

Issaquah Middle School Transition Guide

**Tips to help your student be successful and have
fun in middle school**

IMS Counseling Department, 2017-18

Included in this guide, you will find.....

Parents often wonder how to best prepare their children to make the transition from elementary to middle school and how to support them during their first year in this new environment. The start of middle school can be an anxious time for students and their parents. There is excitement at a new beginning, the chance to meet new friends, have more class options, and become more independent right alongside the stress of the unknown. We hope this guide will help you along the way.

- General Tips for Parents
- Organization Ideas
- Resources for you and your student
- More!

Let's start by comparing middle school to elementary school....

<i>Difference</i>	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>Middle School</i>
Schedule	Students are taught most of the core subjects by one teacher. The schedule varies from day to day based on specialist (music, art, etc).	Each student sees multiple teachers on a set schedule. Students are expected to attend class and move between classes independently.
Independence	Students follow class procedures and the direction of their classroom teachers. Supplies are often stored in desks or provided for them. Beginning transition towards independence.	Students independently move from class to class, bringing required supplies and assignments.
Homework	All students will have some homework. Teachers may help the student keep track of assignments.	Homework and the responsibility for keeping track of assignments and turning them in is placed on the student.
Communication	Parent-teacher conferences arranged by the school.	Curriculum Night at the beginning of the academic year, and staffings set up as needed. Ongoing communication with teachers/counselors encouraged via email or phone.

Tips for Middle School Parents

Parent participation in education is closely related to student achievement. Both of you will be affected by this change to middle school. The key during adolescence is to balance your support while promoting responsibility and independence in your child. Become informed about your new school by attending orientations, reading school guides and student handbooks, subscribing to e-news and visiting the web site regularly for current information.

- Volunteer opportunities at middle school are less in classrooms, but there are many opportunities to volunteer in a whole-school setting such as volunteering for WalkAbout with PTSA.
- Students of all ages benefit when family and school cooperate and have a positive relationship. If you have questions or concerns don't hesitate to call or email teachers and counselors. It's also helpful for your student to know you're in contact with the school.
- Ask to see your student's planner. Every student receives a planner the first week of school and they are expected to use it every day for every subject. This is a skill they will need help learning with enforcement and encouragement from school and home.
- Organization and time management skills must be developed so students will not feel overwhelmed. Be sure to limit after-school recreational activities, provide a quiet study area, and expect to see your child working regularly on homework. Set rules about TV, computer, and phone use.
- Know the dress code for school and check to see that your child is wearing "school friendly" attire daily.
- Check the calendar – know when progress reports and report cards go out, when early release days are scheduled and dates of special activities.
- Be sure the Office has current contact information – don't assume your child will know or share changes in phone numbers or addresses.
- Talk to your child about school and peers. Ask how their day went. Listen for comments that reflect what they are feeling and thinking. Expect your child to make mistakes and have personal struggles. Give them time to think and make decisions about how to handle their problems and deal with the consequences.
- Peer acceptance and self-esteem issues become increasingly important. Provide opportunities for your child to develop interests and socialize with friends, but be sure to monitor his/her choices.
- Keep in mind these two main reasons middle school students tell us they don't report to adults: 1) adults overreact and 2) they would rather try to handle the situation themselves.

Organization

The key to success in middle school is being organized. Your 6th grader needs your help to learn these skills, so please take time to teach your child and recognize when he/she is doing well.

- Make time to discuss getting organized. Call a family meeting or initiate a discussion at the dinner table when the entire family is present.
- Assess the organizational system used at school. Teachers ask students to use certain organizational methods, such as keeping their work in a binder, recording daily assignments in their planner, and so on. However, that system may not work for your child. Find out what he/she doesn't like and look for alternatives that are acceptable to the teacher.
- Enlist your child's help. Don't insist they get organized your way. The idea is to help them discover a way that works for them. Too much "guidance" from you can cause conflict. Brainstorm some ideas together, and let them analyze the pros and cons of each.
- Come up with a plan: consider some combination of these strategies:
 - **Designate a study time and place.** Work with your student to pick a time and place where school work should be completed each day. If they insist they have nothing to do, they should read for 30 minutes. Study areas should be as free from distractions as possible and should have necessary supplies available (paper, pencils, and so on).
 - **Student planner.** They can't remember their homework without writing it down, so your first step is to make sure they do that by checking it each night and asking questions about their entries.
 - **The little-by-little approach.** Be sure your child understands how to break a big project down into pieces so that it's not so overwhelming. Using a calendar, show them how to work backward from a due date and set interim goals. Ask how they would go about earning the high score on their favorite video game — what steps would they need to take to get there?
 - **Setting priorities.** Work with your child to help them prioritize the work. For instance, completing work that is due first rather than what he/she would like to spend time on.
 - **Clean out the backpack regularly.** Have them do it, say, every Sunday. Don't do it for your student, but sit nearby. Corral loose papers by using a binder, accordion file, or folders. If you come across a test they did poorly on, don't comment. The session will revert from backpack cleaning to grades and very likely go downhill from there.
 - **Don't criticize.** Once you've got a system in place, keep touching base. If things get sloppy again (which should not surprise you), don't pass judgment. Just help your student get back on track without comment. It takes time to learn this, along with a healthy dose of patience and persistence from you.
 - **Keep a family calendar.** Along with soccer practice, book club, and so on, keep track of big tests and the due dates of special projects. Seeing the bigger picture will allow you to help your child plan their time more effectively.
 - **Communicate, Communicate, Communicate.** Communicate with your student's teachers by phone or e-mail. Let them know to contact you if ever they have a question or concern.

Also communicate with your middle school student. Although they are growing up and peer relationships take a higher priority than family relationships, it is important students know that you are available to talk to them and listen when they need it.

Resources For You

There are many resources to help you help your student be successful. Familiarize yourself with the tools below to be in-the-know and up-to-date with your student's grades, classwork, and more.

Family ACCESS

Use Family Access to monitor your child's attendance and grades, pay fines and fees:

- Go to connect.issaquah.wednet.edu/middle/ims and click on "Family Access" on the left
- On the right side, click on Log in to Family access
- Log In
- If you have forgotten your Login or Password, click on "Forgot your Login/Password" and it will be e-mailed to you
- If you need help, contact the Registrar

IMS Website

The Issaquah Middle School website, connect.issaquah.wednet.edu/middle/ims, is an excellent source of information including calendars, FAQ's and general school information.

Teacher Websites

Every Issaquah Middle School teacher keeps an up-to-date website. You will be able to see what is being worked on in the classroom, what the assigned homework is, upcoming projects and events, etc.

- Go to connect.issaquah.wednet.edu/middle/ims and click on "Teacher Websites" on the right
- Click on the teacher you would like to view.

E-mailing School Staff

If you or your student needs to reach a teacher by email, please look them up in the Staff Directory via the Issaquah Middle School website:

- Go to connect.issaquah.wednet.edu/middle/ims
- On the left click on "Staff"
- Click on "IMS Staff List"
- All e-mail addresses are "Last Name First Initial @ issaquah.wednet.edu"

Resources For Your Student

Student Access

Your student's education is ultimately your student's responsibility, so they should get into the routine of checking the Student Access every day:

- Go to connect.issaquah.wednet.edu/middle/ims and click on "Family Access" on the left
- On the right side, click on "Log in to Student Access"
- Log In-If you have forgotten your Login or Password, click on "Forgot your Login/Password" and it will be e-mailed to you
- To retrieve login and password, students must have their own e-mail in our system. Please contact the Registrar to add an e-mail or for help with Student Access

Catch Up Cafe

Catch Up Café is open Tuesdays and Thursdays during all lunches. Students should get their lunch and bring it with them – along with their work and materials – to Catch Up Café.

Students can either come on their own to get help or a jump start on homework if there is room or they are assigned by a teacher to make up missing work. This program is supervised by staff members and parent volunteers. When there is room available, it is also a quiet place for students if the Commons is too loud and overwhelming during lunch. The Library is typically open during lunch as well, but food is not allowed in the Library.

Library Club

Library Club is offered Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays after school. It is a quiet, supervised place to complete assignments, study for tests, and get extra help if needed. Students must have a paid ASB card to attend. Activity buses are available. Buses depart IMS at 4:15 p.m. and at 5:15 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Homework Help

Homework Help is offered after school and is funded, in part, by the Issaquah Schools Foundation. Mondays – Focus on Language Arts and Social Studies and the Writing Center, Tuesdays – Focus on Math, Thursdays – Focus on Science. Students can come to Homework Help to work on assignments from any class.

IMS Counselors

The Issaquah Middle School counselors are an excellent resource for both you and your student. Counselors visit 6th grade classrooms during the first weeks of school to ensure our new students know the who, what, where, and why of the counselors at their new school, and how to access us. Your counselor can also connect you to important community resources, including outside counseling/therapist, tutors, groups, fun opportunities like camp, and more.

- AnnaMaria Austin, *last names A – K*, (425) 837-6816 austina@issaquah.wednet.edu
- Amy Lorang, *last names I – Z*, (425) 837-6815 loranga@issaquah.wednet.edu

Homeroom

Homeroom is 1st period. It is a 25-minute period each day (except Wednesdays), a time for students to pause and focus on either reading or other important lessons. If nothing else is planned, students will work on homework or read. It is important that your student is prepared with a book to read each day. Our morning announcements (The DMQ) will start off the period.