

You may have noticed, or you soon will, that your new sixth grader is changing. Your child is growing -- physically, emotionally and intellectually. As he or she enters the middle school years, a new world is about to open up for both of you. Below are a few tips on how to support your child during this important transition.



BEFORE THE FIRST DAY

- From questions about academics to making friends and fitting in, everyone worries about how they'll do in a new place. To help ease the transition, it's great to do a little homework before school officially starts:
- Visit the school with your child. BPS offers Welcome Sessions and Orientations. Visits usually include time to ask questions and to take a tour.
- On the tour, help your child note where the important places are: the cafeteria, their classrooms, the gym, bathrooms, and the main office.
- Confirm school hours and ask questions about your after school needs. If there's an application, be sure to turn it in before the deadline. After school programs are usually in high demand.
- Ask about school supplies, school uniforms, or dress code policies. Schools may have tips on where to get these items for good prices.
- If you're buying new school clothes, shop together. Uniforms or not, you'll have less issues around clothing if you both agreed to the items ahead of time.
- Check out the school's handbook! There's usually helpful information on homework, attendance and discipline policies, as well as contact information for school staff.
- If your child is walking to school or catching the bus at a neighborhood stop, help him learn the best route and how much time he needs to get there.

- If your child doesn't have a formal study spot at home, now is a good time to set up one. There will be more homework in middle school, with different assignments coming from each teacher. Your child will need a quiet place where she can focus. Stock it with pencils, pens, erasures, paper, etc.
- Before school starts, create a schedule together for the school year. Agree on a regular bed time and wake-up time, and time for homework, and any sports or extra activities. You may have to alter this as time goes by, but it's better to start off with something to avoid any possible struggles over these issues.

FIRST DAY JITTERS

The actual first day is finally here! What are some things you can do to support your child on this important day?

- Help him get a good night's rest! Use that schedule that you created together to ensure he gets to sleep at a reasonable time.
- Make sure that the alarm clock is set for the right time so your child isn't late. Today is a good day to be a little bit early in case she does have troubles finding her class.
- Send your child to school with lunch for the first day or two. Cafeterias typically offer more choices as kids get older; however, there's still comfort in coming to school with a favorite sandwich and then checking out how to pick out or pay for lunch in the cafe.
- Your child will have several different teachers now. If your school does not provide you in advance with a list of supplies for all the classes, consider buying just a few basics (a few spiral notebooks, pens and highlighters) and then wait a day or two when your child should know exactly what is needed for each class.
- Have dinner together and ask how the first day went. Ask open ended questions: Which friends from your old school did you see? Who did you sit with at lunch? Which classes did you like the most?

AFTER THE FIRST DAY:

- Check in daily about homework. Be sure to ask him if it's done or if he needs your help.
- Making sure her schedule includes time for homework;
- Reading through homework instructions when he's stuck;
- Setting up a fixed schedule for homework

- Limit screen time for TV, internet, instant messaging, texting, etc.
- Start big projects in advance
- Check your child's homework
- Help your child understand "actions and consequences." Why is math homework important? When kids don't understand why work is relevant, they're less likely to do it.
- Make sure that you can read your child's homework responses. If you can't, chances are the teacher won't either. If the teacher can't read it, it may get marked wrong.

STAYING INVOLVED:

- Be active in your child's school. Kids this age often act like they don't want their parents around and sometimes they don't. However, kids also want to know that their parents care about them and their education. Attending open houses and helping out occasionally at school functions are great ways to show you care. Use email when you can as a great way to stay in touch with teachers!
- Praise your child for accomplishments; if there is a need to take corrective action, be sure the consequence fits the crime. Unfinished homework could equal lost TV or computer time.
- Know his teachers names and the classes he's taking. Ask specific questions; instead of "How was your day?" ask "How did your math test go?" These questions show you care and encourage responses beyond one word answers.
- Review your child's daily planner and then check to see if homework is completed.



HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD SUCCEED

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TIME MANAGEMENT

- Keep TVs and computers in public spaces.
- Give your child some weekly chores to increase responsibility, teach good work habits, and earn a little of his own money.
- Ensure that after school time is a structured time when your child can be productive and enriched (too much idle time has been shown to lead to risky choices).

STUDY HABITS

- Help your child set up (and use) a calendar to track deadlines and schedule activities.
- Ensure that homework is done at a set time in a designated spot that has few distractions.

CONNECTIONS

- Attend at least one parent event each semester.
- Identify contact information for at least one school staff person if you have questions or need help.
- Learn all of your child's teachers' names.
- Build a relationship with at least one other school parent you can turn to for advice or support.

AIM HIGH

- Talk frequently about college with your child.
- Ask how your school supports college preparation.
- Research ways to save and pay for college, including asking your child to save for school.

HEATH

- Make sure your child exercises daily.
- Limit junk food in your home and the amount of sweets or soda your child consumes.
- Talk openly with your child about making healthy choices, including difficult subjects such as relationship issues, smoking, alcohol or drug use.

GETTING HELP FOR YOUR CHILD

Research shows that kids who excel have parents who insist they take challenging courses and then pro-actively seek out extra support for their children. Where can you turn for academic help?

- **Teachers:** Your child should ask the teacher for help when needed. If that doesn't work, then you can seek help from the teacher or others in the school. It's important to let your child try to handle it first.

- **The Boston Public Library** (www.bpl.org): Each of the 27 branch libraries offers homework help. Visit on line or call your local branch for details.

- **Family and Friends:** If someone in your family is good at a subject and has the patience to make it work, recruit that family member's help.

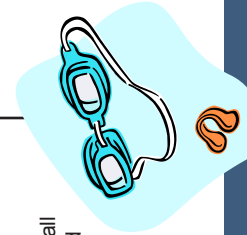
- **Religious or Community Centers:** Lots of community or religious centers offer homework help, tutoring or academic enrichment programs. Ask around.

- **Colleges:** Many college students are willing and available to tutor. Check with a local college for a list of recommended students.

- **Online programs:** You'll be surprised how much help can be found online. For instance, if you google "math help," you'll find all sorts of free and fee-based options, extra practice problems and sample tests.

- **No Child Left Behind:** As a result of this bill, some lower performing schools provide free tutoring. Ask if your school qualifies.

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SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS



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