The background features a dark blue trapezoidal shape on the left and a series of overlapping, semi-transparent green geometric shapes on the right, creating a modern, abstract design.

# Easing The Transition From Elementary School to Middle School

# The Transition From Elementary To Middle School

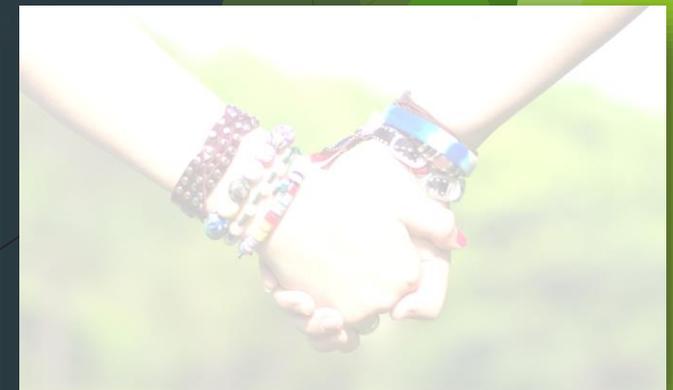
- ▶ The transition from elementary school to middle school marks a dramatic shift in your child's life. This shift concurrently occurs with rapid personal change, increasing autonomy, the ability to think abstractly, and physical growth spurts.
- ▶ Difficulties during this transition can include
  - ▶ Adjusting to a larger school with more students
  - ▶ Switching classrooms
  - ▶ More responsibility
  - ▶ More independence
  - ▶ More demanding academics
  - ▶ Hormone changes



# Social and Psychological Experiences Directly Affect Academic Performance.

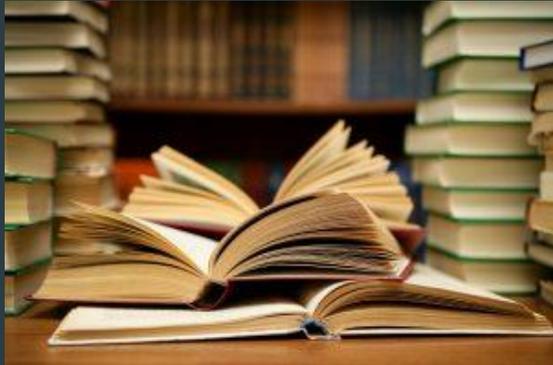
- ▶ Students who had anxiety and stress about the upcoming transition to middle school had lower academic performance and motivation.
  - ▶ Stress is expected- starting middle school can be scary for some students. Talk to your child about what stresses him out and do your best to talk out possible solutions to the problems he might foresee.
- ▶ Consistent friendship equate to better academic life.
  - ▶ Friend groups often change from elementary to middle school. Encourage your child to stay involved with positive friendships from elementary school while also exploring new friendships through joining activities at school.
- ▶ Girls tend to have more anxiety over the transition than boys.

(Goldstein, Boxer, & Rudolph, 2015).



# Typical Academic Concerns

- ▶ **Day to day specifics**
  - ▶ Children like organization and answers. Do your best to talk to your child about things like how he or she will get to school each day, if you will have a meeting point for pick up, the schedule for after school activities.
- ▶ **Getting good grades**
  - ▶ While getting good grades is important, the study and organizational skills your child learns in middle are key to future academic success. Try not to focus so much on the “A” as on the learning process.
- ▶ **Having more than one teacher**
  - ▶ Different teachers have different expectations and classroom procedures. Encourage your child to pay attention to each teacher’s daily routines and to ask for help if needed.
- ▶ **More homework**
  - ▶ Set up a homework routine with your child that makes the most sense for your child and that works for your family’s daily schedule. You can check to make sure homework is completed and help your child study if needed but allow your child to do their best even if that means they make a mistake.
- ▶ **More long-term projects**
  - ▶ Talk to your child about time management and breaking bigger assignments into more manageable parts.
- ▶ **Work that is more challenging**
  - ▶ Students can ask teachers for help and attend homework club for extra support. While we know it is hard to watch your child struggle it is important that they start to find their own ways to solve academic problems and advocate for themselves.



# Talking With Your Child About The Transition

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind before starting a conversation.

- ▶ **Timing.** Try to find a time when you and your child are not busy, rushed, exhausted or overly emotional.
- ▶ **Be present.** Put away your devices, put your mental “to do” list aside and be prepared to fully listen.
- ▶ **Be curious and ask questions.** Have a few open-ended questions in mind and follow the conversation wherever your child takes it.
- ▶ **Be calm.** Topics may come up that are upsetting to you; do your best to take a breath and remain calm.
- ▶ **Be empathic.** Listen to how your child is feeling, let him or her vent without offering solutions but let them know you’re available as a sounding board when they are ready.



# Talking With Your Child About The New Transition

- ▶ You can start a conversation with your child asking by asking “what are some things you’re looking forward to?” and “what are some things you are dreading”
- ▶ Open ended questions tend to elicit more information than a simple yes or no. Here are some examples of general open ended questions you can use to talk to your child:
  - ▶ I wonder..
  - ▶ What would happen if...
  - ▶ What do you think about...
  - ▶ Tell me about...
  - ▶ How can we...
  - ▶ I am worried about...
  - ▶ I would like my middle school teachers to know...
  - ▶ I am excited about...
  - ▶ You can help me by...
  - ▶ What would your do...

# Relationships with Peers

- ▶ Be yourself
- ▶ Think about how you want to be treated
- ▶ Be open to new friendships
- ▶ Keep old friends, share new ones
- ▶ Express opinions respectfully
- ▶ Use assertive language
- ▶ Respect differences in others
- ▶ Stand up for others and what is right
- ▶ Talk out conflicts
- ▶ Think about what makes a good friend
- ▶ Stay out of the drama



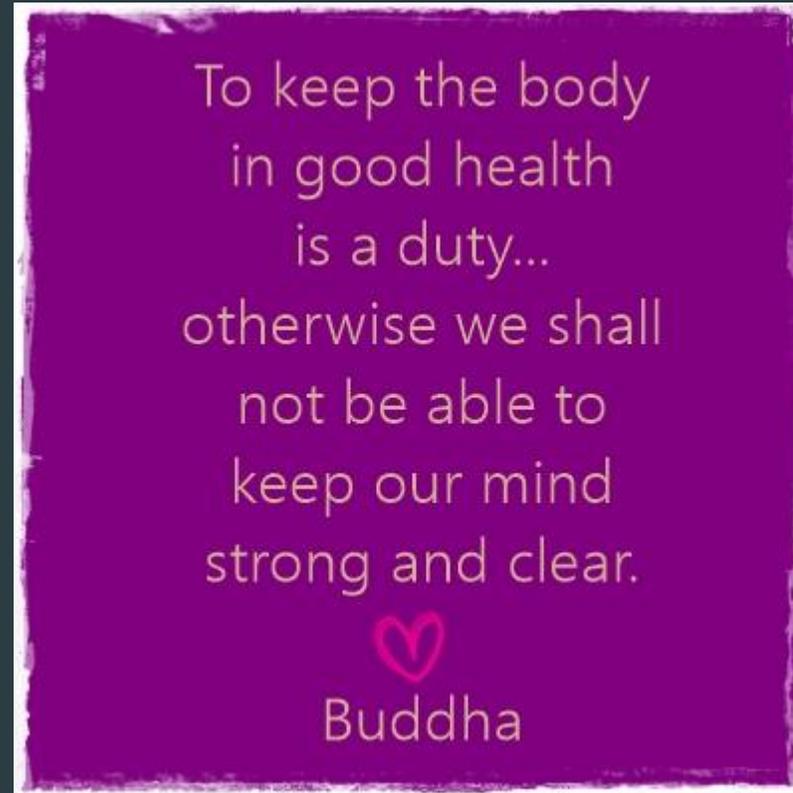


## with Teachers

- ▶ Get to know your teachers; they are people with feelings like you
- ▶ Help them teach by coming to class prepared
- ▶ Be ready to learn
- ▶ Ask for help when you need it
  - ▶ Many students are shy to approach a teacher and often parents will reach out on their child's behalf. Talk to your child about being an advocate for herself and if needed, practice asking for help.
- ▶ Figure out what your teachers expect of you
- ▶ Build your reputation as a student- it will follow you through middle school- but if you start off on the “wrong foot” there is time to change it!
  - ▶ Some students think it's too late to change habits, behaviors, or reputations in middle school. They say they will just wait until high school to start over again. Remember- middle school is the time to practice and there is plenty of time during the 3 years to “start over.”

# Taking Care of Yourself

- ▶ Get enough sleep
- ▶ Exercise and take care of your body
- ▶ Eat nutritious foods
- ▶ Practice good hygiene, shower or bath daily



# Getting Involved

- ▶ New experience will help you continue to grow academically, socially and emotionally
- ▶ Get involved in something you love
- ▶ Many choices are available such as band, sports, dances and clubs
- ▶ The more you put into middle school, the more you will get out of it!

# Remind your kids: What You Do Today Matters For Your Future

- ▶ Study habits- good habits will pay off
- ▶ You are building a foundation for your high school career
- ▶ Start thinking about your future





- ▶ Don't take your child's impending adolescence as a personal affront.
  - ▶ Your child is starting to develop his or her own independence, style, sense of self, and opinions. While this might sometimes drive you crazy, it is a good thing.
- ▶ Don't punish your child for acting "adolescent" -moody, less communicative, more argumentative, less organized
  - ▶ But do have clear expectations, boundaries, and consequences.
- ▶ Accept that for some, adolescence is a more combative age
  - ▶ Make sure you take time for yourself to relax and recharge so you don't feel overwhelmed by the changes.

For more information: [Surviving Your Child's Adolescence: How to Understand, and Even Enjoy, the Rocky Road to Independence](#) by Carl Pickhardt 2013

# Balancing your child's sense of independence with his or her continued need for parenting.

- ▶ One of the most difficult tasks of a parent is finding the right balance between helping out and staying back.
  - ▶ In general, children in middle school should start to have more independence, however maturity doesn't occur overnight.
  - ▶ Start to give your child more responsibilities and choices so he feels like he has more control and power in his life. If he succeeds and fulfils his responsibilities, great! Give him more. If he needs extra support start to back up a little and slow down the process.

**“I really want to be there to help you sort out what you hear from other kids, I'll just give you my perception of stuff that you can add to your own thinking to figure out what you believe. ... I'd like to be there to be able to do that for you.”**

Carl Pickhardt 2013

# Make It A Goal To Develop Your Child's Character

- ▶ Middle school is an important time for your child's personal and academic growth. Try your best to focus on the positive qualities your child is developing along the way.

