



Dear Parents,

As school starts, summer ends, and our busy lives become busier. This message is a reminder that below the surface demands of our lives a child is growing and developing, and he/she needs us. Middle School is an essential bridge between childhood and emerging adulthood; there is tremendous growth and tremendous vulnerability. Our support, humor, life-experiences, and caring are essential support for a child's safe journey. The following article captures the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social changes facing your child during the next two years.

Change is the word that best captures the middle school years. Your students are going through a transformation, from childhood to adulthood. You will notice periods of quiet and periods of exuberant energy, periods of anxiety and periods of unbelievable confidence, periods of loneliness and periods of total involvement with their friends, periods of adjusting and periods of not wanting to adjust to anything. Welcome to the wonderful world of transadulthood. Throughout this active period, change is the operative word and listening is the operative response. Remember, at Egan we work with our parents and students to create safe, reasonable parameters that allow each child to take personal responsibility and, hopefully, learn from life experiences. Please call our counselor, Bruce McClain, or me if you are caught in the emotional backwash of these two years, or, simply want to know if what you or your student is experiencing is normal. Please call us immediately if you have a question or a concern. Working together will make these two years more productive for you and your student, and it will help us better serve your student.

As you peruse the following information, remember each child develops at a unique pace – each characteristic takes on a different hue and significance with each child.

The following information is excerpted from *Caught In The Middle*, a California State Dept. of Education publication.

A. Intellectual Development

Middle Grade Students:

- 1) Display a wide range of individual intellectual development as their minds experience transition from the concrete-manipulatory stage to the capacity for abstract thought. This transition ultimately makes possible:
 - propositional thought
 - consideration of ideas contrary to fact
 - insights into nuances of poetic metaphor
 - ability to project thought into the future, to anticipate, and to formulate goals
 - insight into the sources of previously unquestioned attitudes, behaviors, values
- 2) Are intensely curious;
- 3) Prefer active to passive learning experiences; favor interaction with peers during activities;
- 4) Exhibit a strong willingness to learn things they consider to be useful;
- 5) Are ego-centric; argue to convince others; exhibit independent, critical thought;
- 6) Consider academic goals as a secondary level of priority; personal-social concerns dominate thoughts and activities;

- 7) Experience the phenomenon of meta-cognition - the ability to know what one knows and does not know;
- 8) Are intellectually at-risk; face decisions that have the potential to affect major academic values with lifelong consequences.

B. Physical Development

Middle Grade Students:

- 1) Experience accelerated physical development marked by increases in weight, height, heart size, lung capacity, and muscular strength;
- 2) Boys and girls mature at varying rates of speed;
- 3) Experience bone growth faster than muscle development; uneven muscle/bone development results in lack of coordination and awkwardness;
- 4) Reflect a wide range of individual differences, which begin to appear in prepubertal and pubertal stages of development. Boys tend to lag behind girls. There are marked individual differences in physical development for boys and girls. The age of greatest variability in physiological development and size occurs at about age thirteen;
- 5) Show changes in body contour including temporarily large noses, protruding ears, long arms; have posture problems;
- 6) Experience fluctuations in basal metabolism that can cause extreme restlessness at times and equally extreme listlessness at other moments.

C. Psychological Development

Middle Grade Students:

- 1) Are often erratic and inconsistent in their behavior; anxiety and fear are contrasted with periods of bravado; feelings shift between superiority and inferiority;
- 2) Have chemical and hormonal imbalances which often trigger emotions that are frightening, poorly understood; may regress to more childish behavior patterns at this point;
- 3) Are easily offended and are sensitive to criticism of personal shortcomings;
- 4) Tend to exaggerate simple occurrences and believe that personal problems, experiences, and feelings are unique to themselves;
- 5) Are moody, restless; often feel self-conscious and alienated; lack self-esteem; are introspective;
- 6) Are searching to form a conscious sense of individual uniqueness - "Who am I?"
- 7) Have an emerging sense of humor based upon increased intellectual ability to see abstract relationships; appreciate the "double entendre";
- 8) Are basically optimistic, hopeful;
- 9) Are psychologically at-risk; at no other point in human development is an individual likely to encounter so much diversity in relation to oneself and others.

D. Social Development

Middle Grade Students:

- 1) Often experience traumatic conflicts due to conflicting loyalties to peer groups and family;
- 2) Refer to peers as sources for standards and models of behavior; media heroes and heroines are also singularly important in shaping both behavior and fashion;
- 3) May be rebellious towards parents but still strongly dependent upon parental values; want to make own choices, but the authority of the family is a critical factor in ultimate decisions;
- 4) Act out unusual or drastic behavior at times; may be aggressive, daring, boisterous, and argumentative;
- 5) Are fiercely loyal to peer group values;
- 6) Want to know and feel that significant adults, including parents and teachers, love and accept them; need frequent affirmation;

- 7) Sense negative impact of adolescent behaviors on parents and teachers; realize thin edge between tolerance and rejection; feelings of adult rejection drive the adolescent into the relatively secure social environment of the peer group;
- 8) Challenge authority figures; test limits of acceptable behavior.

E. Moral and Ethical Development

Middle Grade Students:

- 1) Are essentially idealistic; have a strong sense of fairness in human relationships;
- 2) Experience thoughts and feelings of awe and wonder related to their expanding intellectual and emotional awareness;
- 3) Ask large, unanswerable questions about the meaning of life; do not expect absolute answers but are turned off by trivial adult responses;
- 4) Are reflective, analytical, and introspective about their thoughts and feelings;
- 5) Confront hard moral and ethical questions for which they are unprepared to cope.

Junior High years are essential to success in high school, and working together we can assure our students will be academically, socially, and emotionally ready to succeed in high school. We look forward to working together to fulfill our motto: VIKINGS STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE.

Brenda Dyckman

Principal