

Helping Your Child Move on to Middle School



The start of middle school is exciting & scary

both 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 and change:

- 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 or training
- career pursuits
- life!



Your child will need your support

and attention. He or she will also look to you for:

- information
- guidance & listening
- love and understanding
- patience
- modeling & advice

Your involvement still matters as your child matures, even though they may act like they don't want you to be involved.

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 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 six or more teachers every day – many with different styles and expectations.



The other students

Your child will encounter many new faces. Some students will be older. Many may be:

- from other neighborhoods and elementary schools
- taller or shorter
- 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 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
- being 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 you 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 positives!

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
- a more relaxed dress code

Keep in mind that it's normal for your child to want to keep certain thoughts and feelings private at this age.

Get oriented!

Contact staff at both the elementary and middle school to help your child prepare.

Have your child take part in

orientation programs for students heading to middle school. These will include:

- presentations by the middle school staff and students at the elementary school
- visits to the middle school during the summer orientation tours



Visit the middle school with your child during the summer to:

- learn the physical layout – where the classrooms, lockers, school offices, cafeteria and other facilities are located
- get to know the principal, teachers, counselors and other school staff
- find out what supplies your child will need

The school will offer three summer orientation/tour nights before the school year starts.

Help your child be his or her best.

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

Get organized

Have your child make use of:

- academic planners (these help students break down assignments and due dates by the day, week and month)
- color-coded notebooks for different subjects
- three-ring binders with colored dividers.
- Use the agenda book provided by the school.

Setting up a study routine

Arrange for your child to have a:

- place to study
- quiet area (turn off media players, computers, televisions and radios)
- time each day for reviewing class work and doing assigned homework.

Help your child make a schedule to balance all of his or her activities, including free time.

Mastering bigger projects

Encourage your child to:

- start early
- break larger tasks into smaller chunks
- ask for help when he or she needs it.

Check on his or her progress regularly.

Keep your child supplied with basic materials such as paper, pencils, rulers and a calculator.

Nurture a love of learning.

Praise your child's successes and efforts.

Step in when your child does well - not just for problems.

This:

- encourages effort
- helps build confidence

Be an active part of monitoring

Ask your child every day what assignments are due, what tests are coming up, what grades they got on their tests, quizzes and assignments. Do not wait for the interim report to come out every nine weeks to find out how your child is doing. In addition, use the home access website on the computer to view grades.



Use your local library.

Help your child to:

- get a library card
- borrow books and other materials
- use other resources the library may offer, such as computers.

Also use other local resources, such as museums.

Children enjoy having parents involved in school!

- Stay active in parent organizations and school council meetings. Talk with school staff about ideas for improvement.
- Volunteer if you can by tutoring, helping out in the classroom or helping with sports and other school activities. Attend events.

Friends and popularity are major issues for most middle school students. Help your child get in with a good crowd by:

Teaching your child good judgment

To do this, keep teaching values such as:

- fairness
- self-respect and respect for others
- a sense of right and wrong.

Be a positive role model!

Getting 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 the parents, too. Confirm that parents will be home and keep an eye and ear out for inconsistencies in stories/conversations.



Talk with your child about dangerous behaviors.

These include violence and using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs:

- let him or her know that these behaviors are unacceptable
- encourage positive social activities, such as sharing sports, hobbies and other healthy interests with friends

Peer pressure can be both positive and negative! Children often inspire the best and worst in each other. Parents can help to keep it positive by:

- keeping your computer in a high traffic area
- requiring to be a “friend” on your child’s social network accounts so you can see what your child and his/her friends are saying
- limiting texting and phone use after certain hours (Don’t assume the student will abide, take the items away each night.)

Help your child have a positive self-concept.

Teach your child that it’s OK to be different. For example, it’s good to:

- study extra hard even if your friends don’t
- try making friends with people who are different from you
- stick with a favorite hobby even if it’s unusual
- go out for a certain club or after-school event

Practice role-playing.

This involves acting out negative peer pressure situations. Your child can practice different ways to say no, such as with:

- humor (“Smoking could probably help me run the mile in an hour flat!”)
- reasoning (“If you really cared, you wouldn’t pressure me”)
- consequences (“I’ll be grounded if I stay out late”)
- the use of staff (“That Administrator will nail me”)

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 them that it’s normal for people to develop at very different rates.

Safety issues

are on the minds of many new middle school students and their parents.



Find out about the school's safety policy.

Talk to parents, school staff and students about how the school is prepared for:

- ways to keep intruders out of the school
- plans for handling emergencies
- anti-bullying plans



Help stop violence before it starts.

For example, support efforts of the school to offer middle school children:

- conflict resolution (using peaceful ways to solve problems)
- anti-violence skills (such as managing anger and recognizing how the media often glamorizes violence)

Other areas of concern

As a parent, you can do a lot to help your child deal with:

Bullies

Don't accept bullying as normal. Let the school know of any bullying, including teasing. It's important that the school take strong action against it. Also teach your child:

- the value of walking away from a conflict before it gets worse
- how to appear assertive and self-confident
- the importance of strong, healthy friendships (a bully may avoid someone who has the support of friends)



Sexual harassment

Both girls and boys are hurt by lewd talk, unwanted touching and obscene images. Remind your child that she or he can:

- tell the person to stop the behavior
- talk to you
- report the incident(s).

Cultural issues

- Discuss race and race relations at home. Use TV news reports and newspaper articles to start discussions.
- Set an example of tolerance and respect.
- Expose your child to the arts, music and literature of other races and cultures.

Work with school staff.

You'll find lots of people willing to help your child adjust to middle school. Don't hesitate to contact:



The principal

An assistant principal

A school counselor

School health services

Teachers

School social workers

Tutors, coaches and others who may be able to help.

Make use of support from other students, too!

For example, the school has had students shadow another student for the day.

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 our Springer staff

to ensure a smooth transition.

Help your child move on to middle school success!

