

## Fact Sheet/Tips:

# FACT SHEET/TIPS: TRANSITION TO AND FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Change is difficult for everyone. Gathering information and preparing for change can help alleviate anxiety. For adolescents one of the most difficult changes is transitioning to a new school. This transition happens from elementary to middle school and then again quickly from middle to high school. Here are some facts and tips to help prepare students, parents, and teachers for this transition.

### Facts about the Transition to and from Middle School:

- The students and parents have mixed feelings of excitement, worry, anticipation, and resistance.
- The students are going through puberty and changing physically and emotionally.
- The school environment is larger and more confusing.
- The students change classes for different subjects exposing them to a larger variety of teachers, classes, and students.
- The students are allowed and expected to appropriately handle increased independence and display more self-motivation.
- The grading standards change to letter grades and students/families are expected to access grades, homework, and information through the school computer system.
- The teachers are responsible to teach, grade, and keep track of more students.
- The students feel increased social opportunities and social anxieties. Being part of a group and fitting in is very important in middle and high school.
- Students who are in special education can be subject to social isolation and bullying.
- Academic course curriculum moves faster and academic performance expectations are higher.
- Students have more homework requirements
- The students receive personal interaction from the teachers.
- Classroom curriculum relies largely on printed text and is not easily accessible to some students with sensory, physical, emotional, or cognitive disabilities who need alternative ways of accessing and processing information.

### Utah Parent Center

230 West 200 South  
Suite 1101  
Salt Lake City, UT 84101  
801.272.1051  
1.800.468.1160  
info@utahparentcenter.org  
www.utahparentcenter.org



## Tips For Parents/Students:

- Follow your child's lead...give them as much information prior to the transition that they are comfortable with and can handle.
- Give your student information and exposure to the next step gradually. Consider casual opportunities such as attending a concert or game at the school.
- Request to meet the teacher/principal and arrange a tour for you and your student to walk through the new school the spring before the transition.
- If not offered, request a transition meeting early in the spring to discuss the transition with the school team to help prepare your student.
- Ask to visit the school in the summer prior to school starting to show your child's specific locker and classrooms.
- Take advantage of summer programs — academic or recreational — offered at the new school. Your child will get the feel for the campus in a much more relaxed atmosphere.
- Get a copy of your child's class schedule and mark the location of their locker and each classroom and bathroom on the school map. Tape both of these inside their binder. If your child has trouble reading maps, walk the route between classes with them — more than once, if necessary — and note landmarks that the student can use to navigate.
- Prepare a short 1-2 page fact sheet about your student's areas of strengths, struggles, learning style, and motivators and give it to the teacher(s).
- Once school is in session, email each teacher to introduce yourself and student. Let them know your student has an IEP/504 and include it if you have it. Also include the fact sheet. Request a reply so you know they received it.
- Ask how your student will access the general curriculum and what adaptations/modifications can be present if needed.
- Encourage teachers to continue using strategies that have worked for your child in the past, such as writing homework assignments on the board, or assigning your child a "homework buddy" they can contact if they forget their assignments. If the school has a homework hotline, make sure your child knows how to use it.
- Practice with your student any new skills that will be needed such as opening a padlock, carrying a backpack, etc.
- Find out the length of the passing period between classes. Time it out for your child. Demonstrate how far they can walk in that amount of time.
- Obtain a copy of the student handbook. Review rules and requirements — especially the school's code of conduct, which describes consequences for violations of the most important rules. Ask the school staff questions about anything that's unclear.
- Create a relationship with school counselor if appropriate.
- Reach each disclosure document carefully. Make sure you understand grading process in each class. Look for the best way to communicate with the teacher.
- Help your student be his or her own advocate. Encourage the student to discuss problems and solutions with teachers on their own, but be ready to step in and help as needed.
- Encourage your student to ask questions and clarify things they don't understand. Find out about extra help like after school tutoring.
- Explore the school website with your student including the school's homework website or homework hotline. Use it to double-check their class assignments.

- Seek parental involvement at the school. Attend orientation, parent conferences, and join parent groups in the school such as the School Community Council and the PTA.
- Stay involved with your student. Work to maintain an open, communicative relationship during these formative years.
- Maintain a calm and positive outlook about the transition.
- Talk about social skills. Discuss how words and actions can affect other people.
- Find out what student groups, clubs, athletics, extracurricular activities are available and explore them with your student. Get student involved in activities to help encourage relationship building.
- Encourage your student to try new things, become involved with the student body, and foster their independence.
- Encourage your child to join group conversations. Discuss how to join in without interrupting and to add something relevant to a conversation in progress. Practice this important social skill.
- Talk about and practice traits that make a good friend (such as being a good listener).
- Practice skills needed for difficult social situations.
- Remind your child to make eye contact when speaking or listening.
- Help your student with time management skills. Work together on a schedule for study time, break time, chores, etc.
- Begin to learn about and prepare for the next transitions to high school and out of high school. Investigate what the school offers and seek out parent education from the Utah Parent Center.

### Tips for Teachers:

- Personally email or send an orientation letter home before school starts. Provide information such as the schedule, time and day to report to school, transportation information, where the student will meet the teacher upon arrival, classroom rules, and contact info for teacher, principal, and counselor.
- Communicate as much as possible with your students' families. Use a variety of methods: email, phone, notes, etc.
- Provide a basic communication sheet that goes home and back to school daily or weekly.
- Meet with the student/family before school dismisses for the summer and again in the fall after school begins (group orientation for new students).
- Tour the new student and family around school showing them classrooms, lockers, bathrooms, and common areas they will be using.
- Explain the logistics of the classroom and school with new students and their families. Provide details on the daily structure like transportation, class schedule, and lunch procedures.
- Appoint a teacher or peer buddy to help with transition.
- Foster good relationships and friendships. Do not isolate the students from the student body.

### Resources:

- Middle School Transition Tips for Parents: [www.greatschools.org/pdfs/trans\\_midschool\\_adults.pdf](http://www.greatschools.org/pdfs/trans_midschool_adults.pdf)
- Smoothing your child's transition to Middle School [www.greatschools.org/special-education/health/980-smoothing-your-childs-transition-to-middle-school.gs?page=all](http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/health/980-smoothing-your-childs-transition-to-middle-school.gs?page=all)
- Middle School Transition Tips for Kids: [www.greatschools.org/pdfs/trans\\_midschool\\_kids.pdf](http://www.greatschools.org/pdfs/trans_midschool_kids.pdf)
- Universal Design for Learning and the Transition to a more Challenging Academic Curriculum: Making it in Middle School and Beyond: [www.pacer.org/publications/parentbriefs/ParentBrief\\_Apr05.pdf](http://www.pacer.org/publications/parentbriefs/ParentBrief_Apr05.pdf)
- Successful Strategies for Middle and High School Inclusion [www.pealcenter.org/middleschoolseries.html](http://www.pealcenter.org/middleschoolseries.html)