

# Your Child's Move to Middle School: How You Can Help

## **The start of middle school is exciting...**

...for students and parents. It's a time filled with promise and anticipation. Middle schoolers experience all sorts of opportunities and challenges. It's a time of tremendous growth:

- Socially
- Emotionally
- Academically
- Physically

## **You Can Help Make the Transition a Success**

Getting off to a good start in middle school can help set the stage for future success in:

- High school
- College or other advanced education training
- Career pursuits
- Life!

Your child will need your support and attention. He or she will also look to you for plenty of information, guidance, love and understanding.

## **Most Children Are At Least a Little Concerned...**

...about starting middle school. Reassure your child that it's normal to have concerns about:

- ❖ The building: For example, your child may wonder about getting around in a large, unfamiliar building or finding people to eat with in a large cafeteria.
- ❖ The schedule: Moving from class to class can be confusing when you're just starting out.
- ❖ The teachers: Middle school students work with five to seven teachers every day—each with a different style and set of expectations.
- ❖ The other students: Your child will encounter many new faces. Lots of these students will be older. Many may be:
  - From other neighborhoods and elementary schools
  - From different races, cultures and backgrounds
- ❖ Academics: Middle school often means more homework and more challenging projects, reports and tests. Students may be expected to take a

wide variety of classes, from advanced math and science to a foreign language.

- ❖ Friendships: It's common for new middle school students to be concerned about:
  - Making new friends
  - Being apart from old friends from elementary school
  - Feeling left out if old friends move on to new friends

You can help your child deal with any concerns and feel excited about new challenges!

### **Talk With Your Child.**

This is the first step in easing any concerns.

- Ask questions: For example, ask:
  - What are you most excited about?
  - What are you most worried about?
  - How can I help?
- Listen closely:
  - Listen for unstated feelings. For example, concerns about a locker combination may reveal worries about privacy, personal space or safety.
  - Be ready to talk when your child wants to. Give your full attention whenever you can.
- Highlight the positive: Remind your child that starting middle school means:
  - More independence
  - Greater opportunities in sports, drama, music and other activities (such as clubs that focus on the environment or government)
  - Feeling and acting more like an adult

### **Get Oriented!**

- ✚ Contact staff at both the elementary and the middle school to help your child prepare.
- ✚ Visit our middle school with your child. Learn where your child's classes are, get to know your child's teachers and find out what supplies your child needs.

### **Help Your Child Be His or Her Best**

When it comes to academics, here are some ways to help your middle schooler:

- Getting organized: Many children benefit by using:

- An Agenda: This will help your child break down assignments and due dates by day, week and month.
- Color-coded notebooks for different subjects
- Three-ring binders with colored dividers for different subjects
- Setting up a study routine: Arrange for your child to have a consistent:
  - Place to study (one that's quiet and comfortable)
  - Time each day for reviewing class work and doing assigned homework
- Help your child make a schedule to balance all his or her activities, including free time.
- Help your child master bigger projects. While checking on his/her progress regularly, encourage your child to:
  - Start early
  - Break larger tasks into smaller chunks
  - Ask for help when he or she needs it

### **Nurture a Love of Learning**

- ❖ Praise your child's successes and efforts.
- ❖ Make your home a "learning resource." Try to keep books, music, magazines, puzzles and word games around.
- ❖ Use your local library.

### **Children Enjoy Having Parents Involved in School!**

- ✓ Stay active in parent organizations and school council meetings. Talk with school staff about ideas for improvements.
- ✓ Volunteer if you can—to tutor, help out in the classroom or help with sports and other school activities. Attend activities.

### **Friends and Popularity are Major Issues**

Help your child get in a good crowd by:

- ✚ Teach your child good judgment. To do this, keep teaching values such as: fairness, self-respect and respect for others, and a sense of right and wrong. Remember, be a positive role model.
- ✚ Get to know your child's friends. Welcome your child's friends into your home. Of course, be sure that house rules are respected at all times. Get to know the interests and personalities of your child's friends. Get to know their parents, too.

## Peer Pressure

Peer pressure can be both positive and negative. Children often inspire the best in each other—and parents can help it happen more often.

- Help your child have a positive self-concept. Teach your child that it is okay to be different.
- Practice role-playing. This involves acting out negative peer pressure situations. Your child can practice different ways of saying no.
- Talk with your child about dangerous behaviors. Encourage positive social activities, such as sharing sports, hobbies and other healthy interests with friends.

Be reassuring about physical and emotional changes. Middle schoolers often worry if they develop faster or slower than their peers. Help your child feel good about his or her unique timetable. Reassure him or her that it's normal for people to develop at very different rates.

### Play a Positive Role in This Time of Change!

- Learn more about your child's concerns as he or she enters middle school.
- Take steps to help your child academically, socially and emotionally.
- Be a partner with school staff to ensure a smooth transition.

**Help your child move on to middle school success! ☺**

### Getting Organized is Your Ticket to Success

Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Make reminders: Use a different section in your notebook for each class. On the front of each section, write the name and room number of the class, teacher's name and time when the class meets.
- Use your agenda: Use it to keep track of when things are due. Take it to every class.
- Be sure you understand your assignments: If you have a question, ask! Other students may have the same question.
- Keep your locker neat: A messy locker can slow you down and make you late for class. Stopping to talk to friends at your locker can, too. Try to keep conversations brief.

- Make time for homework: Set up a special time each day. Then:
  - Find a quiet place to work. Make sure it has plenty of light. Get the supplies you need before you start.
  - Do not take phone class from friends.
  - Ask family members not to disturb you.
  
- Break big projects into smaller ones: It can make a heavy workload easier to manage. For example, for a research project, collect research one week, take notes the next, and begin writing the next.
  
- Prepare the night before: It will save time in the morning. You should:
  - Check your agenda. Make sure you finish assignments that are due the next day.
  - Pack your schoolbag after you finish your homework.
  - Get your clothes ready before you go to bed.

### **Making New Friends**

You may feel a little lonely if you aren't in the same classes as your old friends. Here are some ideas for getting to know people:

- ✓ Be friendly: People are more likely to say hello to a friendly face. If someone smiles at you, smile back. Say hi and introduce yourself.
  
- ✓ Be a good listener: When you meet someone, show an interest in what the person likes to do. Ask questions, too.
  
- ✓ Get involved: It's a great way to make friends and meet interesting people. Join a team or club, or do volunteer work.
  
- ✓ Be yourself: Trying to impress people usually backfires. Be honest about what you like to do. Remember, it's good to be different. 😊
  
- ✓ Improve your self-esteem: Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself. You can build your self-esteem by setting goals, doing things you enjoy and taking pride in your efforts. High self-esteem can help you feel more confident when you meet others.
  
- ✓ Be a good friend: Treat others the way you would like to be treated. Everyone deserves respect.

### **Learn About Peer Pressure**

Negative peer pressure is when people try to get you to things you don't want to do. Here are some things you can do to refuse peer pressure:

- ❖ Say no. Tell the person you don't want to.

- ❖ Leave. If you feel uncomfortable, walk away.
- ❖ Give a reason. You can say you:
  - Have to get to class
  - Promised to meet someone right after school
  - Don't want to get caught
- ❖ Remind yourself of the consequences. Breaking school rules can get you and your friends into serious trouble.

### Questions and Answers

What if I feel too much stress?

*Talk to an adult you trust, such as: a parent, a teacher or a counselor.  
Talking about your problems is the first step toward solving them.*

What will the cafeteria be like?

*It may be bigger and seat more students. That's why it is a good place to meet people. Look for a friendly face or students you recognize from one of your classes.  
If you buy your lunch, spend wisely and make healthy choices. 😊*

### Make the Most of Middle School!

- ✚ Get organized: Schedule time for homework and other activities.
- ✚ Try new things: Join a club or take a class that interests you.
- ✚ Meet new people: Get involved in school life.
- ✚ Avoid trouble: Stay away from people who pressure you to do bad or inappropriate things!
- ✚ Smile: We are glad that you are here! 😊