

Topic Forum - Middle School

NEW BEGINNINGS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

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For an incoming fifth or sixth grader, beginning Middle School is an exciting and sometimes daunting experience. Although many children sail right through this transition, for others Middle School represents a more intense academic experience, social pressure, new teachers, and a change in their daily routine. Virtually weeks ago, they were walking in a straight line behind their teacher and sitting in a circle being read to by the librarian. Now they are transitioning into personal schedules, trying out for sports teams, being expected to be in class on time, and facing a social scene that can sometimes overwhelm even the most "together" child.

Where do we begin as parents to help our children navigate through this new beginning? One of the most important things parents can do is to encourage your children to talk about how they feel, knowing that some will talk and some will not. That is okay, as letting them know that they have a safe and non-judgmental place to go when they are ready is what you need to communicate.

With all of the changes at school, you will want to keep the home environment as structured as possible:

- Let your child catch their breath when they get home from school, and then have a routine for when and where they do their homework.
- Help him or her stay organized, but do it in a way that supports their system.
- Keep the computer in a "family location."
- Create a strong relationship with your child's advisor, as they are often your first point of contact at the school.
- Celebrate your child's accomplishments and balance the discipline.

As parents, we need to know that there will be bumps in the road and that these are part of the process of our children growing up. Hard as it might be, when your child "falls" you serve them best by letting them figure out how to get up. By being there to support and love them and not solving their problems, they will learn for themselves the skills that it takes to get up.

Your child has begun the next phase in their development and beginnings can sometimes be hard. Parents who are able to be there for each other and for each other's children will come to realize that this journey is filled with joy.

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