

How to Transition Successfully from Elementary to Middle School

When your child is about to graduate from fifth grade to middle school, you may wonder, where did the time go? Wasn't it yesterday when my little one went off to preschool? Now it's time for middle school, how did that happen?

As the parent of a soon-to-be middle school student, you will have some decisions to make. If your child goes to a school that has kindergarten through eighth grade, you can relax. However, if this is not the case then it's time to research your options. You will want to choose a school that fits the needs of your child and your family's lifestyle. There are several different types of schools: religious, home school, private, and public. Within the public school system, there are a number of choices, too. For example, charter, magnet, fundamental, performing arts and many others. All schools give tours of their campus where you will learn about their mission, philosophy, and type of curriculum they teach. Generally, they will have a day or evening where you can meet the principal, teachers and administrative staff. If you are interested in a specific school, get feedback from parents who have children that attend the school. In addition, check the internet for any reviews, www.greatschools.org, and www.yelp.com are helpful sites.

Once you have chosen a school for your child, you can focus on the emotional changes that are about to happen. Leaving friends and teachers that your child has known for several years can be a sad and tearful time. It's also challenging to make the change from a comfortable elementary school where a fifth grader is one of the big kids, to a middle school that is unfamiliar and different. For your child, this can be intimidating and overwhelming. You can help by keeping current with any information and news from the middle school. Try to attend all of the events for new students. Make a point of getting to know the counselor if your child is assigned to one. Visit the school with your child whenever possible and learn the layout of the campus. It's important for him/her to know where their homeroom will be, also where the cafeteria, lockers and bathrooms are located. Ask the elementary school principal if any other students are attending the same school as your child. Plan some dates during the summer, prior to the start of school. The children can get together for a swim party, day at the beach, or a sleepover, etc. Having just one friend at a new school can make the transition much easier. Hanging out with a friend on the playground at recess or lunch is important to a child. Encourage your child to join any afterschool clubs that they might find interesting or fun. This will not only widen their friend base but will help them settle into their new environment. Be aware of your child's concerns, if there are any. Don't overreact, if he/she seems upset about something that happened at school. Talking about problems and making suggestions or simply being a good listener may be all your child needs from you at this time. The last thing a preteen wants is for their parents to embarrass them at school. When I would pick up my son from middle school, he would immediately tell me to turn down my music. I learned to make sure it was off, before arriving.

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