

Starting Middle School During COVID-19

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While my older daughter is finishing up middle school, my younger one is just starting 6th grade this fall! Even though she has heard all about the middle school experience from my older daughter, my younger still faces her own set of concerns, especially in the context of COVID-19. Here are some of the paradigm shifts we have discussed with her to prepare her for middle school.

Learning Environment



While the transition from elementary school to middle school is already a big one, a transition during the uncertainties of COVID-19 is especially difficult. Since spring, we have had to learn how to manage distance learning which included

scheduling class Zoom meetings and Google Meets
balancing screen time for academic and social

activities

navigating online textbooks and resources for learning

having limited access to the teacher (Daily video lessons, an optional 30 min Zoom Q&A session, and a weekly class check-in are just not the same as connecting and learning in-person.)

Returning to school will look very different from what we have ever seen and experienced, but some things still remain true whether in a distance learning or hybrid style school program. My daughter will have to learn how to

actively participate and speak up especially because it is a virtual classroom

take initiative to ask teachers questions when she does not understand because it may be easier to “fall through the cracks”

be resourceful to learn a different school’s or teachers’ online learning management system

find alternate or multiple sources to help her understand content if her teachers aren’t available

Social Environment

In the elementary school setting, students are housed in one classroom and they can also play with friends in the playground. Now, having to move to a virtual or hybrid middle school experience, my daughter will have to learn how to connect and make friends with others in a virtual way. To overcome the socially awkward middle school years, and now to have to overcome the social distance

hurdle are no easy tasks! These are the topics of discussions we've had, and no doubt, will continue to have as we support her adjustment to the "new normal" of doing school in the COVID era.

Don't be shy. Take initiative in the virtual class to say "hi" and introduce yourself.

Ask people about themselves and their interests.

Ask if anyone would like to do a virtual lunch together.

Offer to hop on a Google Meet and do homework or class assignments together.

Wishing you the best as school opens up this fall,

Jaime

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