

Helping Your Child Transition to Middle School or Junior High School



Middle school and junior high are times when students start to take on more responsibility and become more independent. In elementary school, students learn social skills and how to manage their time, with lots of help from teachers and staff. In middle school and junior high, students begin to take more control of their learning and make more choices on their own. This helps them grow into confident and responsible individuals. Below are some tips for you to help with this transition.

Be Your Child's Support System

- Change is difficult. Going to middle school or junior high is a learning curve for many students due to challenging academics, making new friends, and learning a new school's environment. It is important that you talk with your child and let them know you are there for them if needed.
- Attend parent teacher conferences so you are informed about your child's school academic procedures and expectations. This also lets your child know you support and care about their academic efforts.

Prepare Your Child for the Expectations of Their New School

- If possible, **visit the school** with your child so they feel more comfortable with the layout of the school. This will decrease their anxiety on their first day and ease them into feeling more comfortable in their new environment. If in-person visits are not possible find out if there's a virtual option to tour the school.
- **Help your child understand the expectations of after-school activities, like clubs or sports.** Having your child get involved in after-school activities can help them explore their passions and interests, while also teaching time management skills. However, be sure to leave some downtime for your student because it's important for them to relax as well.
- **Homework** gets more intense and grades become critical for their future. A way to prepare your child for a bigger workload is to set up a space at home for your child to work that is quiet, well-lit, and distraction-free. Also, sit down with your child regularly to discuss class loads and make sure their academics and extracurricular activities are balanced.
- **Reinforce organizational skills with your child.** These skills will not only help your child in their daily school life, but also in their future.

TIP: Keeping books and papers organized allows more time between classes!

Check in with Your Child

- Make an effort to talk with your child every day so they know that what goes on at school is important to you.
- When talking to your child, it's important to listen, make eye contact, and avoid multitasking. Remember to talk with your child, not at him or her and be sure to ask open ended questions like, "What was the best thing that happened today?"

- Take time to discuss some common fears, such as:
 - Using a combination lock
 - Getting to class on time
 - Making friends
 - Being different than other kids
 - Tough classes
- If you are worried about your child’s mental health, there are resources...
 - Start the conversation by speaking to the school counselor about concerns or therapy needs. They will help connect you and your child to the right resources and school-based therapy if that is the right option.
 - You can also visit the MindPeace website at www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com and search the online database of mental health providers in your area that accept your insurance or you can call our office at **(513) 803-0844** and our staff will assist you.
 - For non-life threatening urgent mental health needs consider visiting the Best Point Urgent Care. Open Monday-Friday from 9:30am-6pm at 5051 Duck Creek Rd. Cincinnati, OH 45227, or call **(513) 527-3040**.
 - For a non-life threatening mental health crisis, you are encouraged to contact the Psychiatric Intake Response Center (PIRC) at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center **(513) 636-4124**. The PIRC staff will help you to decide the most effective level of intervention for your child’s mental health crisis.
 - Share the **988** Suicide & Crisis Lifeline with your teen. This provides 24/7, free and confidential phone or text support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

TIP: At dinner ask about the day’s “highs” and “lows” or play two truths and a lie about the day. This helps get kids talking!



REFERENCES

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