

# Middle School Matters!

A Guide for **FAMILIES**  
on Middle School Transition

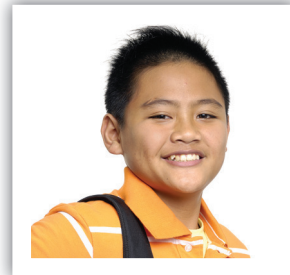


**School Transition** is a process that prepares students, families, schools, and communities to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and relationships to assist students in successfully moving from one setting to another. In this instance, students are transitioning or “changing” from elementary school to middle school. It is important for students and families to begin this transition prior to entering middle school to allow time for the student to get acclimated to the rigor of the curriculum in addition to a new school climate. A smooth transition into middle school will help your child form a positive first impression and realistic expectation of what middle school is really like, increasing their ability to succeed in school.

For the purpose of this brochure, five areas of focus have been identified as particularly important to the life of a middle school student as they transition. They include:

- **Social and Emotional Changes**
- **Organizational and Environmental Factors**
- **Academics**
- **Developmental Growth**
- **College and Career Readiness**

Upon entry into middle school, students are bombarded with environmental, social, emotional, and physical changes that may overwhelm some. Lack of specific skills needed to cope with these changes can have significant effects on an individual student’s ability to adjust, as well as his or her academic achievement, future aspirations, and overall feelings of self-worth. Continue reading to learn more about what you can do to make sure your child has a successful transition into middle school.



**Social and Emotional Changes** will begin to occur during the middle school years as a part of normal development. During this time, children develop many of the social skills they will use throughout adulthood. They form self-concepts and self-esteem, build new relationships, and begin to regulate their own behavior. Talk to your child about school and their peers. Listen for comments that reflect what they are feeling and thinking. Expect your child to make mistakes and have personal struggles. Give them time to think and make decisions about how to manage their problems, as well as time to deal with the consequences. Understanding these changes will help you interact with your child in positive ways.

### **What to Expect Socially**

- Spending time with parents becomes secondary to their peers
- Desire for privacy and secrecy develops
- Belonging to a group becomes important
- Showing allegiance to peers is key
- Exposure to peer pressure and negative influences increase

### **What to Expect Emotionally**

- Desiring freedom from parental supervision
- Experiencing mood fluctuations
- Rejecting adult advice and “talking back” become common
- Becoming highly critical of themselves
- Experiencing stress related to ability levels and competition



## Organizational and Environmental Factors

can influence your child's first priority in middle school, which is to learn. The middle school day changes, with students possibly experiencing as many as six classes with six different teachers, six different expectations, and in many cases six different homework assignments. Organization and time management skills must be developed so students will feel less overwhelmed. Be sure to balance after-school recreational activities, as well as provide a quiet study area. Expect to see your child working regularly on homework and long-term projects. Set limitations on TV and computer use. Make it a goal during the summer before entering middle school to attend a middle school transition camp or other school transition activities offered throughout the year to become acquainted with your child's new building and schedule. Teaching your child to plan each day, keep up with homework assignments, and learn self-regulating strategies is important to motivate your child to become more accountable and self-reliant.

### What to Expect Organizationally

- Learning to manage time
- Getting to each class and other activities on time
- Keeping up with materials and assignments
- Taking time to relax

### What to Expect Environmentally

- Adjusting to using lockers instead of desks
- Learning their way around school (lunchroom, bathrooms, classes)
- Getting to know who's who
- Becoming familiar with the dress code

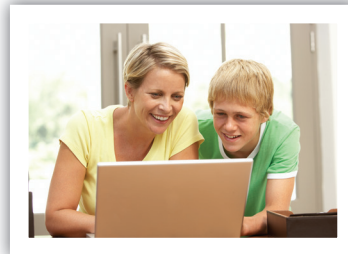




**Academics** relate to what your child is learning and is expected to learn in middle school. Students are required to take the following classes: *English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies*. They may also have the opportunity to take *Physical Education, Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education, or World Languages*. These classes are based on Georgia's adopted state standards which provide clear expectations for instruction, assessment, and student work. Please visit the Website, [GeorgiaStandards.org](http://GeorgiaStandards.org), or call 1(800) 311-3627 to learn information about the state's curriculum standards. Make it a goal to meet all of your child's teachers. Review all homework and grading requirements for each class, and, if necessary, locate resources to help with your child's success. Learning effective "study skills" can also help raise your child's achievement. Establish ground rules and expectations for phone, texting, and TV/computer usage while studying. Academic problems should be addressed through frequent contact with the teacher or school counselors. Gaining an understanding of your child's classes and coursework will allow you to support your child in their long term course decisions and career path.

### **What to Expect Academically**

- Increased homework loads
- Reduced parental help in completing homework
- Understanding new grading factors
- Accepting more responsibility
- Presenting more class projects







**Developmental Growth** will take place in your child during the adolescent years, both physically and mentally. Girls start changing physically between the ages of 8 to 13. Physical changes in boys begin, on average, two years later. Your child may be frustrated at times, but you can look forward to them also being funny, curious, imaginative, and eager to learn. Encourage your child to come up with ideas and think about things abstractly and creatively. Help your child as they begin to think through problems and recognize the consequences of certain behaviors or actions. Make it a point to talk with your child about developmental changes before they happen. Do not become less involved in your child's life at this stage. A good relationship with you, as well as with other trusted adults, is the best safeguard your child can have.

### **What to Expect Developmentally**

- Start of puberty
- Anticipate growth spurts and weight fluctuation
- Increased levels of activity along with frequent fatigue due to rapid growth
- Experiences voice changes
- Develops body odor
- Increase in logical reasoning using concrete examples
- Enjoys using skills to solve real life problems

**College and Career Readiness** is part of your child's curricular activities. With each class they take, and with each life experience, they gain a greater awareness about the nature of work and begin to form ideas about their future career goals. These curricular activities maximize opportunities for students to be better prepared for their next step in their education and career planning process—the workforce or postsecondary education. Support your child's efforts to create an individual graduation plan and participate in the process when invited by their school. Ask your child about their interests and what they enjoy doing in and outside of school. Encourage your child to learn more about their expressed interests and help them explore further opportunities. Parent involvement in every aspect of the educational journey can result in higher achievement for all students.



### **What to Expect for College and Career Readiness**

- Acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to make informed career decisions
- Understand the relationship between educational achievement and career development
- Participate in career exploration
- Take career-related assessments
- Develop an individual graduation plan (IGP)



# How Do I Become Involved In My Child's School and Education?

While opportunities for parent engagement change at the middle school level, your involvement in your child's education is still very important to his or her achievement and success. Check out the ideas below for some ways to help you stay an integral part of your child's educational journey.



- **Visit your school's parent/student organization such as the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA).** Go to a PTSA or other parent organization meeting in the spring before your child starts school. Find out how you can join and get involved. Contact your child's school to learn of meeting dates and times.
- **Keep a family calendar.** Ask for a copy of the upcoming year's school calendar and put important dates, such as open houses, parent conferences, and holidays, on your family's calendar. Encourage your child to add items, such as tests, project due dates, and extracurricular activities as well. Make it a point to check it daily.
- **Attend school activities.** Go to school functions, such as a curriculum and career night, a sporting event, or student performance. While there, learn about school expectations and get to know other parents and school staff. Call the school and ask to speak with the parent involvement coordinator or school counselor to discover when these activities are held.
- **Volunteer at home or at school.** Participate by mentoring students, helping out in the media center or computer lab, or serving as an advisor for an extracurricular activity or club. If you cannot get to the school during the day, let the school know what special talents you have and what you are willing to do from home. It could be collecting recyclables for class projects or reaching out to community and business organizations for school support. Volunteering is a way to meet your child's classmates, network, and understand your school community.



- **Share your ideas.** Find out which school committees seek to include parent representation, such as Title I, School Council, and Family Engagement. Talk to the principal and other parents about getting involved in decision-making processes.
- **Be an informed parent.** Carefully read information sent home from the school on school policies, procedures, curriculum, and meetings. Check out newsletters, Websites, and other resources. Learn how to use the parent portal so you can monitor your child's progress daily.
- **Show your child that you care.** Ask your child about his or her school day. Monitor your child's academic, social, and developmental performance. Get to know their interests and what truly motivates them to do better. Support them in those endeavors.





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