



Bayport Blue Point UFSD
Counseling Center
Newsletter
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High School Counselors

Susan Mullins

Ronald Bard

Daniel Harrington

Middle School Counselors

Heather Woods

James Hughes

Elementary Counselor

Matthew Birdsall

Dear Community,

First and foremost, we wish you a Happy and Healthy New Year!

With that said, we are off and running with the new year. We are completing college applications, preparing for scheduling, planning our transition program and planning for Junior College Information. If you recall, our last newsletter highlighted course selection and assisting your children with meaningful course selections.

It is imperative that your child remember the *twenty-box rule*. That means they should have English, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science and LOTE in their schedule each year they are in high school (4 years of high school X the 5 areas). All students should realize that college like to see a progression in those courses, with appropriate grades. In addition, student electives should either be within their concentrated interest (Music, Art) or a variety of electives to wet their appetites for various majors. This eclectic selection of electives should serve as a stepping stone to a college major or future occupation. With the price of a college education, we all should be aware that additional semester in college adds to the already high price tag for college.

As we begin scheduling for next year, we are busy thinking about our incoming 6th and 9th Grades. Their *transition* is key to their success in their new school. As a entire counseling staff, K-12, we have been introduced to various programs and research that will enable us to plan for this important stepping stone. *How can you help? Take a look at the research:*

Students whose parents monitored their activities and intervened positively (schoolwork, peer networks and direct participation) were more likely to have a smooth transition (Falbo, Lein, Amador, 2001).

Your first step will be to attend orientation programs that pertain to your child. In addition, partner with counselors and teachers to monitor your child's progress, academically and socially, as needed.

We have dedicated this issue to transition in order to will assist those of you whose children will be graduating to the next level.

Have a great year!

The Counseling Staff

Freshman Orientation Program, January 25, 2010 at 7:00,High School Auditorium

Transitioning Issues to 9th Grade

Parents Perspective

Academic

- Courses become more challenging
- Non-academic pursuits take precedence

Social

- Peer group becomes more important
- Family involvement changes

Emotional

- Developing individuality
- Coping with changes

Student's Perspective

- 8th grade students worry about their experience transitioning to high school and some view it as difficult
- 8th grade students were primarily concerned with an increased workload, difficulty of classes and getting lost at school
- Students later reported that academic and social changes, and feeling disconnected from school were the most difficult aspects of the transition process

Middle School: What's Different

At first, middle school may seem like a mysterious place full of strangers and surprises. Here are some of the most common changes you'll be facing:

More Work!

Teachers in middle school often view their students as young adults. This means that your assignments and tests will be more challenging. In addition to your nightly dose of homework, you may also have papers and exams for the first time. The workload may seem overwhelming, but your teachers will most likely understand that you and your classmates are making an adjustment. If you feel that they don't understand this and you're having trouble with the amount of work expected of you, make sure you bring it up with a parent or school counselor.

The A-B-C's

Back in elementary school, your teachers may have graded you with marks like "check plus," "excellent," or a number scale. Now that you're in middle school, chances are that you'll be graded differently. This system may feel more competitive, and you might find yourself and your classmates comparing grades. Remember that your grades are your own business, and if sharing them makes it seem like you're in some kind of contest with other students, or generally makes you feel bad about how you're doing, keep them to yourself.

The Big Lock-Up

Most likely, the hallways of your middle school are lined with lockers, and one of them will be your very own "home base" during the day. Instead of lugging your stuff around in one bag, or stashing it in a classroom desk or cubby, you now have a place to store everything safely. The best part about your locker: being able to decorate it with photos, drawings, magazine clippings, and anything else that makes it feel like *you*.

Library Heaven!

Chances are, your middle school library is bigger and better than the one at your old school. Many middle school libraries have more than just books -- they might also have computers, video stations, and other forms of media to help you learn. They're great locations for doing homework, studying for tests, and gathering research for papers.

On Schedule

A different class, in a different room, every hour? Different classes on different days? Yikes! No doubt about it: the middle school "class schedule" can seem pretty hairy at first. You'll probably have it down in no time, but new buildings and new routines are confusing for everyone. If you have trouble finding something, or keeping track of where you have to be, speak up! Your teachers, counselors, and other school staff are there to help.

Bye Bye Recess

In elementary school, recess was probably your favorite part of the day, right? So how will you survive without it? You'll most likely have a lunch period, "study hall," or "nutrition period" to relax or work on some class assignments with friends.

Extra-Curriculars

Here's one of the best parts about middle school: the chance to get involved in after-school sports, clubs, and activities. From football to field hockey, from drama club to school yearbook, these "extra-curriculars" are a great way to make friends, explore new interests, and, of course, have lots of fun.

The Elementary to Middle School Transition: Five Helpful Hints for Parents

For many young adolescents the transition from elementary to middle school can be a time of mixed emotions. It can also be an opportunity for new beginnings. New friends, new teachers, and new a school environment can bring out excitement and, at times, a little nervous energy for middle school students.

There is also a transition that occurs for parents during this time. Our middle schools works hard to ensure parents feel welcomed and provide information that will help with the transition.

Listed below are tips that can be shared with parents on how to make the transition go smoothly for everyone involved.

- Encourage parents to buy a combination lock before school and have their child spend time trying to open the lock. Call the school to see if they will allow him or her to practice. If you don't have the combination, make one up.
- Go to the school two or three days before school starts and get a copy of your child's schedule. Then take a few minutes to walk from room to room with your child. Look for direct routes to classrooms, stop by the gym, check out the locker rooms, and spend a few minutes in the lunchroom. This will help alleviate apprehensions your child and you might have about going to the middle school.
- Don't buy backpacks that can store 50 pounds of materials. Remember, the students are not going to hike a mountain or spend two weeks in the wilderness. Keep backpacks simple. They should be able to hold a few items. The more the backpack can hold, the more a middle school student will place in it. Smaller backpacks allow for better organization.

- Increase your knowledge of adolescent development. Take time to review information and materials that relate to middle level issues. If you have raised adolescents, be willing to share advice and information with other parents. Form an information group or support group for parents of new middle school students. Also, ask the principal if they would like some volunteers for the first few days to help students with their schedules and lockers.
- Planning and conversation will ease your teen's anxiety about meeting the new, complex demands of middle school.

Smoothing your child's transition to middle school...By Nancy Firchow, M.L.S..

Ah, middle school. Though your child may barely be entering puberty and may still be a pre-teen, the transition to middle school is a big step on the road to maturity. A big, scary step. Regardless of what specific grade marks the beginning of junior high or middle school in your community, your child will be both excited and afraid. Researchers have found that students anticipating the move to middle school worry about three aspects of the change: logistical, social, and academic. Your child with learning or attention difficulties shares the same worries as her peers, and may be afraid the change will be even harder for her.

While you won't be able to calm your child's fears completely, with some advance planning and open discussions you can substantially ease her mind. The first step is understanding what may worry your child.

Logistical concerns

When researchers asked kids what aspect of moving to middle school most concerned them, the top answers related to how things at the new school worked (Akos, 2002). How would they find the right classroom? What happened if they were tardy? Where was the cafeteria? What about the bathrooms?

Middle school is a much more complex environment than grade school. The campus is larger, there are more students, and instead of one teacher and one classroom, your child will have a separate instructor, and classroom, for each subject or block of subjects (e.g., language arts/social studies or math/science). It's no wonder kids worry about finding their way in this new world.

For your student with learning or attention problems, understanding the rules and procedures of the new school may be even more important. The challenge of navigating multiple transitions between classes and organizing books and materials for every subject may be all she can handle in the first few weeks. Here are some strategies for helping your child make a smoother transition to middle school:

- Explore the school's Web site with your child. Search for announcements, schedules, and events.
- Accompany your child on campus tours and orientations offered to parents and incoming students. The better you understand the school layout and rules, the more you can help your child.
- Get a map of the campus and take your child to explore. Pick a time after school in the spring or in the days just before school starts in the fall. Be sure to check in with the school office to get an OK for your explorations.

- Include a couple of your child's friends on campus treks. They can boost each other's memory about where things are when school starts.
- Take advantage of summer programs — academic or recreational — offered at the new school for incoming students. Your child will get the feel for the campus in a much more relaxed atmosphere.
- Get a copy of your child's class schedule and mark the location of her locker and each classroom and bathroom on the school map. Tape both of these inside her binder. If your child has trouble reading maps, walk the route between classes with her — more than once, if necessary — and note landmarks that the student can use to navigate.
- Find out the length of the passing period between classes. Time it out for your child. Demonstrate how far she can walk in that amount of time.
- Get a copy of the student handbook. Review rules and requirements — especially the school's code of conduct, which describes consequences for violations of the most important rules. Ask the school staff questions about anything that's unclear.
- Buy your child a lock for her locker several weeks before school starts to give her plenty of time to practice opening and closing it. (Note: Consider whether a combination or keyed lock is best for your child.)
- Make sure your child has an easy-to-read wristwatch so she can quickly see if she needs to hurry to be on time to class. If she has a cell phone, make sure the time is set correctly and she is in the habit of checking it.

Social Fears

Another area of worry for students moving to middle school is the social scene. Will I see anyone I know? [Will it be hard to make friends?](#) Will I have to eat lunch alone? [Are the older kids bullies?](#)

Your child is moving from the top of the elementary school heap to the bottom rung of the middle school social ladder. She may have heard that the older students tease or bully the younger ones. She knows for sure that she and her best friends are unlikely to be in every single class together, and, even worse, there may be classes where she doesn't know anyone at all on the first day. And if your child with learning or attention problems struggles to make friends anyway, then this all adds up to a potential social nightmare.

Remember that, in addition to changing schools, your child is entering adolescence, a stage when kids start to rely much more on peers and pull away from parents. This is a time when being part of a group is very important and being perceived as different can be devastating. It's not surprising that finding friends in the new school is a top priority.

The good news is that the more varied social environment also offers many opportunities to meet people. Being in multiple classes each day means your student is surrounded by more potential friends. The better news is that, once students are settled into middle school, they report that friendships and the social scene are among the best things about school (Akos, 2002; Forgan, 2000).

Some things that you can do to ease the social transition:

- Encourage your child to join sports teams, clubs, or other extracurricular activities.
- Ease any loneliness in the early weeks of school by [helping your child arrange weekend social activities](#) with neighborhood, church, or grade school friends.
- Encourage your child to join group conversations. Discuss how to join in without interrupting, to add something relevant to conversation in progress, etc.

- Talk about traits that make a good friend (such as being a good listener).
- Talk about social skills. Discuss how words and actions can affect other people.
- Practice skills needed for difficult social situations.
- Remind your child to make eye contact when speaking or listening.

Academic concerns

Though most students worry more about the logistical and social aspects of middle school before they get there, once settled in, academic concerns rise to the surface. Will the classes be too difficult? Will there be too much homework? Are the teachers hard graders?

It's quite typical for students' academic performance to drop upon entering middle school. Along with everything else that's going on - rollercoaster emotions, physical changes, and social upheaval - your child is also coping with harder classes, more homework, and a whole new set of academic expectations.

Some tips to help ease her academic concerns:

- Meet with teachers early in the school year. Give them a profile of your child's strengths and where she needs help.
- Encourage your child to continue using strategies that have worked for them in the past, such as writing homework assignments on the board, or assigning your child a "homework buddy" she can contact if she forgets what her assignments are. If the school has a homework hotline, make sure your child knows how to use it.
- Help your student with time management skills. Work together on a schedule for study time, break time, chores, etc.
- Work out an organizational system with your student. Acknowledge and make allowances for her anxiety; at first, she may need to carry everything for all classes all the time in order to feel prepared.
- Avoid overreacting to grades. Making sure your child gets a handle on how to meet the demands of the new school is the critical factor in the early weeks.
- Stay connected to your child's school work. Try to teach your student to work more independently while supporting her enough to give her confidence.
- Go to back-to-school night, open houses, parent-teacher conferences and other events where you can connect with your child's teachers.
- Help your child be her own advocate. Encourage her to discuss problems and solutions with teachers on her own, but be ready to step in and help as needed.