

Transitioning Tips

Spring 2016

Special points of interest:

Your child's school counselor is always available to provide services to you and your child. We have expertise that we are willing to share. Please do contact us whenever you have concerns! We will be glad to assist you!

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Welcome to Middle School!

"One giant step for your child; one giant leap for you." Although it's a loose paraphrase of Neil Armstrong's quote as he stepped on the moon, it could easily sum up the feelings you and your child may have about coming to middle school. It's a "whole new world."

Our hope is the transition will be smooth with as few bumps as possible. Realistically, though, there will be some bumps! How you handle them can be a critical factor. So, the purpose of this flyer is to give you information that will empower to be a successful middle school parent.

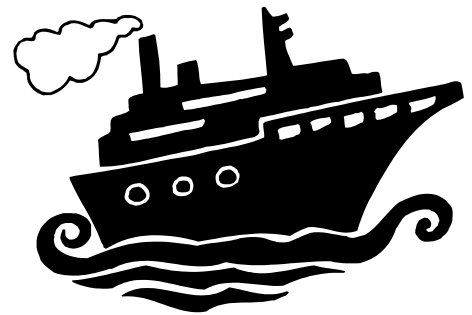
These tips have been gleaned from the wisdom

of former sixth graders at HGMS and their parents. They are happy to share their experiences with you.

7. Less time to make up work.

THE 10 BIGGEST DIFFERENCES FROM 5TH TO 6TH GRADE

1. More homework.
2. Stricter rules.
3. More classes/subjects.
4. Less time between classes.
5. More tests and quizzes.
6. Tougher grading scale.
7. Less time to make up work.
8. More projects.
9. More teachers with different expectations.
10. Following a schedule.



Smooth sailing ahead!

What I wished I had known ahead of time (that I could have prepared for!)

These are the comments sage parents have made:

My child needs excellent organization skills to survive sixth grade.

My child needs to develop time management skills.

Good study habits are crucial.

The start time is a lot earlier and everyone in the family must adjust.

Family activities now must be scheduled with consideration given to

weekend homework/long term projects.

My child was not be able to participate in multiple outside extra curricular activities. He had to choose just one and do it well.

What's Normal???

Physically:

Weight between 57 and 134 lbs.

Height between 51 and 66 inches

Visual and dental problems more evident

Onset of puberty

Beginning of acne and other skin problems

May begin to worry about physical appearance

Need hygiene help

Enjoy athletic competition

Emotionally:

Unpredictable mood swings

Can be another version of the "terrible twos" only amplified

Respect authority

Peers important, but parents are still the number one source of guidance

Want independence in determining bedtime, what to wear, chores, homework

Still bound by a sense of duty

Socially:

Begin to travel in loud groups

Grieve over lost friendships

Choose friends on the basis of interests

Interest in the opposite sex emerges

Can be very critical of parents

Have difficulty with sportsmanship

Begins to take risks

Handling Stress

These tips were taken from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Teens can decrease stress with the following behaviors and techniques:

Exercise and eat regularly.

Avoid excess caffeine intake which can increase feelings of anxiety and agitation.

Learn relaxation exercises.

Develop assertiveness training skills.

Rehearse and practice situations which cause stress.

Decrease negative self talk;

challenge negative thoughts.

Learn to feel good about being competent rather than demanding self perfection.

Take a break from stressful situations.

Build a positive network of friends who will help with coping.

Remember: "The kite rises highest against the wind, not with it."

Winston Churchill

Parenting Resources

The HGMS staff recommends:

[Queen Bees and Wannbes](#) by Roselind Wiseman

[Get Out of My Life, but first could you drive me and Cheryl to the mall?](#) by Anthony Wolf



We've found helpful information here.

[Parenting with Love and Logic](#) by Jim Fay

[Not Much Just Chillin': The Hidden Lives of Middle Schoolers](#) by Perlstein

[Our Last Best Shot: Guiding Our Children Through Early Adolscence](#) by

Laura Sessions Stepp (in our media center)

[When We're In Public, Pretend You Don't Know Me: Surviving Your Daughter's Adolscence So You Don't Look Like An Idiot and She Still Talks To You](#) by Susan Borowitz

How you can help your child cope with “being normal”

One thing is for sure, there is no such thing as a “normal” middle schooler! It’s a time of rapid change and raging hormones. Here’s a few ideas on ways to stay sane and help your child in the process.

Children need to feel they are okay. Point out that other children are experiencing the same thing. Tell them your own stories about growing up.



Let’s face it. Parenting middle-schoolers can be tricky.

Respect their privacy. Listen. Look. Watch. Observe, but don’t snoop.

Expect minor accidents. A colorful to that: They may have adultlike bodies; not adult experiences. Don’t expect adult behaviors.

Learn to listen without judging. Don’t just do something; sit there! Don’t try to jump in and rescue your child.

Let your child know that learning how to handle negative things

is a big part of life. “Defeat is not the worst of failures. Not to have tried is the true failure.” according to Woodberry.

Do not compare your child to his/her siblings. Don’t brag about your child in front of others in your child’s presence.

Give your child opportunities to make decisions. Teach them to think about the consequences prior to acting. Remember to love them even when they make mistakes.

Only tackle one issue at time. Pick your battles wisely.

What Teachers Want You to Know About Them

Educators want a good working relationship with you and your child. The “heart” of a good educator longs to make the world a better place one child at a time.

With that in mind, please remember that your child’s teachers respectfully request that you give them “the benefit of the doubt.”

Please remember there are at

least two perspectives to each story that your child tells. Although your child is telling the truth from his perspective, there may be other details of which your child may not be aware.

Try not to react in a way that would weaken the home-

school connection. Children need to feel you support them, but so do teachers!

“To love what you do and feel that it matters—how could anything be more fun?”

Katherine Graham

So before you zip off that email, take a minute. Sleep on it. Clear your head. Then, call or email the teacher or counselor.

Common Fears of Transitioning Fifth Graders

Locks and Lockers

Yes, you will need to buy a lock and practice, practice, practice. Students need to develop the skill. It’s tricky, but then it can be used on the locker in PE!

No one has ever been stuffed into a locker by an older student. Sixth graders are on “pods” and isolated from older students. There’s really no reason for sixth graders to be in contact with older students during the course of the day.

Getting Lost

Believe it or not, we’ve never lost one yet at HGMS! By the end of the first week, your child will be maneuvering like a pro. HGMS offers opportunities to visit prior to the beginning of school, so, please do visit. It will ease the fears of you and your child.

Things, however, do get lost...often. So please label everything with your child’s name on it with a permanent sharpie.



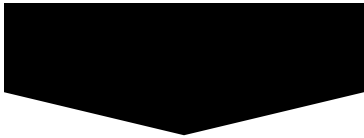
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"All Students Will Succeed."



So, there you have it; a few simple suggestions to get you started. Just remember you are not alone. Your child's school is filled with caring, compassionate, dedicated professionals. However, your role as a parent shifts focus from "hands on" to "support staff." One very important skill your child will develop is self advocacy. He/she will learn to speak with adults with assurance, to voice his/her concerns with peers in an assertive manner if necessary, to develop social skills and independent thinking skills. As a parent, it's scary. We know that. We want to reassure you that someone is watching out for your child.

We welcome your support in various ways by actively involving yourself in PTA projects, chaperoning a dance, being an athletic boosters, volunteering as team parent, helping out on field trips, or even duplicating papers. You are a vital part of our success.

Parenting 101: Letting Go

Laura Stepp says in her book, Our Last Best Shot, "Early adolescence is partly about loss. Our kids lose their innocence, their unquestioning faith in adults, and their certainty about themselves and their place in a world they no longer know. It is about loss for us, as well. We lose their adoration, their physical need for us, and our sense of control."

So how does one learn to let go? Do we abdicate all parental control? Of course not! What should a prudent parent do?

Dr. John Rosemond has five tips to start the new school year off right. He suggests:

1. Let your student be responsible for their own homework. Par-

ents should provide a quiet place and a structured time for study, but only give help when it's truly needed. You should "spot check" the agenda and ask to see completed homework on occasion, but clearly communicate to your student it is your expectation that homework is their responsibility.



Letting go: Difficult, yes, but worth it!

2. If your child forgets something, do not rescue them by bringing it to school.

3. Don't do projects for your child, even if it means a slightly lower grade. The final grade is not as important as encouraging your child to develop both his/her own capabilities,

talents, and self-discipline.

4. Let your child solve his/her own social problems. Listen, yes. However, kids need to learn to solve problems with one another in their own way.

5. Turn off the television and don't play video games on school nights. (There are children at HGMS who confess they can't listen in school because all they think about is playing video games!)

It's not easy to follow these tips. It goes against our natural instincts to stop protecting our offspring. Yet, if we give in, then we are sabotaging our child's academic and psychological growth. Middle school is a time of struggle, but it is also a time of big gains. In giving up their old roles, our kids take on new, adult-like ones which really is ... a good thing.