



## *Kirkland Middle School*

### *Tips for Parenting the Middle School Child*

#### ***Organization***

- ❖ Organization is a necessity in middle school. It's not too soon to start having regular conversations about how your child organizes their materials, assignments and responsibilities. Once school starts, consider the backpack "community property" and have regular "clean out" sessions. A well-organized backpack makes school smoother.
- ❖ Time is the great equalizer. We all have the same amount of it. The middle school child will need to begin to value time more highly and manage it more carefully. Modeling your own time management strategies is helpful to your child. Set limits around potential time wasters (internet, computer games, social media, cell phone, etc.)
- ❖ Prioritizing is a huge life lesson during these years. They'll learn to balance friends, school, family and activities to be successful and manage stress.
- ❖ PLANNER- your child receives their calendar Planner/laptop each September. We teach appropriate Planner use for noting assignments and due dates. Please support this tool by asking them for regular updates. Showing you their written record of homework helps strengthen their time management. This paper/pencil Planner compliments the student's access to teacher websites and homework details via POWERSCHOOL LEARNING (formerly HAIKU) sites.
- ❖ The laptop also has some built in calendars, organizational tools and strategies. Get excited about them and support their use.

#### ***Homework & Study Habits & Grades***

- ❖ Homework completion is the key to success in middle school! The responsibility of homework, studying and appropriate school behavior now shifts squarely onto their shoulders. Share your expectations! Hold them accountable! Consider ways to incentivize weekly school success.
- ❖ Open up their Planner or online teacher PowerSchool Learning website calendar and note all the grading dates. Let your child know you'll be looking regularly at grade report details via the online gradebook-SKYWARD (via Parent Access on the main school and district websites). Consider viewing SKYWARD weekly for work completion, test scores and upcoming homework. This is your right and responsibility. Teachers expect parents to be checking on grades regularly. There should be no surprises. SKYWARD provides wonderful transparency with grades.
- ❖ At the beginning of each grading term (aka: quarter), sit down with your child to set realistic academic goals for each class. Help them to track their progress throughout each semester.
- ❖ Make sure that your child knows the importance of punctuality and strong attendance. When absences do occur, it takes **their** initiative, responsibility and proactive behavior to get caught up and back on track. Assume they'll need to make some pre- or post-school appointments with teachers to get caught up with missing work, quizzes and science labs.
- ❖ Make it a point to attend curriculum night, open houses and school activities. Your involvement speaks loudly to your child. It says, "I'm interested and care about you!"
- ❖ The teachers, counselors and administrators are here to help and support you and your child. Our staff is approachable and interested in student success.

#### ***Communication***

- ❖ Inquire about areas not easily measured by grades. Consider the not-to-distant horizon and our shared goal toward developing a caring, respectful, productive citizen who lives well in community with others. Ask about friends and support safe ways to socialize with peers.

- ❖ Look for ways to acknowledge your young teen. Notice their accomplishments, progress towards goals and successes. A little affirmation goes a long way.
- ❖ Listen to your child and encourage them to talk about their day. Sometimes their timeline for talking will be different than yours for listening. It's the rare teen that walks in the door with a ton of information. They tend to share more as they relax. Be flexible. Listen with the intent to understand and connect to their school experience.
- ❖ As your child progresses through middle school there will be greater changes than you've seen since they were babies. You'll need to continually monitor and adjust parenting strategies or skills, stretch your boundaries and negotiate new agreements as they develop toward increased freedoms and responsibilities. They often want more than they are ready to manage. It's an ongoing process as you nurture their independence. You're not the only parent who says 'no'! (regardless what they tell you)
- ❖ Enabling your children will be counter-productive to positive growth and learning. The middle school years are optimal for pre-teen/adolescents to make mistakes and falter a bit. The life consequences are not nearly as painful nor the costs as high compared to what they will be later on in life.
- ❖ Whenever possible, help your child figure out how to take care of their own problems. Your child will gain confidence and become more independent. If your child is unable to resolve an issue, or if there's a serious problem, be available to intervene and support. Do include your child in these conversations. Keep the goal of nurturing their 'Self-Advocacy' skills over the next 3-6 years!

### ***Friends & Activities***

- ❖ Encourage your child to get involved in after school activities, sports and clubs and expand their peer connections. Make a point to attend as often as you can. They'll remember you were present to watch and enjoy.
- ❖ Monitor and network. Make it a point to introduce yourself to the parents of their new friends. Better yet – get together with other parents periodically to review rules, common agreements and structure. Always call when they are going somewhere new and make sure that there are parents there and that the children are being appropriately supervised. Kids often think that they can "handle situations" as they come up but it's better not to have them take that chance. Wise parents are constantly looking ahead and assessing new situations for emotional, physical and psychological safety.
- ❖ Remember – this is the time of life where they will be meeting new friends on a daily basis. Frequently, the friends they connect to in middle school will become some of the best friends that they keep all through high school. Conversely, the circle of friends can shift over time. It's an asset for any student to reach a comfort level with acquaintances that allows them to mingle easily with many classmates. Encourage these new friendships and don't worry if they come home at first and feel sad because none of their friends are in their classes. New friends are awesome! To have good friends, one must learn how to be a good friend.

### ***The Computer Age/Technology/Social Media/Phones***

- ❖ Monitor their world! That means that you'll need to set boundaries around all their devices. Review the 'social contract' (both legal and family rules) around their phone, computer, social network sites, etc. Most families have access to their children's devices so that they can periodically check how they are being used. Make no apologies! Their devices are a privilege, not a right. Let them know you will monitor their 'digital world' as needed.
- ❖ Make use of email for school communication; it's the most efficient and timely means. Cordial, polite notes with all school staff help to forge positive relationships. Do remember however, that teachers have up to 150 students in their day. Try not to overwhelm their INBOX with emails too frequently or too lengthy. Also – keep in mind that teachers are engaged with students throughout the day and will probably not get back to you until after school or the next day.