

MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION!

The transition to middle school may be one of the toughest transitions during childhood, for both children and parents. Some families glide through unperturbed, but for others this is a rough road that will smooth out as everyone adjusts to the new expectations and rules. The most important thing to remember during this period is to not cut your middle schooler loose quite yet. They are not really ready for the independence we give teens, and they need you to help them with this transition.

In general, it is not uncommon during the middle school years for kids to drastically change their effort or performance in school, to be snuggly one minute and aloof the next, to prefer peers to parents (at times) and to think that parents are completely out-of-touch with their reality.

It is *perfectly normal* for your child to be nervous about starting middle school. Not only are they facing a large group of peers whom they do not know, but they also may be exposed to bullying or teasing and more peer pressure to conform to social norms. For the first time ever, your child may feel competition for grades, success in sports, and popularity.

On top of starting at a larger school, your middle schooler will have to get to know new staff and teachers, as well as deal with new behavioral expectations. In middle school the academic workload gets harder and grading gets tougher. There is more homework and more long term projects to organize, and usually less teacher initiated contact with parents.

On top of that your child may be dealing with the onset of puberty. Depending on how far along they are, they may be concerned about hygiene, pimples, greasy hair, the growth of pubic hair and/or breasts, and for girls – the onset of periods.

Open communication in a relaxed environment can assist in alleviating some of the anxiety that naturally comes with starting middle school. Below are some common "worries". *Try to discuss these things with your child.*

- Getting lost or finding classes
- Opening the locker
- Getting good grades
- Being teased or "bullied"
- Making new friends
- Having more than one teacher
- Finding the bathroom
- Learning the school rules
- Carrying around books and binders
- Feeling not as smart as other kids
- Being embarrassed by parents in front of other kids
- Puberty (pimples, body changes, need for deodorant)
- Changing before and after PE class in front of other kids
- Going from class to class without being late
- Having girlfriends or boyfriends
- Having someone to sit with at lunch