

# Middle School Matters!

A Guide for **STUDENTS**  
on Middle School Transition



**Moving Up to Middle School** is an exciting time because you have finally completed elementary school. On the other hand, you will no longer be one of the oldest kids at school but one of the youngest. In fourth or fifth grade, you will begin to participate in school activities offered by administrators, counselors, teachers, media specialists, or local business people that will help answer questions you have regarding middle school. These activities will help you develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be successful as you transition from elementary school to middle school. Some questions you may have are: “How much homework will I get and how do I get help if I need it?”; “What do I do if I see bullying or am bullied?”; “How do I make new friends?”; and, “How are the school rules different?”



This booklet will help answer these questions by spotlighting five important topics:

- **Making New Friends**
- **Having Time for Everything**
- **Classes and Grades**
- **Growing and Changing**
- **What Do I Want to Be When I Grow Up?**

Upon entry into middle school, it is common to be bombarded with changes that may overwhelm you. You are in a new building, meeting new people and your body is growing. If you don't learn how to cope with these changes, then they could affect your ability to adjust, therefore influencing your relationships with others or your academic achievement. Continue reading to learn more about what you can do to make sure you have a successful transition into middle school.



**Making New Friends** is one of the many experiences you will have in middle school. Due to the variety of courses and activities in middle school, differences between you and your peers become more obvious. You will probably notice kids who are great in academics, some who excel on the playing field, and others who are into the arts. Sometimes people form “cliques” or groups based on what they have in common. Make sure your group doesn’t exclude other kids for unimportant reasons. Another part of middle school is learning how to manage your emotions in a positive way without taking everything personally. Sometimes this means asking for help in adjusting to relationships or working on a solution yourself. For example, you may experience a group project that is not completed on time because of a group member not doing their part. Even though you may ask a family member, teacher, or counselor for help, they might decide to give you time to think about it first and make a decision about how to handle the situation and work out a solution on your own.

### Trying New Things

- Introduce yourself to the other students in your class
- Become involved in clubs, sports, band/chorus/drama
- Volunteer your time in something that interests you
- Try doing more on your own

### Understanding New Attitudes

- Share and appreciate your differences with other students
- Watch out for intense emotions
- Ask for privacy
- Manage anger/stress by talking to a family member, getting active or meditating

**Having time for everything** you want to do throughout the day, week, or month without feeling overwhelmed will require that you develop time management skills. Now is the time to begin keeping a good homework and activities calendar so you don't feel constantly behind. You will have to find a balance between what you have to do and what you want to do. Consider what the consequences will be if you decide not to study for a math test and watch a movie instead. Try creating a "Possible Consequences" list to help you make these decisions. Expect to work daily on homework and long-term projects. Remember your family's rules about when to be home and how much time you can watch TV or use the computer. During the summer before you begin middle school, try to attend a middle school transition camp or another offered activity to become familiar with your new building and your class schedule. Make it a goal to meet other new students while you are there.

### How To Organize Your Day

- Get to school/class on time
- Find your locker and learn your way around school
- Discover if your schedule will change daily/weekly
- Use a homework and activities calendar
- Work on the difficult assignments first
- Take a break and have fun







**Classes and Grades** will determine what you are supposed to learn in middle school and how well you succeed in learning the material. Students are required to take the following classes: *English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies*. You may also have the opportunity to take *Physical Education, Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education* or *World Languages*. Make it a goal to meet all of your teachers during middle school transition opportunities. Review all homework and grading requirements and, if necessary, ask your teacher for additional help before/after school. Stay informed about any elective courses that might be available for you to choose based on your personal interests and career goals.

### **Making the Grade**

- Understand the grade requirements
- Raise your hand, ask questions, and seek help when needed
- Expect more homework
- Know that incomplete homework will affect your grade
- Attend class every day
- Be prepared for every class
- Stay well rested and fueled for each day





**Growing and Changing** will occur during the next few years. Girls start changing physically between the ages of 8 to 13. Physical changes in boys begin, on average, two years later. Your brain develops even faster during this time as well. You will find that one day you and your parents get along just fine and the next day it may be completely opposite. Another day your pants fit just fine and the next day they will be too short. You may begin sleeping later on the weekends. Do not worry, this is all part of normal development. It is a natural process, embrace it and plan accordingly. Take time to find out who you are. Don't hesitate to ask a family member to listen when you need help solving problems or have a new idea to share.

### **Brain and Body Changes**

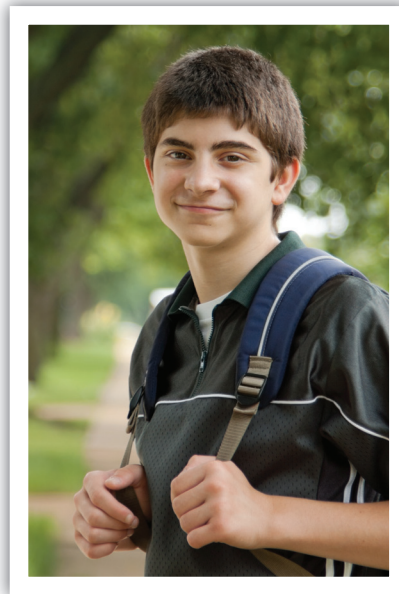
- Think before you act
- Use what you know to solve a problem
- Realize that body changes are natural
- Ask questions about changes you do not understand
- Address the new physical and mental responsibilities that come with puberty



**What I Want to Be When I Grow Up** is a question parents and teachers have asked you to think about since you were a small child. There are several things you may do in school to prepare you for a future job. They are: attending a school career day; researching different types of jobs; making good grades; or working in groups. During this time, you are able to gain knowledge about the nature of work and begin to form ideas about future career goals. School counselors or advisors will help you discover what your interests are by giving you a survey to complete during class. Ask your family to help you create an individual graduation plan based on your career goals.

### **Thinking Past Middle School – What I Want to Be**

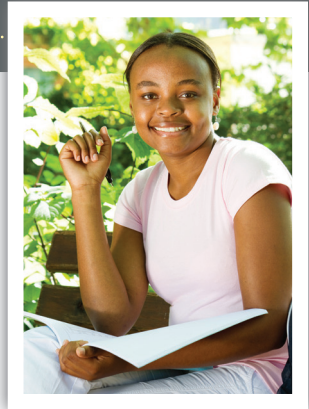
- Discover who you are
- Determine where you want to go
- Make a plan to get there
- Visit a family member's or friend's workplace
- Take classes that can prepare you for your career interests
- Use computer Websites like [www.GACollege411.org](http://www.GACollege411.org) to help



# How Do I Become Involved In My School?

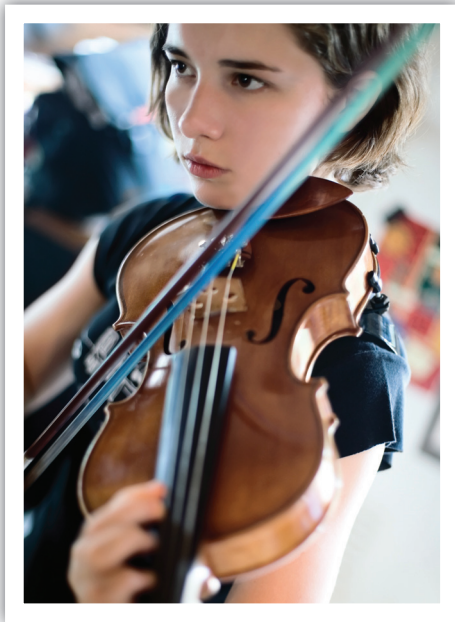
It is important to make the most of your middle school years by taking advantage of all the new opportunities for self-discovery and growth. Check out the ideas below for some ways to help get you started on the right path.

- **Find your spark and let it be known.** Discover what interests you by taking advantage of all the learning opportunities available in middle school. Try new things to discover what motivates you. Share your passion with your parents, school staff, and friends so they can support your goals.
- **Explore student clubs and activities.** Join the football or soccer team, become a member of the Spanish or chess club, attend a dance, play an instrument in the band, sing in the choir, or explore an afterschool program. Ask your school counselor or teacher about how to find out what is offered at your school and ways you can get involved.
- **Put school activities on your family calendar.** Look in your student handbook for a copy of the school calendar and put important dates on your family's calendar. Add test dates and project deadlines, as well as other events that come up throughout the year such as sporting events, club meetings, or dances that you want to attend.
- **Participate in student leadership opportunities.** Decide to run for a seat on the student council or as an officer in one of the school clubs. Student leaders have unique opportunities to bring problems, concerns, and ideas to the faculty or administration of your school. If you do not want to run, consider what other leadership roles you can take within organizations outside of your school, such as your place of worship or afterschool program.





- **Ask questions regularly.** Learn as much as you can in middle school by taking the opportunity to ask questions about anything and everything. This will ensure you are knowledgeable and well prepared for important decisions that will be made later in life.
- **Meet new people.** Introduce yourself to other students who are in your classes, try to sit with different people at lunch, or make it a goal to meet someone new each week. You do not have to be best friends with everyone, but it will sharpen your social skills and help you build a positive reputation.
- **Join a mentoring program.** Talking with a trusted adult other than your parents, or an older student, can be a great way to learn about maintaining positive relationships, discovering college and career opportunities, enhancing problem-solving skills, increasing self-esteem, and developing strategies for conflict resolution.





## Visit Our Partners for More Information about Middle School Transition

Georgia Afterschool Investment Council  
[www.afterschoolga.org](http://www.afterschoolga.org)

Georgia Department of Education  
[www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org)

Georgia Family Connection Partnership  
[www.gafcp.org](http://www.gafcp.org)

Georgia Parental Information  
and Resource Center (PIRC)  
[www.cisga.org](http://www.cisga.org)

Georgia Parent Teacher Association (PTA)  
[www.georgiapta.org](http://www.georgiapta.org)

United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta  
[www.smartstartga.org](http://www.smartstartga.org) and [www.uwma.org](http://www.uwma.org)