



**Saint John the Evangelist School  
Hydes, Maryland**

**Saint John the Evangelist School  
13311 Long Green Pike  
Hydes, Maryland 21082**

# **Middle School Supplement**

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## **Introduction**

**The administration and staff take this opportunity to welcome you to Saint John the Evangelist Middle School in a Pre-K to grade 8 setting. The information in this handbook supplement has been carefully planned to help students in grades six, seven and eight and their parents. The entire staff of this school, administrator, teachers, instructional assistants, counselor and support staff are here to assist you.**

**Have a great year!**

# The Middle School Team

**Mrs. Christina Helwig**  
Homeroom 6

Literature 6  
Social Studies 6, 8  
Math 6  
Pre-Algebra 7, 8

**Mrs. Suzanne Thomas**  
Homeroom 7

Religion 7  
Literature 7  
English 6, 7, 8  
Social Studies 7

**Mrs. Sharon Meloni**  
Homeroom 8

Religion 6, 8  
Literature 8  
Science 6, 7, 8

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Spanish

**Ms. Nicole Creamer**

Math 6  
Pre-Algebra 7  
Algebra 8  
Computer

**Mrs. Martha Spangler**

Art

**Mrs. Sally Duker**

Physical Education

**Mrs. Judith Gardner**

Library

**Mr. David Pomplon**

Music

All parents of students in grades 6, 7 and 8 are part of the team.

## **We Believe**

**That everyone should be respected.  
That every student has unique and special gifts.  
That diversity is to be celebrated and appreciated.  
That every student has the right to learn.  
That every teacher has the right to teach.**

### **Class Behavior:**

**We believe that all students can behave appropriately in the classroom. The Middle School Team will not tolerate a student stopping teachers from teaching or preventing any student from learning.**

### **Classroom Guidelines:**

**Follow all directions the first time they are given.  
Observe silence at all specified times and places.  
Be prepared for class.  
Leave the classroom only with permission from the teacher.  
Keep hands, feet and all objects to yourself.  
Raise your hand and wait until you are called before speaking.  
Respect your peers, teachers, substitutes and all school personnel.  
Respect your property, school property and the property of others.  
Wait until you are dismissed before leaving the classroom.  
Teachers may have additional guidelines that will be shared with the students.**

### **Homework:**

**Students must use prescribed assignment pad purchased at our school store.**

**Homework is a strong and essential component to the academic program developed for the Middle School student.**

**Students may receive homework on a daily basis, Monday through Friday.**

**Students are expected to complete assigned homework. An infraction will be given to a student who comes to class without the homework.**

# **The Middle School Student**

## **What is a Middle Schooler? "The In-Between Ager"**

**What is a middle schooler?  
I was asked one day.  
I knew what he was,  
But what should I say?**

**He is noise and confusion.  
He is silence that is deep.  
He is sunshine and laughter,  
Or a cloud that will weep.**

**He is swift as an arrow.  
He is a waster of time.  
He wants to be rich,  
But cannot save a dime.**

**He is rude and nasty.  
He is polite as can be  
He wants adult guidance,  
But fights to be free.**

**His attention is short.  
Don't lecture all day.  
He wants to contribute.  
He has much to say.**

**He is aggressive and bossy.  
He is timid and shy.  
He knows all the answers,  
But still will ask "why."**

**He is awkward and clumsy.  
He is graceful and poised.  
He is every changing.  
But do not be annoyed.**

**What is a middle schooler?  
I was asked one day.  
He is the future unfolding,  
So do not stand in his way.**

**By - An Eighth Grade Middle School Student**

# **Roots and Wings**

## **Middle School Students: The In-Between Agers**

Students between the ages of ten and fourteen are in the period of human development now recognized as one of the most complex – the middle learning years. Current research indicates that this period is crucial for the attitudes students are developing concerning self, school and society. Problems evident during the high school learning years – dropping out, teen pregnancy, truancy, alcohol and drug abuse, academic lethargy, disruptive behavior – often originate during the middle learning years.

### **The Developmental Characteristics of the In-Between Ager**

Early adolescents are formulating attitudes, concepts and decisions critical to their future lives. As parents and educators we must understand and anticipate the physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs of early adolescents –

- the need for academic growth balanced with the need for social acceptance and self-esteem
- the push for freedom and the urge for restraint
- the desire to regress into the simplicity of childhood and yet progress into adulthood

Early adolescents are highly diverse in physical, intellectual, social and emotion development. They are in different stages of development more than at any other age period because students enter puberty at varying ages. This same variability also applies to growth in cognitive functioning and personality development.

Adding to this is the ambivalence in their behavior. These students exhibit abrupt swings in mood and behavior from intellectual vigor and sophistication to lethargy; from strong social empathy to egocentricity; from attempts at autonomy and independence to dependence on authority and peers; from strong affectionate bonds with adults to alienation from them.

### **Moving from Childhood to Adulthood**

A time of transition and exploration, early adolescence is characterized by the need to receive guiding expectations and social support from both peers and adults. These students are in a

transitional stage in which peers exert increasing influence on individual decision making, attitudes, judgments and conduct. Adults and peers are viewed by early adolescents as collaborative, not competitive, and thus both peers and adults are important sources of social influence for students in this age group. Early adolescents are making multiple transitions:

- entering puberty
- attending new schools
- encountering more demanding peer relationships
- discovering self
- establishing independence

Simultaneously, their ability to understand and apply abstract concepts increases and the boundaries of their world widen.

## Developing an Identity

Each student has a unique combination of abilities and talents, learning rates and styles, hopes and dreams, and problems and fears. It is a time when adolescents must learn to be sensitive to, and tolerant of, individual differences, such as differences in races, cultures, values and abilities. In adolescence, students' self-concepts are fragile, depending in large part on what they believe peers, teachers, parents and others think of them. Evaluation and reward structures should clearly establish high support and continual recognition of their progress in learning and development.

Early adolescents want and need to:

- develop a positive sense of self, as well as acceptance by peers
- feel physically and psychologically secure
- experience academic success
- belong, participate and contribute to a peer group
- feel valued and valuable to the school, family and community
- feel like a contributing member of the group

This state of flux we call adolescence is a demanding time for a young person and his/her parents. Parents are called upon to recognize and respond to unpredictable, uncontrollable swings as young adolescents find themselves pulled between childhood and adulthood. Perhaps the best advice for parents, who find themselves facing the inevitable turmoil of their child's middle years, is to hold on gently and push lightly; for parents can give their children only two lasting things: one is roots, the other is wings.

# Developmental Characteristics of the Middle School Student

The major characteristics of early adolescent youth are set forth in the following sections. These characteristics describe frequent and unusual behavior exhibited by many boys and girls in this age group. They should not be regarded as norms for all. Each individual is unique and may differ from others in regard to some characteristics and will still be expected to achieve normal adolescence and adulthood.

## A – Spiritual Characteristics

The following characteristics, which need to be adapted to the social and cultural settings of the school, provide a guide to understanding spiritual development during the adolescent years:

- The maturing adolescent is developing a clear personal identity and is learning how to accept one's self as lovable and loved by God and others.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a commitment to a personal faith and taking responsibility for his/her own faith life and ongoing growth as a Catholic Christian, which involves the gradual realization and response to the plan, will, and purpose of God for the world.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a mature relationship with Jesus Christ whom the adolescent has come to know in a personal way in the Scriptures and in the life and teachings of the Catholic Christian community.
- The maturing adolescent is learning the skills of critical reflection that enable one to analyze life experience, society, culture, and Church in light of the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- The maturing adolescent is developing an appreciation for the importance of the Scriptures in Christian life and learning the skills for reading and interpreting the Scriptures.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a pattern of personal and communal prayer and worship and understand and appreciates the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist.

- The maturing adolescent is developing an appreciation for and knowledge of the Catholic Christian tradition, its doctrinal expression and its applicability to life in today's complex society.
- The maturing adolescent is actively engaged in the life, mission and work of the Catholic Christian community and, in particular, his/her own family, the Church of the Home.
- The maturing adolescent is developing an interiorized, principled Catholic Christian moral value system and is able to confront moral issues using principles of Catholic Christian moral decision making.
- The maturing adolescent is integrating sexuality into his/her personality in a holistic way within the context of the sexual values of the Catholic Christian community and, in particular, his/her own family.
- The maturing adolescent is beginning to appreciate deeper relationships and is learning the skills for developing and maintaining relationships.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a life of Christian service modeled on Jesus' life and is learning that life is enriched when one gives of one's self for others.
- The maturing adolescent is realizing that Christian faith means a commitment to justice and peace at the personal, interpersonal and social/political levels of one's life and is acquiring the tools to work for justice and peace.
- The maturing adolescent is discovering how one's spirituality can be lived out through a variety of adult lifestyles.

National Federation for Catholic Youth,  
"The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith," 1994

## **B – Physical Characteristics**

**Physical development reflects increasing height, body breadth and depth, heart size, lung capacity, muscular strength and sexual development.**

**Average annual gain in weight is eight to ten pounds and in height is 2 inches.**

**Girls are usually taller and more physically advanced than boys in the earlier stages of adolescence. Interest patterns tend to follow physical change.**

Incommensurate growth of heart and body weight may result in functional heart murmurs. Bone growth surpasses muscle development and bones lack protection of muscles and support tendons. This uneven bone-muscle growth facilitates physical regression in coordination and poor body mechanics during rapid growth spurt periods. Wide differences among students in pre-pubescent and pubescent stages of growth are obvious at given stages. Disproportionate changes in weight and muscle development result in awkwardness which is disturbing to the self-concept and self-esteem of formerly coordinated youngsters.

Sexual maturation is closely related to the general physical development occurring during these years. The growth of genitalia in boys, continued breast development in girls, and the appearance of pubic hair in both boys and girls are clear indications of this development. Just as the awareness of such growth is a matter of intense concern for some, so is the lack of it a concern for others. The cultural models of physical attractiveness upset both boys and girls developing outside such near-perfect norms.

Extreme restlessness and alternating periods of almost hyperactivity and fatigue reflect variations in basal metabolic rates. Therefore, students need both opportunities for release of energy and nutrition breaks to counter unstable blood sugar levels. Over-exertion may result in chronic fatigue. Ossification of cartilage in epiphysical areas of the skeleton makes sitting in hard-surfaced chairs extremely uncomfortable and is one of the reasons for the 'ants-in-the-pants, can't-sit-still' problems of this age.

Overtaxing of the digestive system with large quantities of poorly selected foods is a normal experimental activity at this age.

Concern with appearance reflects peer and "pop" fads and experimentation with styles created by media and economic pressure groups. Students may feel extremely sensitive over acne, moles or birthmarks, and personal body development that may be out of the norm depicted in advertising.

National Middle School Association,  
"This We Believe," 1992

## **C – Intellectual Characteristics**

Intellectual characteristics are related to the intellectual nature of the youth as they move from childhood to full adolescence. Initially grounded

**in Piagetian theory, this area has been expanded to include consideration of brain growth periodization data and other theories.**

**Students at the middle level are pressured, often excessively, to succeed academically. The early stages of the transition (aged ten to twelve years) are usually characterized by success in initiating new and higher level cognitive processes because of brain growth experienced by most youngsters during this time. Conversely, many 12 to 14 year olds may experience problems if expectations for continued development of higher thinking skills are held when a plateau in brain growth exists. During this span for those youngsters emphasis should be directed to learning new facts and information within the profile of thinking skills initiated prior to this plateau period. This allows also for the consolidation, refinement and maturation of thinking skills previously developed. Those indicating a readiness to think analytically should be challenged to so.**

**Young adolescents are curious and enjoy both intellectual and manipulative activities appropriate to their stage of development. They prefer active involvement in learning rather than passive reciprocity. They are generally intellectually uninhibited and find learning most interesting when it is related to their immediate goals and interests. Emerging adolescents enjoy discussing experiences with adults. They are also able to evaluate issues critically, though not always objectively, and they display a heightened egocentrism which often balances through peer interaction. They argue to clarify personal thinking as much as to convince others. Strong desires for self-expression and preferences for creative activity stem from their vivid imaginations and growing interest in transposing self and others into other situations.**

**Youth moving through this transition phase display a wide range of skills, interests and abilities. Slow-rate and fast-rate learners both continue to grow toward mental maturity at their own rates. Interests and attention spans alter during this stage, generally assuming shorter rather than longer periods of focus.**

**In their search for identity and personality, learners seek to understand the meaning and enigmas of life from many aspects. They are concerned with intellectual, philosophical, biological, sociological, moral and ethical issues. They have an increased ability to see through situations and seek to find casual and correlative relationships.**

**National Middle School Association,  
"This We Believe," 1992**

## **D – Social Characteristics**

These are related to the socialization needs realized by young adolescents as they broaden their base of affiliation from family to peer group. Opportunities for students to interact both with peers and with those adults who are significant others in non-instructional areas become increasingly important at this age level.

Turmoil often develops as family allegiances diminish and peer allegiances become stronger. Transfer to rather uncompromising peer group authority is accepted while family norms may be devalued, although not without misgivings. Young adolescents desire to make personal choices, but final authority continues to reside in family and other adult bases.

The desire for social acceptance leads to attempts to become effectively gregarious. Efforts are made to gain acceptance by subgroups with those standards with which they wish to conform. Individuality is surrendered in a desire to be accepted. While heterosexual relations grow during this stage, same sex affiliations dominate. Rapid shifts in interests develop along with striking individual differences. Girls often enter a phase where they emulate boys, but are despised by boys because they threaten them.

Group loyalty carries out group will with indifference, and sometimes cruelty, to outsiders. Conformity to the group in terms of mannerisms, dress, speech and behavior often runs counter to social expectations of adults.

Youth aged ten to fourteen vacillate between their desire for regulation and direction and their demand for independence. They have a continuing need for identification with adults, but reserve the right to accept or reject adults' suggestions.

Young adolescents are willing to work hard and sacrifice, especially if social rewards are involved. Altruism and high ideals in the search for beauty and truth are directed toward institutions such as school, community, church and government. Concerns for oppressed groups rises during these years.

National Middle School Association,  
"This We Believe," 1992

## **E – Emotional and Social-Emotional Characteristics**

**Emotional and social-emotional characteristics are related to adolescent adjustment to personal growth patterns and relationships with adults. When such patterns are atypical, the emotional difficulty is intensified.**

**Young adolescents now must deal with and begin to understand "shades of gray" as opposed to "black and white" choices. They are beset with conflicts within themselves which are inscrutable as "self" becomes increasingly paradoxical. These confusing responses include variations of anxiety and fear with reassuring bravado, shyness with noisiness, and over-responding with fear to respond. Standards lose earlier power because individuals are testing the psychological confines of the adult value system. Movement to a peer group system sometimes finds diametric opposition to those former values.**

**Young adolescents tend to make exaggerated responses to anything with sexual implications. One's sexual development is subject to comparison with peer and media expectations of body changes and personal habits and practices. The need to sort fact from folklore is a continuing emotional challenge to youth.**

**The ten to fourteen year old desires attention, at times without regard to how it is secured. Threats and release of tension through emotional outbursts are episodic reflections of rapid shifts and variations of mood.**

**Instances of expressed or implied criticism from adult sources are not easily tolerated, even when they concern things the individual is prone to criticize. Strong desires to move toward increasing levels of independence and personal decision-making contrast with felt needs for the security of adult reassurance and direction.**

**Adult standards and conventions may be ignored, ridiculed and, at times, defied at the level of family authority. Once desirous of pleasing parents and teachers, young adolescents often become rebellious toward adults. Observable periods of irritability, distrust and suspicion convey their tendency to be easily offended and ready to believe that adults do not understand them. Often inconsiderate of others, they may monopolize the family's telephone, television or bathroom.**

**National Middle School Association,  
"This We Believe," 1992**

# **Roots and Wings**

## **Characteristics of the In-Between Ager**

### **Physical Characteristics –**

- 1) Experiencing the onset of puberty with the growth of pubic and auxiliary hair**
- 2) Experiencing the onset of menstruation**
- 3) Having increased appearance of facial hair in boys**
- 4) Undergoing vocal changes (boys)**
- 5) Undergoing physical changes which include: enlargement of breasts in girls and growth in the genitals and broadening of shoulder in boys**
- 6) Acquiring an increased accumulation of fat in girls**
- 7) Changing body shapes**
- 8) Experiencing increased oiliness of skin and hair and increased perspiration, along with a strong body odor**
- 9) Having a tendency towards minor pimples**
- 10) Undergoing accelerated increase in height and weight and growth in size of lungs**
- 11) Realizing increased strength and endurance**
- 12) Maturing in facial features**
- 13) Clumsy and awkward**
- 14) Becoming increasingly coordinated and using their bodies more efficiently**
- 15) Experiencing an increase in the size and weight of heart (nearly doubles)**
- 16) Tending to begin and end development about two years earlier than boys (girls)**
- 17) Growing in a wide variety of shapes and sizes**

## **Intellectual Characteristics -**

- 1) Transitional thinkers**
- 2) Concrete thinkers who are moving into the area of formal operations (Piaget)**
- 3) Able to apply "formal operations"**
- 4) Starting to use "abstract thought" to solve some situations, but not others**
- 5) Beginning to think about possibilities, "What is it?"**
- 6) Increasing their attention spans**
- 7) Intensely interested in political activities and "right" of self and others**
- 8) Starting to hypothesize**
- 9) Enjoying experimentation and exploration**
- 10) Increasingly interested in many things for short periods of time**
- 11) Experimenting with new behaviors in a safe environment**

## **Emotional Characteristics -**

- 1) Wanting parents who can look past immediate actions and still love them**
- 2) Needing adults and peers who are caring and understanding**
- 3) Moving from feelings of sympathy to empathy**
- 4) Intensely committed (to causes) for short periods of time**
- 5) Intensely emotional**
- 6) Unsure, deceptive, honest, bold, scared, insecure**
- 7) Increasingly interested in and fascinated with their own thoughts and emotions**
- 8) Unpredictable**

## **Social Characteristics -**

- 1) Struggling to identify their own personal identity**
- 2) Playful**
- 3) Eager to be accepted as part of peer group**
- 4) Rebellious**
- 5) Closely tied to "best friends"**
- 6) Increasingly interested in the opposite sex, but still desire to have friends of same sex**
- 7) Involved in intense relationships that are often superficial and are based on similar interests of the moment**
- 8) Conforming within peer group, even though they feel unique**
- 9) Often vicious in their verbal attacks of others**
- 10) Striving for independence**
- 11) Needing consistency from adults so they know what to expect**
- 12) Defining value systems**
- 13) Starting to think not only about their own thoughts, but about what others are thinking**
- 14) Very idealistic, but often have difficulty bringing reality and idealism together**
- 15) Appearing to be distancing themselves from parents and family**
- 16) Finding "security" knowing that they can depend on adults and their actions**
- 17) Wanting positive feedback**
- 18) Imagining that everyone is thinking about the same things they are**
- 19) Becoming more adult-like**
- 20) Childlike at times**
- 21) Having difficulty handling sarcasm**
- 22) Needing clear communication about adult concerns**
- 23) Self-conscious about looks and performance**
- 24) Susceptible to believing they are invulnerable**
- 25) Increasingly interested in religion**
- 26) Active, enthusiastic, bored, sincere**
- 27) Eager to please (adults, as well as, peers)**
- 28) Struggling with the development of concept of self and the thoughts of "Who am I?"**
- 29) Discovering new interests**
- 30) Acquiring a sense of shared responsibility**
- 31) Developing a sense of community and belonging**
- 32) Needing increased levels of trust from adults**
- 33) Needing increased freedom from restrictions**
- 34) Desiring the love and acceptance of others**
- 35) Wonderful and lovable!**

"Transescent Book," CEYA (Center of Education for the Young Adolescent), Wisconsin

# **The Middle School Parent**

# **Roots and Wings**

## **Characteristics of Middle Schoolers'**

### **Physical Development**

**Students in their middle learning years:**

- **Experience rapid, irregular physical growth; more than any other time**
  - **Undergo bodily changes that may cause awkward, uncoordinated behavior**
  - **Have varying maturity rates, with girls tending to mature 1 1/2 to 2 years earlier than boys and with girls becoming more developed physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually; and with late maturing students often at a physical disadvantage which may require more protection by caring adults**
  - **Experience restlessness and fatigue due to hormonal changes**
- 

- **Need daily physical activity because of increased unfocused energy**
  - **Experience significant brain growth followed by a period of non-growth, with girls generally undergoing rapid brain growth earlier than boys**
  - **Develop sexual awareness which increases as secondary sex characteristics begin to appear**
  - **Are concerned with bodily changes that accompany sexual maturation and changes resulting in an increase in nose size, protruding ears, long arms and awkward posture; early and late bloomers might have more problems**
- 

- **Have preference for "junk foods" but need good nutrition; they have an increased appetite with a need for more carbohydrates**
- **Lack physical fitness, with poor levels of endurance, strength and flexibility; and, as a group, have bodies heavier and more out of shape**
- **Are physically "at risk" and, as a group, have tendency to be accident prone due to awkwardness and attempts to perform tasks beyond their physical capabilities**

**Parents, remember .....**  
**with early adolescents, strange behavior is often normal.**

<b>Physical Change</b>	<b>What to Do</b>
<b>Rapid Growth</b>	<b>Believe complaints about aching bones, muscles (growing pains)</b> <b>Allow time for stretching (physical activity)</b> <b>Be tolerant of fidgeting</b> <b>Be aware of high levels of physical energy combined with long periods of doing nothing</b>
<b>Sexual Development</b>	<b>Respect need for privacy</b> <b>Provide information about changes</b> <b>Provide time, products for hygiene, grooming</b>
<b>Hormonal Changes</b>	<b>Provide balanced meals and snacks</b> <b>Allow naps if needed</b> <b>Allow students to cope with loss of familiar bodies</b>
<b>Aggressive Behavior</b>	<b>Encourage involvement in sports and community</b> <b>Channel aggression into physical work</b>

Early Adolescence – A Time for Change: Implications for the Family;  
 A videotape by Jerry Tottier, Margie Stone and Delaine Klinka, University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire  
 Available from the National Middle School Association

What Matters in the Middle; Maryland Task Force on the Middle Learning Years;  
 Maryland State Department of Education, Bureau of Educational Development; 1989

# **Roots and Wings**

## **Characteristics of Middle Schoolers' Intellectual Development**

**Students in their middle learning years:**

- **Display a wide range of individual intellectual development**
  - **Are in a transition period from concrete thinking to abstract thinking**
  - **Prefer active over passive experience**
  - **Prefer interaction with peers during learning activities**
- 

- **Respond to opportunities to participate in real life situations**
  - **Are often preoccupied with self**
  - **Have a strong need for approval and may be easily discouraged**
  - **Develop an increasingly better understanding of personal abilities**
- 

- **Are inquisitive about adults, often challenge their authority and are always watching them**
- **Are primarily concerned with social and personal interests rather than academic pursuits**
- **Are interested in personal learning experiences**
- **Are developing a capacity to understand high levels of humor**
- **Are intellectually "at risk," making decisions that affect their immediate academic future which may have life-long consequences**

**Parents, remember .....**  
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<b>Intellectual Change</b>	<b>What to Do</b>
<b>Slowed Brain Growth</b>	<b>Expect fluctuations in grades</b> <b>Break large tasks into small ones</b> <b>Expect short attention span</b>
<b>Intellectual Maturing</b>	<b>Expect both childlike and adult thought patterns</b> <b>Encourage reflection, value discussion</b> <b>Include child in family decision-making</b> <b>Promote career exploration</b>
<b>Identity Concerns</b>	<b>Accept child's thought as important</b> <b>Spend time on individual basis</b> <b>Recognize accomplishments</b>

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# **Roots and Wings**

## **Characteristics of Middle Schoolers' Emotional/Psychological Development**

**Students in their middle learning years:**

- **Have widely varying moods with peaks of intensity and unpredictability as feelings shift between a sense of superiority and inferiority**
  - **Need to release energy, often resulting in sudden, apparently meaningless outbursts of activity**
  - **Seek to become increasingly independent, searching for adult identity and acceptance**
  - **Have great concern for peer acceptance which becomes increasingly important**
  - **Tend to be self-conscious, lacking self-esteem and are easily offended by and sensitive to personal criticism**
- 

- **Exhibit intense concern about physical growth and maturity as profound physical changes occur**
  - **Behave in ways associated with their sex as sex role identification strengthens**
- 

- **Are concerned with many issues as personal value system develops**
- **Believe that personal problems, feelings and experiences are unique to themselves**
- **Are basically optimistic about their future – infallible, invisible, personal fables**
- **Carry an "imaginary audience" with them**
- **Are psychologically "at risk" because, at no other stage in development, are they more likely to encounter so many differences between themselves and others**

**Parents, remember .....**  
**with early adolescents, strange behavior is often normal.**

<b>Emotional Change</b>	<b>What to Do</b>
<b>Mood Fluctuations</b>	<b>Understand link between emotions and physical changes</b> <b>Be consistent with discipline</b> <b>Expect back talk, bossiness within limits</b> <b>Expect adult advice to be rejected</b>
<b>Changes in Alliances</b>	<b>Understand importance of peer acceptance</b> <b>Maintain a stable home environment</b>
<b>Concern about Self Egocentric</b>	<b>Stress child's positive qualities</b> <b>Help child find activities he/she does well</b> <b>Listen sensitively to fears</b>
<b>Idealism</b>	<b>Help child understand everyone makes mistakes</b> <b>Help child set realistic goals</b>

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# **Roots and Wings**

## **Characteristics of Middle Schoolers' Social Development**

Students in their middle learning years:

- **Have a strong need to belong to a group, with the need and search for peer approval increases as the importance of adult approval decreases**
  - **Model behavior in their search for self after older, esteemed students or non-parent adults**
  - **Exhibit immature behavior because their social skills frequently lag behind their mental and physical maturity**
  - **Experiment with new slang and behavior as they search for a social position within their group, often disregarding these "new identities" at a later date**
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- **Must adjust to the social acceptance of early maturing girls and the athletic successes of early maturing boys, especially if they are maturing at a slower rate**
  - **Are dependent on parental beliefs and values but do everything to be individual making their own decisions**
  - **Are intimidated and frightened by their first secondary school experience because the numbers of students and teachers and the largeness of the school building cause anxiety and feeling of not belonging**
- 

- **Want recognition for their efforts and achievements**
- **Like fads, especially those shunned by adults but highlighted by the media**
- **React overtly to ridicule, embarrassment and rejection**
- **Are socially at-risk because, as they develop their beliefs, attitudes and values during adolescence, any negative experiences with teachers, parents and peers may tend to compromise their ideals and value system**

**Parents, remember .....**  
**with early adolescents, strange behavior is often normal.**

<b>Social Change</b>	<b>What to Do</b>
<b>Allegiance to Peers</b>	<b>Realize family will be rejected</b> <b>Try to accept friendships</b> <b>Discuss alcohol and drug abuse</b> <b>Allow social activities in the home</b> <b>Support school-related social activities</b> <b>Expect new looks and new friends, often</b>
<b>Interest in Sex</b>	<b>Discuss normal behavior</b> <b>Try to put sex into perspective</b>
<b>Desire for Independence</b>	<b>Expect rebellion within limits</b> <b>Understand need for privacy</b> <b>Be tolerant of one-syllable responses</b>

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# Roots and Wings

## Differences between Girls and Boys in Adolescence

Physically, the ten to twelve year olds who are approaching puberty begin to show marked changes in their growth patterns. Before onset of puberty, there may be a resting period of six months or a year during which little gain in height or weight is made. This resting period is usually followed by a period of rapid growth which may last one or two years.

	For Most Girls	Common to Both	For Most Boys
Height	Growth spurt is at 11 or 12 – although it may come anytime between 8 and 14.		Growth spurt later than 11 or 12.
Weight	Gains of 20 pounds in one year are not unusual. Hips broaden; breasts begin to develop; pubic hair; menstruation begins for many.		Boys' weight gains are more gradual but are made over a longer period of time. Shoulders broaden; pubic hair.
Heart		Heart is not fully developed in both; is in danger of overtiring, especially in competitive games.	
Maturing	More socially mature; become interested in boys and parties and dancing. Legs grow first, then trunk and chest, then hips grow.		
Awkwardness		Since height and weight gain are not made simultaneously boys/girls may be awkward.	Legs grow first, then trunk and shoulders grow.
Laziness		The physical change taking place saps children's energy. Have great energy spurts with frequent lazy periods; fatigue may be body's real need for rest.	

	<b>For Most Girls</b>	<b>Common to Both</b>	<b>For Most Boys</b>
<b>Emotional/Social Maturity Fluctuates</b>		<p>Both may be moody and difficult to get along with since they are going through so many physical and emotional changes.</p> <p>They become overcritical of parents and teachers, but may also develop crushes on adults to whom they are attracted.</p>	
<b>Best Friend Is Needed</b>	More important to girls than boys.	Old friendships may change.	Boys tend to form groups.
<b>Group Is Very Important</b>		<p>Trouble, misunderstandings are likely to develop among youngsters of differing maturity levels.</p> <p>Quarreling, gossiping, name calling and spreading rumors are common.</p> <p>Withdrawing from the group, and being and feeling left out are also common.</p> <p>Some are just not interested in a group. If he/she has 1 or 2 friends, there is no concern.</p>	<p>Boys tend to keep interest alive in secret codes, secret words.</p> <p>With boys, gang interest is often beginning to merge into a new interest in a team sport or Scout activity.</p>
<b>Play Skills Are Important</b> <b>Interest in Team Games Is High</b>		<p>Competence in play skills gives feelings of confidence.</p> <p>Opportunities for skating, soccer, bowling, baseball, etc. help to develop coordination and skill.</p>	
<b>Period of Disorganization</b>		Will rebel concerning a set bedtime, at keeping clean, at wearing types of clothes parents think suitable; may use inappropriate language and be untidy and uncooperative.	

**Characteristics of Children of 10 to 14 year olds taken from various DODDSEUR Materials, Department of Defense Schools, European Area, Athens School**

# A Memorandum from Your Child

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## To: the Parents

- 1) Don't spoil me. I know quite well that I ought not to have all I ask for. I'm only testing you.
- 2) Don't be afraid to be firm with me. I prefer it. It makes me feel more secure.
- 3) Don't do for me what I can do for myself. It makes me feel smaller than I am.
- 4) Don't correct me in front of people if you can help it. I'll take much more notice if you talk quietly with me in private.
- 5) Don't try to discuss my behavior in the heat of the situation. For some reason, my hearing is not very good at this time and my cooperation is even worse. It is alright to take the action required, but let's not talk about it until later.
- 6) Don't make me feel that my mistakes are sins. It upsets my sense of values.
- 7) Don't be too upset when I say, "I hate you." I don't mean it, but I want you to feel sorry for what you have done to me.
- 8) Don't protect me from consequences. I need to learn the HARD way sometimes.
- 9) Don't take too much notice of my small ailments. Sometimes they get me the attention I need.
- 10) Don't nag. If you do so, I shall have to protect myself by appearing deaf.
- 11) Don't forget that I cannot explain myself as well as I would like. That is ONE REASON why I am not always very accurate.
- 12) Don't tax my honesty too much. I am easily frightened into telling lies.
- 13) Don't be inconsistent. That completely confuses me and makes me lose faith in your guidance.
- 14) Don't put me off when I ask questions for information. If you do, you will find that I stop asking questions and seek my information elsewhere.

- 15) Don't ever suggest that you are perfect or infallible.  
It gives me too great a shock when I discover that you are neither.
- 16) Don't every think that it is beneath your dignity to apologize to me.  
An honest apology makes me feel surprisingly warm toward you.
- 17) Don't forget, I love experimenting.  
I couldn't get on without it, so please put up with it.
- 18) Don't forget how quickly I am growing up.  
It must be very difficult for you to keep pace with me, but please try.
- 19) Don't use force with me, I will respond more readily to being led.

# **Roots and Wings**

## **The Middle School Parent**

### **A Supportive Middle School Parent Is .....**

<b>Loyal to the child</b>	<b>Understanding/loving</b>
<b>A confidant</b>	<b>Able to teach values – religion, sex, morals</b>
<b>Nurturing</b>	<b>Compromising</b>
<b>Mature emotionally</b>	<b>Interested – school work and attendance</b>
<b>Idealistic</b>	<b>Trusting and developing trustworthiness</b>
<b>A chauffeur</b>	<b>Academically attuned</b>
<b>A volunteer</b>	<b>Able to provide structure</b>
<b>Able to set limits</b>	<b>A listener – sounding board</b>
<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Understanding of the middle school child</b>
<b>A role model</b>	<b>A provider – food, shelter</b>
<b>An advisor</b>	<b>Home – some of the time</b>
<b>Talented</b>	<b>Able to recognize limitation of schools and teachers</b>
<b>Protective</b>	<b>Knowledgeable of and responsible for communicating with the school system</b>

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### **Eight Tips for Middle School Parents**

Courtesy of Hammond Middle School Handbook

- 1) Let middle schoolers let off steam a bit.**
- 2) Give them time to express their thoughts and feelings.**
- 3) Maintain a sense of humor to meet the ups and downs.**
- 4) Treat them as young adults.**
- 5) Show affection and positive attention even when difficult.**
- 6) Help them to understand their own pattern of growth and development.**
- 7) Provide a sense of belonging and acceptance.**
- 8) Help them to recognize their own uniqueness.**