

DISCOVERY... this is the Upside Down world of Middle School!
Sara Sloves, Parent Coordinator, got advice from 7th and 8th graders. The are wise!

Routine... have one! At home, morning and evening.

- ★ Breakfast (home or at school)
- ★ Backpack: adults, you are the boss of the backpack. Empty out, help organize, etc.
- ★ Planner Planner Planner!
- ★ Phone (school - locker; home - usage, boundaries, off at bed-time/before bed-time)
- ★ Dinner - as family (how ever that is configured) as much as possible given schedule
- ★ SLEEP (many students report having trouble getting enough sleep or managing their time.

SCHOOL- Parents: Knowledge is helpful!

- ★ Use Jupiter Ed, Check the website
- ★ Know your child's schedule, class section, HR teacher

SELF-AWARENESS & "WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER"

Your work & studies:

- ★ Students, where and how you do your work best. (At school? Home? Partner? Solo?)
- ★ Know what distracts you, what helps you, doing at a table, common area at home, room?

Behavior: These ups and downs, this moodiness is normal..

- ★ It's key as to how we cope with and navigate these that will help us support each other.
- ★ **Come up with strategies...** perhaps "detente time" / "safe space" when/where you do a shared activity (good food, movie, etc.), putting things aside "for now!"

Independence: learning from mistakes, areas of struggle.

- ★ Learning how to ask for help, who you think is most helpful to you or easy to approach/responsive.
- ★ Students advocating for themselves, writing to teachers, asking them when they are available to come see outside of class when needed. Develop agency and active choices.

Fun: Having some unstructured, fun, free and easy time! Stress relief, dates with your kids where they don't feel pressured.

Empathy is a great foundation for both students and their adults to embrace. Of course you have it! But there are moments when we ALL need to remind ourselves to tap into it. (Parents, you work hard!)

BUILDING RESILIENCE

This is key in all stages of life, but especially right now as students approach and enter adolescence, begin to consider high school, face more complex life choices and more challenging academic and creative work in school.

- ★ **Making Connections** - friends, family, educators, mentors
- ★ **Helping Others** - this gives back to one's community and it's rewarding and empowering to all.
- ★ **Routine...** manage expectations for yourself, and work within that, at times around it, and change as needed. But create a map for yourself!
- ★ **Breaks!** Creative time, de-stress, have fun, just BE... wonder and wander! De -digitize now and then!
- ★ **Self-care:** a life skill we all need to re-visit, revise, enact! Food, water, exercise, sleep, meditation, play, whatever it is that helps you feel healthy, energetic and strong.
- ★ **GOALS:** steps to building toward goals, or working backwards from them. Break it down so it doesn't feel so huge or daunting. Small, doable goals help us build confidence and momentum, and help us realize that we CAN DO IT!
- ★ **Positive Self Regard:** Build on your strengths. It's easy to "compare and despair"... We may perceive someone's life as "better" or see them as better looking, smarter, more talented... whatever it is, *you have your strengths*, you have your areas that need work.

Recognize what you want to work on, but embrace your positive attributes and build on those.

If you have trouble identifying those, ask for help from someone you trust. We can build each other up!

- ★ **CHANGE:** this is part of living. It is exciting, scary, sometimes painful, often full of joy and discovery. Stay curious, and know that when things change and you feel uncomfortable or scared, that is NORMAL. Embrace this, talk about it as needed, and enjoy growing up because you get to be YOU!
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FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES! Pearls of Wisdom from 7th and 8th graders

The following section is advice from 7th and 8th graders. It re-states some of the above in their own, eloquent words, and from a place of experience, compassion, and a willingness and desire to help and support others in our community!

I tried to cluster their responses by topic, more or less.

Backpack, locker, organizing, help...

- ★ Get a hw buddy and walking buddy. Overuse your planner. Write down everything and anything. (O.)
- ★ Always get your backpack ready the night before. (M.)
- ★ Keep things in your locker. (L.)
- ★ Don't be afraid to ask for help and keep you backpack organized and always write down everything in your planner. (M.)
- ★ I think you should remember to talk about organizations in how being organized really can help you be less stressed. (S1.)
- ★ ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS put notebooks and folders ,etc you don't need or else your book bag will weigh a ton. (E.)
- ★ Never feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to ask for your friends, teachers, peer leaders, and parents for help with anything. (S2.)
- ★ Always ask a teacher for help and go to them because the teachers here are here to help you succeed and not feel uncomfortable. If you don't want to go by yourself you can ask a friend of yours to come. If that friend does not want to come then go anyway because you gain more if you go than if you did not. Teachers don't want you to struggle. (B.)
- ★ Hard times, Homework Planning, Going in at lunch to go to teacher/s for help. Talk with family if you ever feel like slacking off or if you want to skip a lunch meeting. Definitely talk you your parents about how they can support you and if you have any problems in class you can set up a meeting as a family with a teacher to talk and if you don't want to then have a family meeting. After all this lets face it, YOU ARE SUPPORTED IN EVERYWAY AND HAVE CHOICES BUT IT IS UP TO YOU TO MAKE THOSE CHOICES.(B.)
- ★ For some kids, middle school can be a stressful time for young students but, all of your parents? Every single one of them survived middle school. You will too.

Some tips for middle school are: don't stress. Keep yourself organized. Don't be scared or nervous to ask people for help. (A.)

Friends...

- ★ I would definitely say that you should try your hardest to make new **Friends**, because For me, making new friends really helped me, and made me happier in general to kind of branch out and not just stay with the same friends from my elementary school. (S1.)
- ★ After school and lunch clubs are a good way to meet people.(L.)
- ★ I thought of something else you could mention to the sixth grade families! I realized that one way I made a lot of new friends at the beginning of middle school, was through afterschool activities. I think it's a great way for the students to get to know each other, and to make more friends. I thought that maybe you could mention that to the parents. Just wanted to throw it out there! (N1.)

- ★ 6th grade was pretty hard for me, I was expected to be a certain way by different people, I felt like I was living two different lives. I didn't know who I was. Before you make cliques, and groups of friends, *if there is ever a moment where you need to slow down, and breath, and remember who you are, take it, take the moment, because there won't be many chances to stop.*

Middle school goes so fast, friendships, tests, lessons, everything is so fast, and honestly, hard to keep up with sometimes. Keep your head up, don't be afraid to raise your hand, if you have NO IDEA how to deal with Spanish, then talk to your teacher, they will understand. All of you are doing great! (J.)

- ★ make sure that when it comes to work and studying that you do it before hanging out with friends. (I.)
- ★ Don't forget who you are and stay true to yourself. Peer pressure is real but try not to let it get to you!(M2)
- ★ My schedule has changed a lot since sixth grade. When I started Middle School, I wasn't worried about all my activities. But when I got homework, did after school activities, and didn't get a lot of sleep, it was hard to keep up. There are a lot of activities that I love to do but don't let it pile up on you like I did. Make sure that you can **balance** it with all your school work. (N1.)
- ★ I learned that you, entering middle school will be applying to high schools sooner than you think, so every class matters.(N2)

A lot of great points by an 8th grader, P.:

- ★ **1) If you want something to happen at school, you have to chase after it.** For example, if you want a teacher to change a grade in Jupiter for a critical thinking response, then you have to send that teacher an email. If they still don't fix your grade, then make an appointment to go up at lunch and argue your grade up (some teachers let you do this!) Teachers are always happy to hear you out and to help you in any way, but in order to get that advice, you have to work and chase it down. Don't expect teachers to come to you, you have to approach your teacher. At the end of the day, you will be happy that you did!

2) Don't be worried about knowing everything about the way that The Computer School works, or the expectations of every single class. Try your best (always) and check in every once in a while to make sure that you understand what you're learning. And remember, everyone else (even the 7th and 8th graders) are still learning too. We DON'T know everything there is to know about our school, but we will be happy to give you tips for success!

3) Manage your work and grades by checking Jupiter often for missing assignments or grades that you want to improve. This is a really good strategy because by the time the marking period is over, you won't have any work to make up. Instead you'll have strong examples of your best work. Email your teachers when you are unsure about a grade. And remember that you have others resources at your disposal as well (Google Classroom and your classmates).

4) Make a Peer Leader friend. Peer leaders are 8th graders who wear a green bracelet at school or who visit 6th and 7th grade homerooms every week to give helpful tips and advice. Peer leaders are trained in everything from helping out students when they are having a bad day to tutoring. I'm a peer leader, and I think that I speak for all of us when I say that we are really excited when another student asks for our very wise peer leader advice. We are a friendly face, someone to sit with at lunch, someone to work on tricky math homework with, and someone to say hi to in the hallway. We also help students with time management skills as well as other helpful skills to get through middle school alive! We volunteer at many of the events around school. So say hi the next time you see us in the hallways, and remember that we are there if you need any help at all.

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R.'s 4 key points:

- ★ Always make sure to do homework and go to bed on time.
- ★ Don't be afraid to make friends.
- ★ Go to Tea Magic, it solves all of your problems.
- ★ Don't be around those who make you uncomfortable.

Email:

- ★ I think I should absolutely tell the cs parents that the computer school really wants their students to communicate with their teachers via email instead of the parents doing it. (N2)
- ★ Remind parents that their child can contact any adult or peer leader through emails or in person. They are here to help. (M3)
- ★ Make sure that their children are also checking their emails and managing their time correctly. (A.)
- ★ It's really important to keep track of emails so that you know about the events coming up at CS. Absolutely talk to your parents about parent teacher conferences, or about other events coming up that you would like to attend. I like to tell my parents about the school trips that are planned for my grade because sometimes we have to self dismiss. Talk to your parents if you are having trouble managing your time, and also explain the grading system to them (you can't really get a 4 at the beginning of 6th grade because that would mean that you need to be moved up to 7th grade, which isn't possible because you don't know all the 6th grade material). And remember that they were in middle school too once, and they are happy to share any advice. (also from P.)

PHONE and SLEEP

★ --Know your kid. That's rule number one when it comes to phones.

--But rule number two is that you have to remember that your kid is only 11 or 12. They don't know everything, they don't know how to stay safe on the internet, and they might not know what they can and can't do on their phones. Tell them. Talk to them about staying safe on the internet, what information is appropriate and allowed to be shared about their personal lives, and what to do about cyber bullying.

--Rule number three is to remind your kid that if someone ever texts/snaps them something mean to them or to someone else, they just shouldn't respond. Don't respond, screen-shot it, and tell them to go to a trusted adult for help if the problem needs to be addressed. While you should not try to frighten your child into being super careful on the internet, remind them that EVERYTHING can be traced back to their name, even after they've deleted it and cleared their history. Cyber bullying or using the internet inappropriately has very severe consequences. Those things can get recorded and sent to high schools and colleges. So monitor their phone usage, check in on them every once in a while, and keep in mind that while you definitely, definitely do have the right to scroll through their texts occasionally, remember that their phone also belongs to them, and that in the same way that they respect your boundaries, you should respect theirs.

--At the end of the day, it is important to think about why you got your child their phone: to be safe and to be used as a tool. Build clear guidelines from there. *(all of the above also from P!)*

★ --Sleep is very important in middle school

Usually what's stopping someone from going to sleep is their phone. What parents can do is come up with a compromise and a plan for the child's phone time in middle school. For example, doing chores, homework or anything else that is important - do that first. Then use the phone. However when night approaches put the phone away an hour to a half an hour before the child goes to bed. If the parent feels like their child is spending way too much time on their phone, suggest screen time to their child. If the child wants to be more independent have them set limits for their own phone. Eventually this will become very useful, but not if the child is getting enough sleep. (M3)

STRESS, SUPPORT, COMMUNICATING, FUN

- ★ Sometimes we can easily feel stressed about school and it's great to just give us a moment to relax. (S2)
- ★ To not pressure the kids and let them figure it out. (S3)
- ★ Not stressing out their kids, (it's going to be very hard...)(E.)
- ★ Important: Sleep, healthy food,lunch out, phones, after school, Ms. Hill, STARS, absences and sickness, support how to deal with bullies. (L.)
- ★ I would definitely tell them not to pressure their kids too much and that mental health is more important.(M2)
- ★ remember that as you get older things change with your parents. You get more freedom and responsibility, and sometimes it's overwhelming. Make sure to talk to your parents about your feelings rather than keeping them to yourself it will make these two ears easier.(I.)
- ★ Make sure to talk about what they can do to best support their child in these upcoming busy years of their lives. Also, you can tell them that sometimes it just helps to comfort or show you child that you are there for them when they need it. (N1)
- ★ That this is the BEST school with the BEST teachers! (N2)

- ★ Middle school IS really hard. Tell your kid how proud you are of them. It really means a lot. It's tough to be new, to be in the youngest grade, and to navigate a new schedule and a cast of new teachers. Take time to chill together, and talk about the challenges that YOU faced when you were in middle school. This is especially good if your kid is sometimes hesitant to ask for advice. You talk about your experiences, and they can choose to use that information to help make middle school easier for them without having to feel nervous about asking for help. And cut your kid some slack if they're a little frustrated after a long day. It's rough being a 6th grader (or, to be honest, a 7th or 8th grader too). (P.)