

Survival Guide

For

Middle School Parents

Welcome to the wonderful world of middle school! This is an important time of transition for your child as well as your family, and we are thrilled to be a part of this exciting period in your lives. Humans experience more changes from the ages of 10 through 14 than at any other time in life except for from birth to age 2. These can be challenging years as students move from being children to being young adults; hopefully the information shared within this booklet will make the next three years go more smoothly both at school and at home. In addition to basic information about our program and policies, you'll also find our recommendations regarding several issues which may arise in the next few years. We feel there is wisdom in the principles we advocate, and ask that you give prayerful consideration to the material provided.

"But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

1 Timothy 1:5

Every child is unique, and has a different experience in middle school. You may have older children who sailed through middle school yet your younger child may not, or vice versa. We recognize, celebrate, and appreciate the special gifts and qualities of each child!

“For it was You who formed my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.”

Psalm 139:13 - 16

First-Day Jitters

Your student is probably worried about starting middle school, even though he/she may not voice these concerns to you. Getting lost, not remembering what class is next, not being able to open the lockers, and not knowing the rules are all important concerns for new middle schoolers. In order to help ease this transition, we have created opportunities this year for your fifth grader to begin to become familiar with middle school practices throughout the fourth quarter. One difference is that fifth graders will begin changing into shorts and a t-shirt for PE; this will help them adjust to changing into uniforms for PE in sixth grade. In order to help them practice proper hallway conduct, fifth grade teachers will continue to walk their students to and from lunch and specialty classes during the last quarter, but the students will not be required to walk in straight lines and will be allowed to talk quietly while travelling the hallways. In addition, your fifth grader will be assigned an empty locker in the middle school hallway, and he/she is welcome to come up to practice opening the lock. Another change is that students will begin to eat ala carte in the café rather than receive tray lunches. Students will bring their lunch money each day, and purchase whatever items they choose in the café. We believe that allowing our fifth graders to start these middle school practices while still under the watchful guidance of their classroom teacher will make for a smoother and less stressful beginning to sixth grade.

In addition, the fifth grade students will be coming to the middle school a morning in April in order to tour the building, see the classrooms, and talk with teachers, administrators, and current sixth graders.

However, they may still have some butterflies! You can help allay some of these fears. We encourage you to bring your new 6th grader to the back-to-school day in August; this will give him/her a chance to pick up a class schedule, use a map to find all the classrooms, and continue practicing opening the locker combination. Tape a copy of the schedule and map inside of your student’s plan book and locker. Advise him/her to keep a copy of the locker combination in a safe place, and to not tell it to anyone! Go over the rules listed in the school handbook with your child, and encourage him/her to listen carefully and make notes regarding each teacher’s expectations. If either you or your student is unsure about a rule or policy, please ask a teacher or administrator – we want to help!

Above all, pray with and for your youngster during this time of new beginnings and throughout the year.

“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped.”

Psalm 28:7

Staying Alert

Most students of this age are often tired, and they always seem to be hungry! During these years, humans need more sleep than at any other time in their lives except when they were babies. A good average for a middle school student is nine hours of sleep per night, and it is best if they go to bed at the same time each night. On weekends, students have a tendency to want to stay up late and then sleep in; this is not recommended, as it throws the sleep schedule off and it takes several days to re-adjust. If they are very tired, allow them to sleep no more than two extra hours on weekends.

“...let us be alert and sober.”
1 Thessalonians 5:6

Academic Changes

The schoolwork will begin to get more difficult, and concepts will become more abstract. Students will be expected to work more independently, and will have long-term projects that require setting and reaching short-term goals along the way. Instead of just memorizing facts and procedures, students will be expected to combine pieces of information from different sources, and then assimilate those pieces into a complete answer. Students will also begin to experience lecture in classes, and be expected to take notes. Students in middle school can expect approximately 1 hour of homework per night. They may have to begin to juggle their homework along with weekday sports practices and games. Because of all this, grades may drop a bit temporarily during these years as they adjust to all the changes and expanded expectations. If that happens, please do not panic! Work with your child in an encouraging and helpful manner, and contact the teacher to see what suggestions he/she may have.

We do have several things in place to help students with these added responsibilities. Most teachers are available every day after school from 3:05 to 3:30 p.m. for extra assistance for any student who is struggling with a concept, and we strongly encourage your child to take advantage of this free tutoring time. This assistance may be arranged at the request of the teacher, student, or parent. Long-term projects are broken down into steps for our middle school students, with separate due dates for each step. In addition, our teachers have progressive expectations for taking notes throughout middle school, with more instruction and assistance at 6th grade leading to more independent work at 8th grade.

If at any time you are concerned about your child’s academic progress, feel free to contact the teacher via e-mail or voice mail for an update or suggestions.

Keeping Track of Homework

Students of this age can be unorganized and forgetful, and they begin to utilize lockers and switch classrooms, so getting homework completed and turned in may become more of a challenge. Your child will be issued an assignment book, in which he/she is to write all assignments. You will need to initial the book each evening, and the teacher will check the next day to make sure this has been done. In this way, communication lines remain open between the teachers and parents. To make sure the necessary books get home, talk with your child about what method might work best for him/her. Some students simply look at their plan book at the end of the day to see what they need to finish. Others prefer to have a dry-erase board inside the locker door, on which they can write the homework/book that’s been assigned after each class period. At the end of the day, a look at the board will let them know which books to take home. Another suggestion is to have a pad of sticky-notes in the locker; as students return to the locker from class, if they have homework they put a sticky note on that book. At the end of the day, every book with a sticky note will need to be taken home. To make the time spent working at home as productive as possible, we recommend that you:

- **Get into a routine**
When your child walks in from school, have a specific spot where the backpack is placed. Also have a location where your child is to place any notes which need to be seen/signed by parents.
- **Study every day**
Explain to your child that there will be a period of study time every day, even if your child has no homework. There is always something on which he/she can work – Scripture memory verses, spelling and vocabulary review, studying for next week’s test, reading for the book report due next month, etc. By requiring that time be set aside each day, your child will develop discipline and also be less likely to rush through assignments at school.
- **Find your child’s “prime time”**
Each child is different; some students focus well right after school, others need some down time and/or food before they can concentrate, others work best in the early morning. Help your child figure out when he/she is most alert, and make that the study time.
- **Have a specific location where homework is done.**
Having a specified area with all necessary materials handy can help make your child’s work time more focused and productive. The actual location might be at a desk or the kitchen table; a floor or couch would also be an acceptable study site, as long as the area is well-lit and supplies are handy. The telephone and television should be turned off, but many students of this age concentrate better with quiet music playing.
- **Set goals for study time**
At the start of the study session, have your child look through his/her assignment book and make a “to-do” list. He/she should then check off each assignment as it is finished. At the end of the study session, all materials should be put back into the backpack, and the backpack placed in its assigned location.
- **Plan ahead**
Have a calendar with lots of room for writing to keep track of big assignments, upcoming tests, practices, etc. Update and review it weekly.
- **Take breaks**
Studies have proven that we remember more from multiple short study sessions than one long session. Encourage your child to take short but regular breaks during homework time. In addition, when a test is coming up, schedule short review sessions each day to prepare rather than one long cram session the night before the test, focusing each day on a different aspect of the material -- one night he/she might review vocabulary, the next go over the review questions, the next re-read all notes, etc.

“Commit your works to the Lord, and your plans will be established.”

Proverbs 16:3

Changes

For some students, the young adolescent years are a time of turmoil; however, many students make this transition with few difficulties, and others experience them only in small degrees. Novelist Anne Lamott has said that the middle school years involve a “changeover from dog to cat.” Younger children are friendly, generally do what you say, and usually like you! After entering the middle grades, many young people become aloof, have minds of their own, and probably no longer consider parents their best friends. This is a natural part of growing up, as a young person works his/her way to becoming an adult. This does not mean, however, that the family unit is no longer a vital part of a child’s life. Middle schoolers depend on the security of family more than they will let on, and it is extremely important that parents continue to stay involved with them. Many students also become more:

- Disorganized
Homework, books, permission slips, even shoes are misplaced on a regular basis.
- Forgetful
Even reliable children suddenly forget to give you messages, do homework, or bring books home.
- Emotional
Sudden outbursts of tears, anger, or giggles are the norm.
- Exploring
This week your child may want to be a professional skateboarder; next week he/she may prefer to be a veterinarian. Expect constant changes, and whenever possible rent equipment rather than buying!
- Independent
One of the most important jobs of a parent is to raise a child who can live on his/her own, depending and trusting on God once he/she is away from the supervision of parents. These are the years when your child will likely start to pull away from you, and friends become more important than ever before.

There must be a balance during these years. We would not want to excuse laziness or apathy, and would certainly not want to allow such traits to continue as the child grows older, but also would not want to penalize a child for not being able to accomplish something that is developmentally beyond him/her. Assistance as the child adjusts to new responsibilities should be gradually lessened so that the child develops the discipline to handle these issues appropriately

“When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.”

1 Corinthians 13:11

Social Changes

Your child’s peer group will likely become much more important, and have increasing sway over his/her opinions and actions. This can be a good or bad thing, contingent upon whom your child’s friends are, so remain involved and get to know your child’s friends and their families. Children who come from a family with strong unity and identity are less likely to fall for negative peer pressure, so it is important to maintain those strong ties. Eating meals together is one way to do that, and is a tradition that should be continued even as your child gets older. We also recommend that you be available when they want to talk, even though the timing may be inconvenient for you.

There is often upheaval among friends at this age, as students who have been close for years will suddenly begin fighting and not like each other anymore. There is a great deal of “drama” at this age, especially among 7th grade girls. Although this is normal, we do strive to help them handle these issues in a Biblical way.

If your child comes home upset about a social issue, always remember there are at least two sides to every story! Don’t give too much weight to all the break-ups and make-ups among friends; for the most part it is best to allow the students to work their way through these issues on their own. This is a necessary part of growing up which helps them learn what they do and don’t want in a friend, how they want to be treated, and how they should treat others; resist the natural urge to jump in to try to solve things for your child. Parents help most when they are supportive, willing to listen, and serve as a sounding board for their youngster, interjecting truth without judgment. Also, strive not to become emotionally entangled in disagreements among students – a parent who shows anger or continually asks about a situation can actually make circumstances worse. When allowed to grow through these difficulties with Godly help and advice, your child becomes socially strong and mature.

If your child is struggling with friendship issues, there are some things that you can suggest. We all need to guard our tongues, but this is especially essential for middle school students. Being critical, making fun, and gossiping are all things that can destroy friendships.

“The tongue of the wise brings healing.”

Proverbs 12:18

“Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.”

Proverbs 26:20

“Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”

Hebrews 12:14

Making friends can also be difficult for some students. Encourage them to make the first move to reach out to others, especially if he/she notices other students who seem to be alone as well. Above all, help them to understand that ultimately their best friend is Jesus Christ. If the enemy is telling your child that no one likes him/her, a reminder that Christ loves us and wants us to come to Him when we're hurting can be very helpful.

“He who would have a friend must show himself friendly, but there is a man who sticks closer than a brother.”

Proverbs 18:24

Parenting

Most of all, children want to spend time with their parents. Listen to them, play with them, and hang out with them; what we spend time on is an indication of what we value. If you want your teenage child to enjoy spending time with you, you must spend time with them now in these pre-teen years.

“He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents.”

Malachi 4:6

For some, it is a temptation to be the child's buddy rather than parent. Don't be afraid to make the tough decisions that may not be popular! Stand firm for righteousness, and in the long run your son/daughter will appreciate it. As the teenage years come, it is best to have your boundaries set in advance.

“How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to Your word.”

Psalms 119:9

No parent enjoys seeing a child struggle, and the temptation during hard times is to want to smooth things out for your child. However, a certain amount of difficulty is actually good for us – when we are able to persevere and come through times of trouble, we learn that we can triumph over problems. Times of difficulty are also the times that we typically strengthen our spiritual walk, as we cling to the Lord more than we do when things are going well. If your child makes a bad choice, don't try to fight the consequences given; instead, realize that suffering consequences for sin is an important Biblical principal.

“We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character...”

Romans 5:3-5

“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life...”

James 1:12

No matter how uncooperative they may be, middle school students need to know that they are loved and valued. Find reasons to praise them, and celebrate any accomplishment or achievement. Use rewards as often as punishments, and allow them some power or control over various aspects of their lives.

“If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”

Philippians 2:2

Discipline

Expectations should be clearly established and followed consistently, and there should be as many good consequences for good choices as there are bad consequences for bad choices. When it is necessary to deliver a negative consequence to a middle schooler, always do it in a calm and rational manner. Be sensitive to your child; often the natural consequences of an action are enough to change the behavior, and additional punishment is not necessary. Make sure that your expectations are not set at an unattainable height: you would not punish a one-year old for not being able to drink out of a glass, but instead would provide a sippy cup as training until he/she is ready to drink alone. In the same way, don't expect more of your middle-schooler than he/she is developmentally able to do. Allow them age-appropriate support for things that are temporary phases. At the same time, however, do not ignore inappropriate behavior – students do need to be held accountable for their actions.

When your child misbehaves, determine if the action is temporal or eternal. If it is temporal, something that he/she has done simply because of age that he/she will grow out of, then address it briefly and move on. If what he/she has done has eternal consequences, including issues such as respect, courtesy, honesty, or obedience, then it needs to be addressed in a much more serious manner.

As students demonstrate trustworthiness, they should gradually be given more and more responsibility.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Ephesians 6:1-4

Disciplinary Referrals (DR's)

If your student misbehaves at school, he/she may be issued a detention. The student/parent will be notified by a slip of paper on which the teacher has written the student's name, the date, and why the detention was issued (i.e. chewing gum, running in the hallway, etc.) The student is to take the detention slip home to be signed by a parent, then bring it back to school and turn it back in to the teacher who issued it. In this way, parents are kept informed of any minor behavior issues. Students will serve after school for 35 minutes. We ask that you discuss any behaviors resulting in a detention with your student, helping them to understand why it was wrong and helping them devise ways to improve. At the same time, however, it's important that your son/daughter understand that no one is perfect, occasional mistakes are understood, and that Christ and parents/teachers are always willing to offer forgiveness. If a student receives an excessive number of detentions, parents will be notified and consequences may become more extreme. More serious misbehaviors will be handled as listed in the school handbook or at administrator discretion, and parents will be notified by telephone.

“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

Hebrews 12:11

Boyfriends/Girlfriends:

Students will begin to be more interested in the opposite sex, and many will want to “go out” with other students. We strongly discourage this practice, as the students are not emotionally mature enough to handle even these simple relationships. We encourage middle school students to become friends with the opposite sex, but not to take that next step into the world of boyfriends/girlfriends. Some students will also begin to want to go to dances; our philosophy is that middle school is too young for an activity which initiates physical contact between young people, and we will not sponsor nor endorse dances for middle school students. Group activities with parent supervision provide an appropriate social environment for young adolescents, allowing young people the opportunity to relate to the opposite sex as friends in a controlled setting. Our PTO sponsors many such fun after-school activities, including dodge-ball tournaments and “Minute To Win It” games, so encourage your son/daughter to participate in these age-appropriate activities.

“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem...do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready.”
Song of Solomon 2:7

Clothing (girls):

Appearance will begin to become very important to your daughter, and this again is a very normal part of growing up! However, many current styles popular with young ladies are blatantly immodest, either due to excessive tightness or the baring of stomachs, shoulders, and cleavage. We encourage you to stand firm regarding the clothing your daughter wears. Yes, she may protest (“but all the girls are wearing this!”); however, eventually she will appreciate that you care enough to protect her modesty, and you will be making it much easier for our Christian young men to keep their thoughts pure. There will be special days when uniforms are not required and on these days modesty is still expected. Our guideline for tops is to follow the “five finger rule:” when your daughter places her thumb along her breastbone, her top should be no lower than where her pinkie finger is. Skirts/shorts must reach the knees, and yoga pants/sweat pants are not allowed. We ask that these guidelines be followed at extracurricular school events as well.

“Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair and by wearing ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God’s sight.”

1 Peter 3:3-4

Media Influences & Social Technology:

Students at this age begin to grow much more interested in movies, television, and music. These forms of media can be wonderful opportunities for enjoyment and enlightenment when used properly; however, when used improperly or excessively they can be a detriment to your child’s growth and development. We strongly recommend that you limit the amount and monitor the content of the movies, television, and music to which your child is exposed. If vulgar language, violence, and immoral behavior are not appropriate in your home, your child should not be hearing/seeing them through the media either. Both www.pluggedinonline.com and www.christiananswers.net/spotlight provide detailed reviews of movies, music, TV shows, and video games from a Christian perspective to help you make wise choices regarding the media to which your child is exposed.

Another trend that is extremely popular among young people today is the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Students are blocked from using these sites at school, but we know many of our students have accounts, and many view the pages of their friends and others. The sites aren’t inherently bad, but parents and students do need to be cautious in the way they are used. Concerns include:

Spiritual While content your student posts on these sites may be harmless, that of others may not be. Some students' pictures and language are not in keeping with the values of CAI or your family, including profanity and sexual comments/photos. Our greatest concern is the spiritual hearts of our young people, and the prevalence of ungodliness on these sites is alarming.

Safety Students are posting pictures, personal identifying information such as their address, school, phone number, and plans/where they intend to be on a particular night. Even if your child does not have a site, it is possible that a friend has posted your child's name and picture on his/her site. Our children are naïve, trusting that the person viewing their site is another teen, and that the person with whom they are communicating is telling the truth. Therefore, posting or sharing this information seems harmless; however, these details are of great interest to sexual predators. There are hundreds of registered sex offenders in southern Indiana, and the media is full of stories of students in this area who have set up meetings with people they first "met" on the Internet, sometimes with disastrous results. There is no way to know if the person chatting with your child or viewing his/her pages is just another teenager or a predator with evil intent.

Addiction Many students spend hours on these sites, which is not emotionally or physically healthy for them.

Bullying Some students use these sites to make disparaging comments about others, in a format that is open for the world to read.

If you are concerned about this issue with your child, here are some suggestions.

- You can check the sites your child has gone to by clicking on the "History" icon on the top menu bar of your Internet browser. From there you can open the sites that he/she has visited, and click to open each of the blogs, pictures, friends, bulletins, inbox, etc. We recommend that you make it a habit to do this regularly.
- If your child has a separate account, you as the administrator can disable his/her password, enabling you to log on as him/her. We also recommend that you eliminate the "guest" feature, as it is a way children can by-pass all parental controls. Contact your Internet provider to find out how.
- It is a good idea to invest in software that will block inappropriate web sites; however, they don't automatically block these types of sites. You can choose to block specific sites yourself; contact your Internet provider to find out how.
- It's best not to place a computer in your child's bedroom or in an isolated part of your home. Access to the sites we've described, as well as pornography, is readily available; viewing these sites can have life-long consequences for your child. Ideally, the computer should be in a location where there is constant monitoring/traffic from other members of the family.
- We recommend spending time talking with your child, teaching him/her to be wise and responsible with Internet use and other technology. As Matthew says in chapter 10, verse 16, we and our children need to be "as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

If you choose to allow your child to have an account on a social networking site, we would encourage you to:

- Consider disabling his/her password and reviewing the site regularly; this will help to hold him/her accountable. If, while you're reviewing, you see any material that you find objectionable and/or unsafe, talk with and/or discipline your child as you see fit.

- Encourage your child to set the profile to “Private” so that the general public cannot view personal information on his/her site. This does not, however, guarantee anonymity. If your child sends messages to others who are not set to “Private,” his/her comments can be read.
- Explain why it’s important that your child only accept “friends” whom he/she personally knows.
- Make sure your child knows not to give out personal information, agree to meet someone met online, send pictures of him/herself to others, give out his/her password to anyone else (even friends.)
- Instruct your child to check with you before downloading or installing software or doing anything that could possibly damage your computer or jeopardize your family’s privacy.
- Continue to teach your children: teach your daughters that it is not appropriate to intentionally dress/post pictures that are immodest or provocative; teach your sons to be respectful to girls in the way that they talk to and about them; teach your children that sexual jokes/innuendos are not funny, and should not be made or laughed at; teach them that obscene language is offensive, and that substitution words are also inappropriate.

Your child is a precious responsibility which God has placed in your care, and therefore you do have the right to know what your child is doing. We pray that you will find nothing of concern as you investigate your child’s Internet use; if you do find inappropriate content, we pray that you will have the wisdom, discernment, and courage to do what is needed as you nurture your child into the adult God created him/her to be. If we can help you in any way with this process, please feel free to contact us.

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.”

Philippians 4:8

Inappropriate Actions From Other Students:

While we would hope that all of our students would reflect the qualities of Jesus at all times, we realize that this is not realistic. Although most of our students are Christians, they are not perfect and will make mistakes and bad choices. Generally when a child chooses to use inappropriate language or actions, it is done when there is no adult around. Therefore, the best way for these types of behaviors to be stopped is for the students themselves to stand up for righteousness. If your child hears another student cursing, gossiping, criticizing, etc., of course they should not join in, but we ask that they take things a step further and encourage them to speak up, saying “Hey, we don’t want to hear that.” This is not only great training for your child in speaking up for what is right, but will also be much more impacting for the offender, as they will often conform to peers more readily than teachers. If this does not change the behavior or if your child cannot bring him/herself to speak up, then please notify a teacher or administrator and we will make sure the issue is addressed.

“Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain are the righteous who give way before the wicked.”

Proverbs 25:26

Spiritual Development

Dr. James Dobson has stated that if a youngster has not committed his/her life to Christ by the time he/she leaves 8th grade, there is very little likelihood that it will happen. These middle years are such a crucial time in your child's spiritual development, and much care and thought should be given to nurturing his/her personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Your child will begin to develop his/her own faith rather than relying on yours, so be prepared for questions and possible doubts.

"Turn to me and be saved...for I am God, and there is no other."

Isaiah 45:22

"It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish."

Matthew 18:14

Staying Involved

Elementary school children love for mom and dad to be a part of what's happening at school; by middle school, this starts to change. Studies show, however, that children whose parents stay involved tend to do better in school. We strongly encourage parents to continue to be active partners with our school, and offer the following opportunities:

- Come to back-to-school night and other school events throughout the year; these are great opportunities to connect with each of your child's teachers
- Become involved in our PT0 (Parent-Teacher Organization)
- Contact teachers directly anytime you have a question or a concern. Every teacher has a phone and e-mail in the classroom, and they want to hear from you.
- Attend sports events, concerts, and field trips
- Assist with service projects or explorations classes
- Assist in the library or other area
- Assist with planning chapels
- Participate in a prayer group for parents
- Utilize the resources in our library

"...but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another..."

1 John 1:7

If a Problem Arises:

If a situation arises which causes you concern or dissatisfaction, please come talk with us! We truly want to know your concerns and opinions. If the issue is with one of your child's teachers or coaches, we ask that you first go talk with that teacher/coach. In most cases, this is all that is necessary to straighten things out. If after talking with the teacher/coach you still feel that this issue has not been resolved, please make an appointment to see the appropriate person in administration. In general, Mr. Wilson handles academic issues, Mr. Harper handles athletics, Miss Lindley handles discipline issues, and Mr. Arrell supervises teachers. If you still feel that the situation is unresolved after meeting with the administrator, please ask to set up a meeting with an additional administrator. Open communication between the home and the school is one of our best assets in helping students learn effectively!

"Do not speak against one another, brethren."

James 4:11

“If your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.”

Matthew 18: 15

Age Characteristics of Middle School Students

While God creates each child as a unique individual, there are some characteristics that are common at certain ages. The following paragraphs give general descriptions of children at ages 10 through 14; your child may or may not fit each category. Hopefully by reading through these descriptions you will realize that the things your family is experiencing are common to many families with middle school-age children. It may also help to see where your child is heading next – an uncooperative eleven-year old does change into a self-confident twelve-year old, and a moody thirteen-year old eventually does become an enthusiastic fourteen-year old!

Although some of these developmental stages call for compassion and understanding, children still should be held accountable for their actions and parents should hold firm on expectations regarding moral issues.

Age 10

Age ten is often referred to as the “Golden Age;” students are generally happy and seem to be in a state of equilibrium. They love and admire their parents/family, they love life, are enthusiastic and friendly. Fairness is important at this age – they try to be fair with others, and insist that others be fair with them. They like to be active, and prefer to be outdoors. Ten-year-olds can explode in anger and display hitting, kicking, and yelling, but these temper bursts are usually over quickly. Sudden bursts of affection are also shown. There is some sibling conflict, especially with those a little younger. Youngsters of this age like to try many different things, but only on the surface; they don’t get deeply involved in most of these activities. They like to help people and animals, love being with friends, like to collect things, and like to belong to clubs and organizations. Academically, they are good at memorizing things, but are still developing the ability to find insights into why. They don’t want to be singled out for praise – they want to be as good as their classmates, but not better. They don’t want to be the best or the worst.

Age 11

At age eleven, children move into a stage of disequilibrium; they are generally very oppositional and egocentric. They are more likely to be uncooperative and argumentative, sensitive and proud. They are generally energetic, and can become fidgety. Eleven-year-olds often exaggerate the negatives, and focus on excessive worries and fears. At this time they may develop tics or resume bedwetting, possibly because they feel scared and out of control. This is an age of extremes – they either love things or hate them, and this can change very quickly. They have a tendency to become more violent, with kicking, screaming, and hitting not unusual. Emotions are usually on edge; they cry easily, even over trivial things, especially when they are tired or angry. They don’t know why they fight and cry, and this is scary to them. They set high standards for others, and can be very critical. This trait is often at its worst with mothers, as children of this age may be resistant and rebellious towards them. However, they are mannerly away from home, and generally don’t even see or understand the turmoil they cause. They exist in the “now” without advance thought or planning. It can be helpful to leave reminder notes for them in logical places to assist them through this stage, and to break long-term projects into small manageable tasks. Young people begin to eat a lot at this age. They tend to want to spend time with the family, even if they don’t get along. They are generally afraid to be alone due to vague fears of burglars or

kidnappings, so they prefer to spend their free time with the family in a common room. They are also afraid of being teased or getting hurt feelings. They are competitive, and want to be the best – not just an athlete, but in the NBA; not just an actress, but a star. They tend to work best if they are motivated from within, rather than having demands come from someone else. Allow them some choices – list several acceptable options, and let them make a choice. Another strategy is to list what you want, then have them list how they can comply. It is important that they get regular unstructured time for play and sports. They also need affection – they’re rebelling against uncertainty and the complexities in their lives, not against their parents or authority figures. Children do have a tendency to begin stealing and lying at this age – it’s best to frighten them with stiff consequences. Realize that the rudeness they display at this age is temporary, and they will move away from it. As unpleasant as it may be, young people must go through this stage in order to grow and develop properly.

Age 12

Twelve-year-olds are emotionally stable, capable of calm, smooth relationships. They are self-contained, self-confident, and self-reliant. They have achieved a new level of comfort and security; they can allow others to make mistakes, and are generally tolerant, sympathetic, and friendly. They are more in control of themselves, and more thoughtful. They view their parents objectively and tolerantly and generally get along with them, but they do begin to pull away from family activities. Children of this age are interested in others, not just themselves. They begin to enlarge their circle of friends, to meet their changing tastes and interests. When they are in a group, they can egg each other into doing things they normally wouldn’t; this is where having a strong family identity can be a huge help. The girls begin to get romantic, but the boys are still more interested in horsing around and eating. They can take the blame if they do things that are wrong, and believe that if they are too good, the other kids won’t like them. They want to be even with their peers – not better, not worse. Appearance is important to them, and they want to follow the crowd. They have a great deal of energy and enthusiasm, but there is usually no middle ground – they either love or hate something/someone. Physically, they experience a burst of activity, and then need time to recover. What appears to be aimless fooling around is okay, as this is probably their recovery time. They also experience short periods of extreme fatigue – this is normal, and parents should strive to put few demands on them during these times. They tend to eat a lot, with many periods of snacking. Most skip breakfast, and are consequently starving by mid-morning. Mementos are important to this age group – they love to save pictures, ticket stubs, and articles; a bulletin board can be a great collecting place for these items. They are reasonably good at working, as they realize it needs to be done properly. Sometimes they need a push to get going, but usually don’t argue. They are motivated by money, not competition. Both boys and girls enjoy creative expression through art and painting, and they like writing letters, having pen pals, and sending postcards. They also like organized projects; summer camp is great for twelve-year-olds. They like variety and change, not routine.

Age 13

Thirteen is a time of slowing down, withdrawing; they are generally uncommunicative and uncertain. They tend to withdraw from the family, both physically and emotionally. They are described as moody, sensitive, sad, sour, thoughtful, quiet, morose, secretive, suspicious, unfriendly, unhappy, and aloof. Their budding personalities are fragile and half-formed, and need to be protected; they are not secure enough for scrutiny. Generally dissatisfied with themselves, they are also highly critical of their mothers. Don’t take it personally! It is great if dads can step in and take the more active role in raising sons at this age, allowing mothers to support and encourage rather than discipline. They will complain that they’re not understood, but if you show that you understand it makes them mad. They are not sociable with adults, and tend to be less involved with teachers even if they do like them. They don’t confide in their parents, and don’t want parents fighting their battles. They enjoy independent and challenging projects, keep themselves extremely busy, and set high standards for themselves and others. Parents are encouraged to respect their need for privacy and isolation – it is not a personal slight, just a developmental characteristic. They are becoming more sure of their own likes/dislikes, and don’t feel a

need to follow the crowd as much as they did in the past. They need reminders to do things – they generally don't argue, but will claim "just a minute." If they have large projects to do, they will generally wait until the last minute. They may get mad at teachers with or without just cause. They may display this by acting aggressively towards the teacher or doing/believing the opposite of what the teacher says. Fairness is important to them, and they worry a lot. Because they are sensitive, their feelings get hurt easily; it's important that parents be tactful with them. They like to hang out after school and to compete in things that matter to them, but they are selective in what they participate. They can become passionate about their particular interests, and don't generally get too disturbed if they lose at competitions. There is a renewed focus on intellect and words. Boys tend to have several best friends, and they enjoy doing things together. Girls are usually friends in threes, and they enjoy talking with each other.

Age 14

Fourteen-year-olds generally begin to blossom. They are filled with energy and excitement, enthusiasm and good will. They will attempt anything, and they like to be busy. They thrive on a varied program. Both parents are criticized; generally this is because they are still forming their own identity, and they believe it reflects on them if their parents are embarrassing. They do, however, still love, need, and want their parents. They have a tendency to feel entitled and be demanding with family members, but outside the family they are bubbly, energetic, and lively. They tend to have a crowd of friends, with little jockeying or jealousy within the group. They want to be like others, not too different from their friends, but with their own individual style. Instead of criticizing teachers, they will criticize the administration, the system, or the school. They are trying to make their own decisions, independent of their parents and friends. They are generally more secure, and not as defensive as they were at thirteen.

Some information for this handbook has been taken from:

Day One and Beyond by Rick Wormeli; Stenhouse Publishers, Portland, Maine; 2003
Meet Me in the Middle by Rick Wormeli; Stenhouse Publisher, Portland, Maine; 2001
"Moving Right Along" by the Parent Institute, Fairfax Station, VA, 2002
This We Believe by the National Middle School Association; Westerville, Ohio; 2003
What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know by Trudy Knowles and Dave Brown; Heinemann Publishing, Portsmouth, New Hampshire; 2000
Your 10- to 14-Year-Old by Dr. Louise Bates Ames; Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing, New York; 1988.

We pray blessings on you and your family during these exciting years, and encourage you to enjoy and appreciate the unique child that God has given you!

"Finally brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

2 Corinthians 13:11