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Helping Kids Adjust to Middle School

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Middle school presents new challenges for most kids. Kids from several elementary schools come together so there are a lot of new faces. For some this is exciting, for others it's intimidating. This may also be the first time your tween travels from class to class with many teachers. Further they have to find their way around the geography of the school and may be afraid of getting lost and being late to class especially the first week or so. Parents can surely be helpful in supporting their new middle schooler adjust.

Parenting Tips for Helping Kids Adjust to Middle School

1. Prepare your child ahead for the differences between elementary and middle school. They may already have a sense because they were probably taken on an orientation last spring. But that seems a long time ago at this point.
2. Discuss how different teachers have different routines and personalities. Let them know you will be interested in hearing all about this and will be available to guide with any difficulties they encounter with certain teachers they are not comfortable with.
3. Kids may find the nurturing quality of elementary school teachers isn't as present in middle school. Let them know this doesn't mean their teacher doesn't want to know them individually, but that it takes time because the teachers have many more kids to meet than in their previous school.
4. Help your child organize their back pack from the start. Make sure they have all the folders and notebooks required and that they are neatly arranged. Don't expect them to do this themselves right off the bat. Most kids really need parents to show them how to arrange their things so nothing is lost.
5. After homework is done, show your child exactly where to put the finished product for each subject, so they feel prepared to hand it in the next day. Otherwise a mass of papers seem to collect and your child can get overwhelmed.
6. Don't hesitate to discuss socializing with your child. Don't barrage them with too many questions, but ask them who they had lunch with and if they were comfortable in that situation.

7. Buying or bringing lunch should be a joint discussion with your child. Kids have different preferences that make them feel more at home in school.

8. After school, be prepared to give them a snack or tell a caretaker if you are working to do the same. This renewal of energy keeps them going as they then face the task of homework.

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9. Have a discussion about whether homework should precede or follow some loose time. Discuss the pros and cons of each, but then make a routine that will be followed daily.

10. Praise your child for starting a new challenge. Middle school surely is one even if your child doesn't say so specifically. Don't presume all's just rosy even if they don't have complaints. There's a definite adjustment period for all kids from days to weeks and for some even months.

11. They aren't too old for you to be available to help with homework or just be present as needed. You don't want to do the work for them or be overbearing, but you do want them to know you are really there as they pick up the pace of the amount of assignments compared to previous years.

Most of all, your child learns that you are understanding of the changes they are facing. They need an ally so they don't feel alone. You may tell them all the kids are going through this, but it probably doesn't feel that way. Tell them everyone makes mistakes, gets lost, and has trouble organizing all the new class assignments, but you'll be there when they get overwhelmed. Praise their efforts and persistence as they face both frustrations and successes.

Laurie Hollman, Ph.D., is a psychoanalyst and author of ***Unlocking Parental Intelligence: Finding Meaning in Your Child's Behavior*** found on Amazon and wherever books are sold. Visit her website for more guidance: <http://lauriehollmanphd.com>.