based on priority, determined by the day of the week (e.g., Monday = Social Science, Tuesday = Math). If the stamp is not for the priority day, the

student will attend the class where they need the most support.

## Small School Feeling

At BAMS, our teachers and staff work hard to create a "small school" feel by maintaining close contact with parents about student progress. We strive to connect with each student, ensuring they have an adult advocate on campus they can trust. Sixth grade teachers work in teams with the same group of students, collaborating on strategies to help them succeed. The Associated Student Body (ASB) organizes activities to help students socialize and get to know each other, while the Peer Assistance Leadership (PAL) class hosts special luncheons to help new students make friends.

## PTSA

We encourage all parents to join our Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), a great way to get involved at your child's school. Our school relies on parent volunteers for various programs, including Reflections, dances, field trips, the lunchtime PTSA table, the student store, and the book fair. We strive to create an environment where parents are welcome and encouraged to help.

## Forster Ranch Educational Foundation

The Forster Ranch Education Foundation was established by parents of Truman Benedict and Bernice Ayer Middle School students. This volunteer-led, non-profit organization provides financial support for educational excellence and enrichment programs for K-8 students. Our mission is to set new standards in education and expand opportunities for students at Truman Benedict and Bernice Ayer Middle School.

## Quick Facts about Bernice Ayer Middle School

- 3 feeder elementary schools (Truman Benedict, Las Palmas, Lobo)
- Approximately 900 students
- 42 teachers
- 1 Principal
- 2 Assistant Principal
- 6 Campus Supervisors
- 1 Guidance Tech

- 2 Counselors
- 1 Health Assistant, 4 Office Staff
- 1 Community Liaison
- 1 Chrome book per student
- Library with fulltime Media Tech

## Phone Number and Web Site

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at (949) 366-9607.

For additional information and dates regarding the 2026-2027 school year, please visit our Web Site at:

[www.bams.capousd.org](http://www.bams.capousd.org)

