



Helpful Hints for Transitioning to Middle School

From Veteran McCall Middle School Parents

The beginning of middle school is both exciting and a little stressful for students and parents alike. We have compiled some helpful hints from veteran McCall Middle School parents to help ease your transition. These are just some ideas to consider, which may or may not apply to your particular student. It is also a work in progress (like our kids!) and we would love to hear from you as your student continues through middle school if you have any tips to share.

Regarding School...

“If your child has had difficulty transitioning in the past...expect difficulty for the beginning of middle school. A few days before school starts, walk around the school with your student to get acclimated...if he/she doesn’t want to go with you, ask older friend.”

“Be prepared for an influx in homework. This differs for each child and each Team. For some children, 6th grade is easy and 7th is harder or vice versa. Helping your child to be organized can be essential to their success. Also, there is an afternoon homework club (3x a week, Tu, W, Th) that they can go to.”

“Don’t let academic pressures build up. The teachers are very happy to meet with students and parents. Also, email communication is a great way to contact teachers with any concerns.”

“Most teachers have a 30 minute rule, which means that if a child cannot finish a nightly assignment in 30 minutes, a parent can sign the unfinished homework and it will be accepted.”

“The lunch lines are really long for the first few weeks of school. Your child may want to bring their lunch from home for the first few days. Tell your child to try to plan a place in the cafeteria to meet friends so they’ll have someone to sit with. There are lots of kids and it’s sometimes hard to find the people you’re looking for.”

“Buy a combination locker and have your child practice using it during the summer. For many kids, opening their lockers is a cause of stress.”

Many teachers assign “homework buddies”. Remind your child to write down his/her buddy’s phone number. At Open House look around each class and see which parents you recognize. This might come in handy when homework gets forgotten and the buddy can’t be reached.



“McCall has a computerized lunch payment system. You should put money in an account with the food service provider to purchase food in the cafeteria. You can do this over the Internet or in the morning before school. McCall will mail you a PIN number during the summer. You need to learn it to buy your lunch.”

“McCall has lots of extracurricular activities which generally begin in October. Watch the Parent Assoc. newsletter and the web site for the list of activities offered. Remind students to listen to the morning announcements for information.”

“Someone needs to chaperone the dances. If your child doesn’t want you to, offer to chaperone a dance of a different grade. If you’d rather chaperone your own child’s grade and they say they won’t go, tell them that’s okay with you...My son stayed home the night I chaperoned his dance, but I got to see what goes on with kids his age.”

“Some classes have ‘home copies’ of textbooks, so that students don’t need to carry heavy books back and forth. If home copies are unavailable, **Half.com** is an excellent source to buy books for as little as \$5. Guidance and the Parent Assoc. can give you a list of ISBN numbers you need to make sure your ordering the correct version of the text.”

“The daily schedule can be confusing. There are 7 periods in a day and it is a 6-day cycle. Don’t think about “Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday”, but think “Day 1, Day 2 Day 3...” (Day 1 is not always a Monday!) Get a copy of your child’s schedule and keep it where you can see it every morning, so you’ll have sneakers on gym days, instruments on band/orchestra days, etc.”

“Make sure you sign up to get on the Parents’ Assoc. electronic mailing list for the monthly newsletter and class mailing list as well. This will assure that you get rapid notification of breaking news.”

Life Outside of School...

When your child tells you “You’re the only one that won’t let me...” (fill in the blank), you usually aren’t. But, sometimes you are and you should still stick to your guns!

“Every middle school child doesn’t have a cell phone.”

“If your child does have a cell phone, keep it out of their bedroom in the evening. A lot of texting goes on when you might think your child is sleeping.”

“Half days can be a problem when kids go to unsupervised houses. Make sure you speak with a parent if your child says they’re going to a friends house on the half day.”



“Hanging around at the Center is usually okay for a little while, but it’s best not to let your child spend hours of unsupervised time. Even if they stay downtown, large groups of kids can get unruly and be intimidating to other downtown patrons.”

“Their friends may change a lot during the next few years and they will start to hang out with kids that you don’t know. Try to encourage your child to have people to the house so you can get to know them better.”

“On the flip side, children who have been friends with your child throughout elementary school may suddenly disappear from his or her life. This can be painful and difficult to understand, but reassure your child that this is to be expected, and new friends will come along.”

“I once thought I was a “cool parent” until I realized there is no such thing. As it turns out, it’s better to be a dependable and responsible parent.”

“Try to keep a sense of humor.”

“Find common ground with some tv shows that you both enjoy for something to talk about. Whether it’s sports, a sitcom or American Idol, it helps to have some common interests when everyday communication gets harder.”

“When the child that idolized you doesn’t even want you to chaperone a school field trip, it can break your heart. Rest assured, they will come back to you, but it may take a while”.

“If they are going to someone’s house in the daytime or evening, **always** check in with the parents to make sure there’s someone home.”

“It seems a lot of parents look at middle school as a time to give their kids a lot more freedom. It’s really a time to pay a lot more attention to what’s going on in their social lives.”

“Continue to find reason to do things together. Just because they say they don’t want to go on vacation or spend time with the family doesn’t mean they won’t have fun once they get there.”

“It is healthy and important that your child starts to venture off on their own more, but frequent check-ins are important. It’s best to develop a routine of checking in with you so that when they get into high school checking in is second nature.”

“Middle school is a time when kids are trying to “fit in”. Make sure you stress that it’s not important **at all** if they’re in the “in” crowd. It’s only important that they have some friends that they enjoy being with. Over the next few years their circle of friends will grow immensely. Tell them to take their time!!”



“During these middle years it is sometimes hard to keep kids interested in some of the activities that they enjoyed in elementary school. Let them know that you expect them to continue to keep busy and encourage them to explore new activities.”

“Sleepovers should be kept for special occasions...kids rarely get enough sleep. If your child does host a sleepover, it’s a good idea to put kid’s cell phones in a basket to be returned to them when they leave the next day.”

Parent to Parent is a community-based, non-profit organization which has provided education, support, and networking opportunities to Winchester parents since 1982. The organization seeks to enhance family communication, increase parents' understanding of their child's development, and strengthen the relationship between family and school. Our speakers and panels include educators, mental health professionals, parents, and students who provide insights and strategies for parenting young to college aged children. New this year, we are facilitating a Parenting Book Group, co-sponsored with the Winchester Public Library. Parent to Parent continually strives to be responsive to the needs of the community and we welcome your input.

To find out more and learn about upcoming programs, check our website: parenttoparentwinchester.org.