

How We Can Make It Work

Help ease your child's transition to middle school

The transition to middle school can be tough for even the most prepared of students.

"In this larger, more complex environment, students are faced with different teachers and classmates for each subject, older peers, and new procedures," said Richard Ramos principal at Madison Park Middle School. "The first few months can be overwhelming for students and their families."

There are, however, some ways for students to prepare this spring and summer to ease the transition to a middle-school campus:

- **Brush up on the basics:** Work with your child's elementary school teachers to ensure that your child is prepared for the rigors of a middle-level curriculum.

Summer break is a great time to brush up on basic math and reading skills or do a little creative writing or journaling.

- **Make new friends:** An expanded circle of friends can serve as healthy social supports in a large middle school.

Sport teams, dance classes or other venues of special interests are great ways to encourage your child to explore personal interests and develop friendships.

- **Find a quiet study space:** The demands of middle-school academics are greater than at the elementary level, and will require more time and increased self-discipline.

Work with your child before the school year begins to establish a consistent time and place to complete assignments at home.

- **Get organized:** With the demands of multiple teachers and the extracurricular activities that will compete for your child's attention, organization is key. Encourage your child to make daily use of calendars, binders or other organizational tools.

- **Act your age:** Help your child brush up on their interpersonal skills. Students of this age are expected to display the beginnings of socially appropriate adult behavior.

The social blunders that were once considered cute as a 7-year-old are not acceptable for a 12-year-old.

Spend time reviewing the traits of socially acceptable behavior and guide their developing skills.

Don't let preteen anxiety overshadow the excitement of starting middle school. A little preparation will ease the nerves and provide skills that will serve your child for years to come.

Carol Peck is president and CEO of the Rodel Foundation of Arizona. Her columns appear bimonthly on Sundays. Post your questions and comments on her blog at azcentral.com/members/Blog/DrPeck or send them to rodel@rodelfoundations.org. Visit the Rodel Foundation-AZ Web site at www.rodela.org.