



# Transition to Middle School

## 10 Tips for a Successful Transition from Elementary School to Middle School

1

**Teach and practice refusal skills:** Peer pressure increases in middle school. Not all peer pressure is bad. Examples of positive peer pressure includes friends encouraging growth and taking challenges – trying out for the school play or sports team, encouraging your teen to talk to an adult about a problem they are facing. However, more likely than not, your growing teen will be exposed to negative peer pressure – like being offered substances, helping someone cheat on a test or homework assignment, or making fun of or excluding others. Take frequent opportunities to talk to your teen about peer pressure and ways to say “no”. Practice scenarios at home so saying “no” in the moment comes more naturally when faced with negative peer pressure.

[Ten Ways to Assertively Say "No" to Negative Peer Pressure](#)

2

**Encourage Self- Advocacy:** Middle school students are expected to take on more responsibility than in Elementary School. At times, your teen may have questions about a topic they don’t understand, or may need additional help in class. As a parent, you should encourage your teen to initiate getting help before they get too far behind. Instead of reaching out to the teacher on behalf of your teen, have a brainstorming session and let your teen take the lead. You can help guide them in crafting an e-mail to the teacher, but ultimately, your student should be the one to write and send the e-mail.

3

**Use a planner:** There are many styles of planners – Daily, Weekly, Monthly. And there are many choices of planners – physical planners, phone applications, and calendars on the computer. Let your teen find one that works for them. It’s important that they write down all assignments and due dates in one place.

4

**Model Self-Care:** In middle school, it’s natural for teens to begin putting more emphasis on friendships over parents/family; however, it’s important to remember that parents still have the most influence on their teens lives than any other source. One way to continue to influence our teens is to model behaviors that you want to see. As teens navigate a larger workload,

more independence, and greater responsibility, it's only natural that they may also notice an increase in stress and anxiety. Model self-care and encourage your teen to practice self-care as well. Make sure you are taking care of yourself in the following areas: physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional, personal, and professional.

### [Self Care Wheel with Suggestions](#)

**5 At Home Work Space:** You may consider making several spaces available to your teen while they are virtual learning, although this may be tough for small spaces and multiple people working or schooling from home. Things to consider for an at home work space: ample lighting, space to spread out and take notes, close to an electrical outlet to keep that chromebook charged, and free of distractions. Make this space user-friendly by having all needed materials – books, charger, pen, pencil, eraser, highlighter, calculator, etc. If this space needs to be a community or family space at the end of the school day, have a box or backpack nearby to pack things up at the end of the day so nothing gets lost!

**6 Organization & Structure:** As your teen enters Middle School and has more classes and homework to keep up with, organization becomes more important. The middle school years are the perfect time for parents to help guide their teen's organization. Find techniques that work well for them. With virtual learning, make sure the workspace is organized, and folders on their chromebook are organized in a way that makes sense. When returning to school, it'll be important to make sure their binder, locker, and backpacks stay organized. One way to do this is to encourage them to get into the habit of organizing at the end of the week if things start getting messy. With virtual learning, it's more important than ever to provide your teen with structure at home. Make sure your teen wakes up and goes to bed at consistent times each day. Carve out time for fun activities, get-up-and-move breaks throughout the day, and set homework time each day. Check in often to see how their routine is working. You can always evaluate and change things if your teen needs a different routine.

**7 Study Skills:** Middle school is a time to learn new ways to take notes and study effectively to be successful in class. Examples of study techniques include making flashcards, completing a study guide, highlighting important ideas, reading over notes, and quizzing friends. Encourage your teen to be an active learner – this is especially important in a virtual learning environment. Participate in class discussions, post on discussion boards, and create a study group. Doing this will make learning fun and help your teen connect with the material, classmates, and make a good impression on the teacher. Bonus!

8

**Lockers:** If lockers are a big stressor for your teen, and for most rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders it is, then it may be helpful to purchase a combination lock at the store for your teen to practice on. Once they feel competent in opening a combination lock, they will feel that much more ready to start the school year! With virtual learning, this will probably not be on your teen's radar as a potential stressor, but it may become one closer to when schools reopen.

9

**Orientation:** Going to middle school typically means going into a school that's much larger than what your teen is used to. Some rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders feel anxious about the new building and getting lost in a larger space. Most schools have a school map available for students. Set up a time to visit the school in person and take a walk around and get oriented. Attend school orientations and back to school nights. In the new virtual learning, it's important to become oriented with the technology and videoconferencing platforms used by the schools. It's also important for parents and students alike to become knowledgeable and comfortable with online resources available to them.

10

**Goals:** Sit down and talk to your teen about their goals for this year. Make sure these goals are realistic and measurable. What are their goals academically? Is it to make all A's? Or maybe make the Honor Roll? Is it their goal to make perfect attendance? Also, it's important to talk about other goals as well, such as goals outside of school. After identifying their goals, the next step should be to brainstorm ways they will reach those goals.

### Resources

[Chesterfield County Mental Health - Prevention Services](#)

Facebook: Chesterfield County Prevention Services