

A-Z GUIDE TO SUPPORT PARENTS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

This is an A-Z list of helpful hints that has been devised to support parents maneuvering the middle school years. Many of these items are in the *OGMS Student Planner*, which contains the Student Handbook that each student has as a guide to support positive experiences at OGMS. If you have questions, please contact the principal.

Nuts and Bolts for Success

A-Academic Assistance has been designed into our late start day to provide a direct opportunity for our teachers to meet with struggling students, students who have missing assignments or may need to make-up an exam. During academic assistance, teachers are in their rooms from 8:55- 9:25 and are available to provide extra help that may be needed by a student who can drop in, or may be requested to attend the assistance time by his/her teacher. If the teacher invites your child in for assistance, please do what you can to have your child arrive and receive the guidance needed.

B-Building Community is critical in middle school. Students who feel connected have greater attendance at school and achieve academically. We build community through a variety of activities like school-wide assemblies, open library and Panther Den during lunch, activities through student council as well as opening up the gym, field and library for additional activities. We also work to support students being respectful, responsible and kind and we know these behaviors support community because everyone understands the expectations. Additionally, we have built in extra time during our first period to support character development and as an opportunity for students to have greater community with their first period teachers. Activities and ideas are provided weekly to teachers to guide similar school-wide experiences.

C-Conferences are different in a MS. At OG we want our students to be able to reflect on their learning, set goals for improvement, and learn how to construct support for work that is well done by talking about it. Helping our students be self-directed through leading a learning conference is key and one of the most powerful ways we believe in helping students take ownership for their work ethic and achievement. However, we recognize parents have a need to be able to talk to teachers and often feel uncomfortable emailing staff, so we will run two types of conferences. In the fall we will run a modified conference schedule that is similar to what is done at our district high school. Parents will be notified ahead of time to sign-up and speak to a teacher(s). Each teacher is scheduled for 10-minute slot and together student, teacher and parent can converse about how the student is performing. It is critical to involve your child in this conference because parents and teachers can further model for students how adults hold conferences and after all, the student needs to hear from everyone how they

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are perceived. In the spring, we will run Student-Led Conferences where students will share with their parents their portfolio of work and their progress on their goals and reflect about their learning.

D- Discipline is about teaching and learning. Students make mistakes and middle school is a good time to learn from mistakes, so that when students go onto high school, they do not make the same mistakes where the consequences can be much greater. During the middle-school years often there is no explanation for the poor behavior, because this age group reacts before they think. Consequences are not thought about ahead of the action, and remorse is typically sincere. Honesty and owning the behavior is what we strive for to help our students learn from their poor choices. We work to give a logical consequence and then we support the student moving on and hopefully learning from the experience.

E-Empowerment is key at this age and by **encouraging independent problem solving** you can empower your child to resolve his/her problem, gain confidence and become more independent. As a parent you need to know what is going on in school and your child's academic progress, but when a problem arises, encourage your child to solve his/her problem. Sometimes simply by helping your child identify whom they need to visit with and then encouraging your child to communicate with the teacher, the counselor or even an administrator will help instill confidence and provides your child with tools for learning to advocate for him/herself which is a lifelong skill.

F-Family Faculty Organization or FFO is an important way to be involved and know what is going on during your child's middle school years. Volunteering in middle school looks different. It isn't a center helper, it isn't a room parent, and it isn't just baking cookies for an event. It is an opportunity to attend coffees prior to the FFO meeting to learn about grade level news and hear concerns other parents have about their children who are struggling with friends or asking for more independence and aren't sure how to handle it. It's about attending the FFO meetings and learning about the committee opportunities that go on behind the scenes to help make middle school a positive experience for all students, and it is about being informed about school, district and local/state news. Meetings occur every 4th Thursday of the month at 8:30 a.m. and everyone is welcome.

G-Grades. Yes, they are important but not as important as helping your child look at where their weaknesses are and zeroing in on how to help your child set goals to improve his/her progress toward the benchmark noted on the report card. If your child has anything below a 2.5, talk to your child's teacher and see what you can do to support your child improving and moving toward a 3.0. A 4.0 represents opportunities outside the grade level that a teacher provides so anything your child receives beyond a 3.0 shows they are working and looking at ways to extend their learning.

H- Homework is key to success because it provides a student with opportunities to practice the skill and it helps to teach an important habit of mind. At Orange Grove, students receive a personal and social responsibility grade, and often don't take this grade seriously. We take doing the work very seriously because there is a strong correlation between content grades and doing or not doing homework. We try to impress upon students that effort equals achievement and you can help by reminding your child to check the teacher's website, pay attention to your child's missing assignments on the ParentVUE, and help your child celebrate when you notice they are getting their work done without you reminding them.

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I-Internet use is something none of us had to deal with at this age, but it is our children's world. Instagramming, Gaming, IMing, Snapchatting, Cyberbullying, Tweeting, Texting, YouTube - the list of interactive platforms goes on and on. We know we have students on Instagram who aren't of age, we know we have your student texting you when they go to the restroom to bring their forgotten lunch, and we know students use various technology tools to be unkind to each other. What we also know is your children don't realize the dangers of the Internet and how they are leaving a footprint every time they push send. We work hard to teach your children about digital citizenship, but you can help by keeping any computer with internet access in a common place and reminding your child to never give out personal information, never agree to meet someone they met online and to ROCK online which means **Read Over** and **Check for Kindness** before pushing send. For more information on Internet Safety, go to www.socialsafety.org or www.wiredsafety.org.

J-Jargon...don't get lost in it. Yes, your children do have a language of their own and LOL or other texting abbreviations help them to think they are pulling something over you. We let them have their own language, their own fads, and we try to stay out of these harmless ways the students try to exert some of their independence with their made up words, gestures and slang. Please know that we will step in if it seems like the messaging is inappropriate or hurtful to another person and it is pretty obvious when this is occurring. When you aren't sure of a word's meaning, you might consider looking the word up in Urban Dictionary.com.

K- Kids First...your child at this age is almost like the ego-centric two-year-old who has to have the toy they want and doesn't know how to share. This is the age that your child does begin to exhibit signs of rebellion because he/she is all about having his/her way and they are perfectly content telling you everyone else gets to do what they want, go where they want and frankly they are happy to let you know that you are the meanest parent in the world. Thank them for the compliment and know it is a stage, but don't engage. Keep setting boundaries, and pick your battles. Hair color, a messy room, an extra dessert can be pretty harmless, but decide what your non-negotiable issues are and those are the battles to take on.

L-Late arrivals at school are not an option. Your child has one main job and that is to attend school. If your child stayed up late, that doesn't give her/him a pass to come to school late. If your child has a test, it isn't okay to promote staying home and studying. When we as parents allow students to stay home or miss a class or a class period, we are sending the message that school isn't important. If your child doesn't want to go to school, or you see a pattern of excuses for missing school, please talk to your child or have your child talk to his/her school counselors. Students who are chronically tardy to class, including first period, will receive lunch detention.

M-Mood Swings. Yes, we did say mood swings. The middle-school years are a time in which there is physical, emotional intellectual and social change and it is a time that can frustrate the most patient parent. When you think about all the changes they are going through, it is easy to understand why they are moody. Bodies changing, or not changing, hormones make your child feel tired, achy and even cranky. You can help by reassuring your child they look great, their changes are normal and be sure you choose clothes that flatter your child and you remind them of good hygiene by buying various products that support this. Dive into these conversations and be sure to respect their ideas. They need to know they have a voice at this age and know they are simply trying to find their identity and fit in when everything about them says they don't.

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N-Need Assistance and don't know where to turn? Our counselors can point you in the right direction with lots of resources. Additionally, for a student struggling due to academics, we have what is called the Panther Den. An adult can further support your child and peers helping peers during lunch in room 302. The nurse is also great at supporting students, especially those that don't feel well. Your teachers and your principal can also support your child. **The first place to start if it is an academic issue is to email the teacher.**

O-Organizational skills or a lack of these skills becomes apparent in middle school even more because your child has a lot more things to keep track of and a different teacher for every period. It is normal for some students to have everything in its place while other students can't find anything or even remember where they put the item. Don't stress, we know this is the reality of kids this age and we continue to look at ways to organize them; there is no one way that works for everyone. However, here are some reminders to support your child at home with this skill: Have your child use his/her planner and check it periodically. Make sure your child has the supplies needed for each class and help them to label the folders. Keep returned papers, quizzes and tests until you see the item put in students' grades on StudentVUE. If your child isn't good at organization, have him/her clean out his/her backpack each week and put loose papers in the proper folders. For long term assignments, help your child organize for the tasks by writing what can be accomplished over the time period and help your child pace the project so it isn't done the night before it is due. Most importantly, every night have the backpack by the door, have clothes laid out and have things needed to take to school where they are visible. A little time spent in the beginning of a school year, a new quarter and a new semester reorganizing can go a long way in supporting your child. Remember there is more than one way to organize and so if their way doesn't match your way, but it works for them, let it go. The point is your child has a system.

P-Pride. We hope your student will take pride in his/her appearance. Orange Grove Middle School encourages students to take pride in their attire as it relates to the school setting. Students should dress in a manner that, in addition to the guidelines, takes into consideration the educational environment, safety, health and welfare of self and others. The dress and grooming of Orange Grove's students contributes to the health and safety of the individual, promotes a positive educational environment and does not disrupt the educational activities and processes of the school. Please know we will call you and/or send a letter if your child is not following our dress code to have you bring a different set of clothes.

Q-Questions When you are in doubt, ask our staff in the Front Office. How to get a lunch to your child, when dates of certain events are, who can help you with your ParentVUE account, and oh so much more can all be supported simply by calling Mrs. Morgan at 209-8202 or Mrs. Algeo at 209-8201. If these women can't answer your questions, they will happily find the answer and get back to you in a reasonable time.

R-Responsibility is the main part of helping our young people become empowered. We build responsibility through club and sport participation, teaching our students to tap their resources, use their StudentVUE, and to seek help from their counselors, teachers or even go into the Panther Den and receive support from an adult or peer. Our hope is to give students tools to be responsible citizens and learners so that they can contribute in their community.

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S-Standardized Testing occurs in April. We ask you as parents to be mindful of not taking your child out of school for appointments, to remind your child to eat a good breakfast and to ensure your child gets plenty of sleep. Each factor plays an important role in supporting your child during testing and throughout the year even when we aren't testing. If you must take your child out for an appointment, please consider scheduling the appointment for a Wednesday late start morning.

T-Team. We are all here for your child and a strong partnership begins with communication. Email us, call us and know we all want the same things, for your child to become self-directed and confident in maneuvering through middle school and the years beyond.

U-Unsupervised students are an accident waiting to happen. Please remember being present is just as important now as it was when your child was in elementary school. Allowing your child to go to the mall after school unsupervised for long periods of time, going to a home where an adult is not present, or even being home for long periods of time alone can invite your child to make poor choices. This is not because they are prone to do that, but because they often don't think about the consequences of their choices until after the fact. We don't have supervision before 7:00 a.m. or after 2:30 p.m. on our campus so please don't drop students off early and be prompt in picking them up.

V-Visitors are welcome at Orange Grove Middle School. The Catalina Foothills School District asks that all visitors check in at the school office upon arrival on campus and show a photo id to verify their identity. A visitors badge will then be given in exchange for an item of value (car keys, phone, etc.), which will be returned when the adult leaves the campus. With approval from the Principal, regular visitors (likely parent volunteers) to the OGMS campus can pay for a fingerprint clearance card and receive a permanent photo badge, to streamline entry onto the OGMS campus. We encourage parents to volunteer during our two lunch periods which gives them an opportunity to see what it is like to be a middle schooler and the kinds of interactions that take place. All school assemblies are for students only; we don't have the capacity in our MPR to safely accommodate all parents. Student visitors aren't permitted at any time during the school day.

W-Website-Sign up for the RSS feed to receive important information about what is happening at our school by going to our website www.ogms.cfsd16.org which provides you with parent, teacher, academic, extra curricular information and access to the InTouch online payment portal.

X-X-tra curricular activities-Middle School is the time to have your child try lots of different sports, join clubs, and volunteer to give back to the community. Help your child figure out what is the best activity or activities for your child to engage in. The [Community Schools after-school programs](#) are a great way to meet other students, become involved in the school, and participate in activities that help your child thrive: sports, the arts, and academics. Students who are busy don't have time to get in trouble, but remember a growing body needs sleep, so be careful not to over-schedule your child.

Y-You are the most important person in your child's life. They want you to be proud of them even though they give you attitude. Believe in them, encourage them, and help them maneuver the system so that as Ann Landers would say "It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings." Middle school is all about you helping them take on more and more responsibility and problem solve so that you are giving them the tools they need to go to the next level and beyond in life.

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Z-Zap, or Zeros Aren't Permitted is a program to support and build strong academic and work ethic skills amongst our students. The focus of the program is on-time work completion by all OGMS students. The purpose of ZAP is to prevent students from having zeros and to support practice and mastery of essential academic skills. We will notify parents and students if a student has a zero in any class and needs to come to school at 7:30 on a Wednesday morning, or Tuesday or Thursday afternoon. We will send emails to your students and you, notifying them if they have missing assignments - this is information that we hope is useful to your student as they organize their time and resources. Very often, a student will have turned an assignment in, but neglected to put their name on the work - or will have turned it into the wrong location, etc. We hope these reminders serve as prompts to help students communicate with teachers to make sure they understand the requirements and have their work in. If a student is missing 3 assignments / assessments, they will be required to attend ZAP (of course, students who have been out due to illness will be provided extra time to complete their assignments prior to having their name submitted to stay after school).

We hope you found the A-Zs helpful in figuring out how to maneuver through the middle school years and remember... **we are here to help you, so ask if you don't know or need more information. Be sure to log-on to our website at ogms.cfsd16.org to further guide your journey through the 2019/20 School Year.**