Helping Your Young Teen Transition to Middle School  
by: Nina S. Mounts

What challenges do teens face during the middle school/junior high transition?
Researcher Jacquelyn Eccles suggests that the transition to middle school/junior high is a challenge academically and socially for many early adolescents because young teens attend larger schools and change classes throughout the day.

Switching classes for young teens means that one teacher isn’t tracking all of their assignments. Many young teens don’t know how to do this without some support from parents. Switching classes also makes it harder for young teens to get to know their teachers. This is a big change from elementary school when they saw the same teacher all day, every day!

Dealing with a larger school might make it difficult to get to know other kids. The friends that teens make in one class might not be in their other classes. This is a big change from elementary school. My research shows that parents can help young teens make new friendship networks.

What can you, as a parent, do to help with this transition?

• Help your teen set up a system for tracking homework and in class assignments using a small notebook. Check in with your teen periodically to find out how the assignment tracking is going. You want your child to do this independently, so give some help, but don’t do it all for him!

• Encourage your child to talk to her teachers, instead of you doing it for her. This will help her build relationships with her teachers.

• Encourage your teen to give extracurricular activities a try. Extracurricular activities are an excellent place to start friendships.

• Give your teen an opportunity to invite kids to activities outside of school. This will set the stage for developing those new friendships.

• Be ready to help your child think about strategies for making new friends. Your teen is starting to want independence from you in regard to friends, so don’t force yourself into your teen’s peer relationships. Rather, be alert for times when your teen might be looking for advice about friends.

Remember, with some extra support from you, your teen will make a smooth transition into his/her new school!

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