

Everything You Need To Know About Middle School...



This planning guide belongs to:

Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| What Happens in Middle School? | Page 3 |
| What to Expect | Page 4 |
| How to be a Self-Directed Student | Page 5 |
| Staying Organized | Page 6 |
| Making Time for Homework | Page 7 |
| Where to Go for Help | Page 8 |
| Changing Friendships | Page 9 |
| Real Questions, Real Answers | Page 10 |

What Happens at Middle School???

You might be wondering, "How different is Middle School from Elementary School?" Well, we won't lie to you – it's pretty different. While this exciting for some students, it can also be kind of scary; and it will take some time to adjust. This planning guide will help you prepare for some of the changes and choices you will experience as a middle school student.

IMPORTANT WORDS TO KNOW ABOUT

Exploratory Rotation: This is a fancy term we use for "electives". You will be scheduled for Art, Shop, Technology, and Study Skills – each of these classes will last **one quarter**, which is about 9 weeks. So don't worry if you find you aren't very interested in one of them -- because in 9 short weeks, it will be time to switch 😊

Band: If you choose to take Band as an elective (instead of the exploratory rotation), please understand this is a **year long** commitment. Students are responsible for renting their own instruments, and are invited to play clarinet, flute, alto saxophone, trumpet, baritone, trombone, or percussion. An "instrument rental night" will be held before the start of school. Letters will be sent home during the summer.

Passing Time: The time between classes. At North Lake, we give students **4 minutes to get from class to class**. This may not seem like a lot of time – but believe us, it's plenty to get where you need to go. You probably even have time to stop at a restroom along the way.

Period: The set amount of time in which a class is taught. At North Lake students have **5 periods in one day**, and each class lasts **about 70 minutes**.

Lunch: This is the time to eat. All students eat lunch in the cafeteria during one of three lunch periods. Unfortunately, we can't guarantee that you will have the same lunch as your friends, and this may be hard at first, but this is a time to meet new people. This is also the only time during the day when you will have time for something like "recess." Although we don't have playgrounds at middle school, students like to hang out and run around in the courtyard after eating in the cafeteria.

Join the "Lunch Bunch" on Wednesdays in the Counseling Center!!!

Feel free to eat lunch and play games in the counseling center on Wednesdays - this is a GREAT way to meet people who have the same lunch period as you!!

What to Expect

In middle school you change classes every period, have more homework, and are expected to take on more responsibilities than ever before. On top of all that, you may be dealing with changing friendships and changing bodies. YIKES! How in the world will you manage all of that?? The truth is, some days will be harder than others. But if you know this, and are prepared for it, than you'll be ready to handle all of these new changes and choices.

Lockers

At North Lake, we only use lockers for P.E. You might see lockers in the hallways, but we only use them for storage. You will be expected to have a backpack that can carry binders, textbooks, and your daily agenda. For P.E. class, you may choose to buy a lock for a locker in the locker room, or you may choose to just keep your P.E. clothes in your backpack. Whatever you choose – remember to take home your P.E. clothes to wash them every week. PEEW!!!

Schedule

You will receive your schedule at orientation (if you choose to attend), and on the first day of school. Here are a few things you may be wondering about your class schedule:

- We do not change schedules so you can have classes with friends;
- We do not change schedules so you can have lunch with friends;
- We do not change schedules because you don't like a teacher.

You may feel free to speak with a counselor about your schedule if:

- ✓ You have been placed in a challenge level class, and you didn't sign up for it;
- ✓ You are not scheduled for 5 classes;
- ✓ You accidentally got scheduled for the same class twice;
- ✓ You want to be in Band, but got scheduled for Exploratory (or vice-versa).

There are other reasons to request a schedule change, and if you have a question about it – please ask. We tend to keep all schedule changes to the first week or so – then you are expected to stick with what you have until the end of the quarter.

Agenda

All students are given an agenda on the first day of school, and are shown *exactly* how to use them. This is a tool we have found to be most useful to students as they learn to stay organized, keep up with assignments, and complete homework. We have found that students who are most successful in school, use their agendas on a daily basis. If your student should lose their agenda, there will be a \$10 charge for a new one. Please see the following page for an example of what a completed agenda looks like.

REMEMBER: Good study habits begin with consistent use of your agendas!!!

School is about Life Long Skills

In middle school you are asked to assume more responsibility for yourself. That includes your learning. While you learn content skills in math, language arts, science, social studies, P.E., and your electives, you will also be learning "life skills" that are necessary to become successful students. These skills include self-direction, effective communication, and effective problem solving.



Self Directed Students:

- Take their responsibilities seriously;
- Manage their free time so that everything gets done;
- Don't wait for parents to nag about doing homework, they know what needs to be done, and they do it!

Effective Communicators:

- Wait their turn to speak;
- Speak for themselves, from what they know – instead of saying things like, "Everybody else says.....";

Effective Problem Solvers:

- Use "I Statements" instead of accusing people with, "Well, you told me to....."
- Always use a respectful tone when expressing their feelings;
- Understand that sometimes we have to agree to disagree about things.

Do you already have some of these skills? List some things you do to show that you are on your way to becoming a responsible adolescent.

Staying Organized!!

Keeping yourself organized is the ticket to success in middle school. We even offer a class that ALL 6th graders will take (unless you are in Band) called "Study Skills." This class will help you learn all of the things you need to know about keeping your binder organized, your backpack tidy, and your agenda complete. However, you may not be scheduled for this class until the second semester - so here are a few tips to get you started.

Notebook / Binder

You will have 5 classes each day. You should have a different section in your notebook for each class. If your notebook isn't set up for a 3-hole punched paper, make sure there are pockets or folders for loose papers. You might even have a section for "completed homework" that needs to be turned in. Whatever system you choose, make sure it's one that you will be comfortable using.

Agenda

Because you have MORE classes in middle school, and more work to complete, it is SO VERY IMPORTANT to keep it all straight. Each student will be given an agenda to write down homework assignments, test dates, project due dates, etc. USE IT!!! We cannot stress enough how important it is to make your agenda part of your daily routine. But we can tell you that the number one difference between students who pass their classes, and students who don't, is making use of the agenda.

Finally, as important as it is to write things down in your agenda - DON'T FORGET to take it back out of your backpack and LOOK AT IT when you get home.

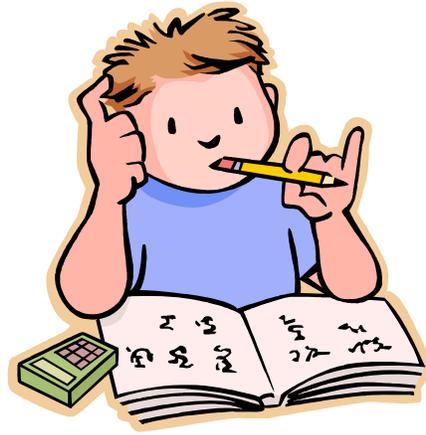
Backpack

Make sure your backpack is packed and ready to go each night before you go to bed. This will save you the trouble of rushing around in the morning, which is normally how we forget things. ALSO, take time every week to *clean out your back pack!*



Middle school students are FAMOUS for having "black hole" backpacks. That means, things go into the backpack - and are never seen again.... Take out everything, put loose papers in your binder where they belong, sharpen your pencils, refill your blank paper supply - and throw away ALL moldy food items.

Make Time for Homework



Set up a special time each day and stick to it! If you do not have a written assignment due, take time to do your "at home" reading (part of your Language Arts grade) or review notes for upcoming tests.

Set up a special place to study. Make sure it is away from the TV, and where you will not be distracted from the "goings on" around your house. If you do not have a place like this at home, use the Lake Stevens library, attend Study Table before or after school, or stay after in the school library.

Find out if a teacher is willing to stay after school to help you when you are struggling. Most teachers are willing to do this -- the trick is you have to ASK!!

Break big projects down into smaller steps. Create a timeline (again, using your agenda) and set up your own personal due dates for each step. If you need help doing this ask a teacher or an adult you trust.

Turn in your homework!! You would be surprised to know that lots of students DO their homework, but then lose it or forget to turn it in. Think of it like this - if you went to work all week, would you expect a paycheck? Of course you would! It's the same with homework. Why do all the work, then forfeit the grade? This is another reason to keep your binder and backpack organized!

Exchange phone numbers with someone in your class. You never know when you might get stuck on a problem, or have a question about an assignment.

Parents: Be prepared to take away privileges (cell phones, ipods, video games, time with friends, etc) when homework is not getting done. Teachers are more likely to spend extra time with a student who is making an effort, than a student who habitually blows off assignments.

Where to Go For Help



HELP WITH SCHOOLWORK

Ask your **TEACHER**: If you are struggling in class, **GET HELP RIGHT AWAY!!!!** The longer you wait, the harder it is to catch up.

- Find a moment when the teacher is not instructing the rest of the class;
- Be specific – Make sure you are clear about what it is you don't understand. Tell them how to help you.

Example: "Mr. Smith, can I get some help with fractions? I am confused about how to multiply and divide."

Remember: Teachers are humans too, but they cannot read your mind. If you need help, **YOU HAVE TO ASK FOR IT!**

Ask your **COUNSELOR**: Stop by the counseling center and talk to a counselor. That is what we're here for.

Counselors can help with:

- School related problems
- Problems with friends
- Family issues
- Personal problems

At North Lake we have two counselors, Mr. Width and Mrs. Riebli. To find out who your counselor will be, look at your last name. If your last name starts with **A - N**, your counselor will be **Mr. Width**. If your last name begins with **O - Z**, your counselor will be **Mrs. Riebli**.

School counselors are **GREAT** for helping you come up with a plan, giving suggestions when you have problems, or answering questions.

Check out our "counseling" webpage on the North Lake website!!

Ask your **PARENTS**: Sit down with a parent, or an adult that you trust, and explain that you're having a hard time at school. Let them help you make a plan to get help.

- Ask a parent to check your agenda every night – just to make sure you are writing things down;
- Parents can quiz you for tests;
- Parents sometimes struggle with the math we do in middle school, but tell them to call or email your teacher or counselor for suggestions;
- No matter what you think, your parents **ALWAYS** have your best interests at heart!!

ENCOURAGE YOUR PARENTS to schedule time with your teachers during conference week. Unlike elementary school, we don't automatically schedule time for your parents – **THEY** have to call **US** to schedule conferences 😊

Friends and Middle School



By now you've probably heard a lot about how much things change in middle school. This is an exciting time in your life – you are no longer an elementary school kid, you have a lot more freedom when walking around school, you are expected to take care of your own needs, and you may notice your body is making some changes as well.

Well, along with all of those other changes going on, middle school seems to be the time when friendships change as well. There are many reasons for this:

- You will be going to school with 6th and 7th graders from THREE elementary schools, so there are lots of new people to meet and connect with;
- With all of the different teams and clubs after school, you and your friend may find you have different interests;
- You aren't in class with your friend all day;
- You may not have lunch with your friend;
- We all grow and mature in different ways, and oftentimes friends just grow apart at this age.

All of these things can make it hard for you to keep up with the best friend you've had since kindergarten. And it can be really painful and hurtful if your friend discovers that they have more in common with someone they just met. But don't feel like all hope is gone, because there are over 600 other students your age at North Lake. And certainly, someone else is feeling the same way – and is looking for someone else to be friends with. This may take a while, and it may mean a few lonely lunches here and there – but keep your head up, and have faith that your next best friend is JUST AROUND THE CORNER!!!

If you find yourself feeling lonely, or down in the dumps, because you feel a divide growing between you and a friend – talk to someone about it. Maybe a parent, counselor, or teacher you like. It helps to share how you're feeling. This would be a good time to join a club, or work out with a sports team (Team sports are mostly for 7th graders, but 6th graders are usually welcome to work-out with the team to prepare for next year). This is ALWAYS a great way to meet new people and try new things.

NOTE: Talking about friendship issues with other students can make things worse! Middle school is a place where rumors and gossip grow and spread like wildfire. So **BE CAREFUL** about what you say about other people!!!!

REAL QUESTIONS from REAL STUDENTS....



Question: Will I get stuffed in locker or trashcan?

Answer: We don't use lockers at North Lake, so that's not ever an issue. And trashcans here have covers on them – so that's not an issue either 😊

Question: Will we have recess, or time to play with our friends?

Answer: Not exactly. Students usually have about 15 minutes to run around or hang out after they're done eating lunch. And you have that 4 minute passing time to use the restroom, or say a quick hello to someone.

Question: Are 7th graders mean?

Answer: As a general rule, No. They tend to hang out with other 7th graders, and 6th graders tend to hang out with other 6th graders. They may be taller, and look older, but usually they are pretty helpful. If someone is harassing or bullying you, tell an adult!

Question: Do I have to take a shower after P.E.?

Answer: No...but you may want to bring some deodorant. Running around can make a middle schooler kind of smelly.

Question: Are teachers mean? And is there a lot of homework?

Answer: As a general rule, No. And No. But keep in mind that each teacher is different, and has their own rules about what they expect in their classroom. As for the homework thing, depending on how much you get done during class (most teachers give time for this), you might have some stuff to finish up at home. BUT there is always studying for tests, AR reading, and other things...

Question: What if I get lost?

Answer: Well, hopefully not. But if you do, there will be plenty of teachers in the hallways to help you find your way. Try to come to the orientation day, so you can get your schedule and find out where your classes will be.