



Blue Sky Pediatrics Asheville

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Newsletter

helping with school transitions



Transitioning from Elementary School to Middle School

Middle school means change for both the student and the parent. Your child is going from being one of the oldest kids at school to one of the youngest. They might be taking classes or doing activities with eighth graders who seem a million times bigger. Remind your child that these "big kids" were once the youngest kid just like them. Remind your child that if they find themselves in a situation where older students are using their size or status to bully, they should tell a member of the school staff. Because of the courses and activities in middle school, differences between people might become a little more obvious. Encourage your child to ask questions from teachers, counselors, coaches and office staff as they find their way around their new surroundings. Parents should understand that their middle-schoolers will be going through many emotional, physical and intellectual spurts. Not all are always appreciated by the adults. Children will start "pushing the envelope" to see what boundaries the school and the parent will set. This is natural. Peers will have as much, if not more, impact on youngsters' social lives as the parents. Almost everything that was normal in the past will change during this time. Most students will go from having one main teacher to having several main teachers. Your child will also probably struggle with the locks on their lockers in a busy hallway between classes. You can help with this transition by purchasing a combination lock before the school year begins and have your child spend time trying to open the lock. Remember that your student may not need as large a backpack as before since they will have the availability of a locker to store their things. Keep backpacks simple. The more the backpack can hold, the more a middle school student will place in it. Smaller backpacks allow for better organization. The cafeteria can be louder and harder to find friends to sit with during lunch. Remind your child that a new school and a new student body is a great opportunity to learn about different people and to make new friends. The amount of homework can increase dramatically. Check the school website for homework assignments. If your child is having academic difficulties, contact the teacher by email. Email is a quick way to communicate and missing homework assignments might sometimes be sent as an attachment in an email. Your child will also have many more choices of extra curricular activities. Encourage your child to explore as many clubs and activities as they can. It doesn't matter who they are or what they're interested in, getting involved is the best way to make lasting friends and truly learn what their new school has to offer. The most important thing you can do to help your child during this transition is to teach them to be prepared and to be responsible. This is a great time to teach your child to get organized. Their school life will be much easier if they develop a system for keeping track of their schoolwork and belongings. Encourage them to create a binder and/or folder for each class so they can easily find what they need. This can also be a time of anxious transition for the parents. There is usually no longer a need for room mothers at the middle school level. Not to mention that some middle school students don't want to be seen with their parents at school. This doesn't mean that the parent should disconnect with their child's school life. Students need their parents even more at the middle school level. The parenting approach just needs to change with the growing child. You can stay connected by volunteering at the school. Middle schools usually need chaperones for dances and field trips. The school staff might also need help with fundraising and tutoring. Even though transitioning from elementary school to the middle school can be traumatic for the student and the parents, if you are both prepared their will be less tears and anxiety.

Transitioning from Middle School to High School

The move from middle to high school is one of those times when your child needs you most, but is often too embarrassed to ask for support. You may have noticed that your child is starting to push away from you. Try to respect this. On the other hand, it is important to balance a respect for your child's desire for independence with a very real need to stay involved in his life and education. The social and emotional fears that incoming freshmen deal with can have a direct impact on their academic performance. It is important to keep the lines of communication open with your child throughout this period. Although your child is becoming independent, he needs support during the process that only you, as a parent, can provide. One way to spend time with your child and get to know his friends is to suggest that he invite friends over to watch movies or hang out. As the kids drift in and out of the kitchen for snacks, take the opportunity to ask your child's friends casual, non-intrusive questions to get a sense of who they are and to send your child the message that you care. Encourage your child to fully enjoy their high school experience. If they feel pressured to do something they feel is wrong, advise them to talk to you, a friend, or a counselor. If they are not succeeding academically, they can find a tutor or someone to help them improve. If they feel isolated, they can join a school club, play a sport, or make new friends. The middle school and high school years are challenging times that require a little extra support from mom and dad.

