

Options for Tomorrow

Transition planning for the future ...
produced by the Anchorage School District STeP Center
and the Secondary Special Education Department

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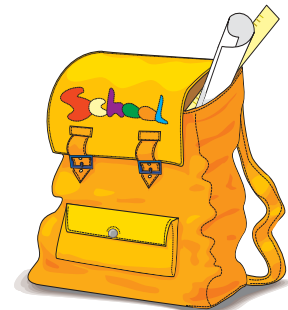
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How Different Can Middle School Really Be?

As former sixth grade students are in the process of transitioning into Middle School, parents are also noticing some differences between Middle School and Elementary School. And, to make matters worse, Middle School isn't like it used to be, so everyone is temporarily confused.



Middle School operates on a team model. Each team consists of a group of students, 4 core teachers (English, Math, Science, and Social Studies) and a Special Education Collaborator. The team teachers have one period daily when they meet together to call parents, discuss students and plan activities for their team. The nice thing about that is, if you go to school for a team meeting about your student, you get to see and talk to all 5 members of the team at one time. Counselors can set up those team meetings at your request, or you may be invited at the request of the team teachers.

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To Order this Free Newsletter!

Any parent, teacher, agency representative or student who wishes to receive this newsletter can email us at step@asdk12.org or call 742-3872. All email addresses will be used for this newsletter subscription only and will be held confidential.

How Different Can Middle School Really Be?

But, your child has more than 4 core subjects during the day. There are required subjects like PE and, for 8th graders, Health. There are also a host of elective classes. Some of the electives are year-long choices, others are quarterly changes and still others are by the semester. There are 7 periods in a day, That means there are 7 opportunities to be tardy during the day. These 7 periods are scheduled by a counselor assigned to your child's team or the Special Education Department Chair.

The changing of classes brings a lot of anxiety to students because they are afraid they will not have enough time to get to their locker, use the restroom, and report to class on time. Within a few weeks, most of the wrinkles are worked out and things run smoothly.

Another cause for concern to your student may be the combination lock on their locker. Again, within a couple of weeks, most students get that wrinkle ironed out also. Special locks for students who are unable to master the traditional combination locks are available. Staff and security are more than willing to help all students with their lockers.

Lunches cannot be charged at Middle School. It doesn't take long for students to realize they need to be responsible about making their lunches ahead or making arrangements for money before coming to school. Vending machines are locked until the end of the school day so that junk food doesn't get in the way of a nutritious meal. Students can buy juice and water from the machines in the cafeteria during the school day.

Don't forget to call in your child's absence to the attendance counselor. Make arrangements with the nurse for any medications that need to be administered. Above all, if you have questions about your child's program, call and asks to speak to a counselor or the Special Education Department Chair.

Organize Your Locker and Your Life

Opening your locker and finding papers scattered, books on the shelf and under your jacket, your lunch squished between your football and running shoes doesn't allow for a quick transition to your next class. Keeping your locker organized and neat will help you find that science paper that is due next period without too much scrambling. A small trashcan collects those unruly candy wrappers that you sneak between classes to give you a boost. Keeping your locker in order can help keep your life in order too.



Making Friends with the SAT

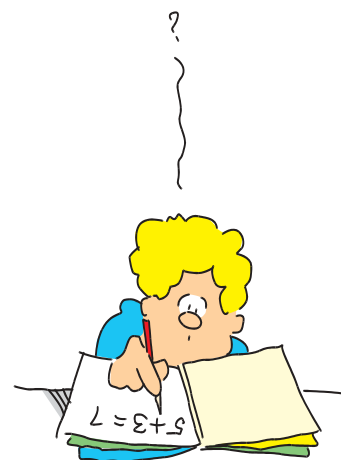


When you are first looking for online information about the SAT, start with the websites for the Educational Testing Service - <http://www.ets.org/> and Collegeboard.com - <http://www.collegeboard.com/>. These two websites provide information about the SAT I and II tests as well as how to register to take the examinations. If you are a student who receives special education services or accommodations under a 504 Plan, be sure to review the "Students with Disabilities" section at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/disable/students/html/indx000.html>.

The process for requesting accommodations requires students must submit a Student Eligibility Form. A visit to your high school counselor is the best place to start to learn about this process.

Preparing for the ACT

The ACT is the most widely accepted college entrance exam. A great place to begin learning about the ACT is at their website - <http://www.act.org/>. The ACT Assessment® is designed to assess high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The tests cover four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science. Information on test registration, preparation and sample questions as well as test day procedures is online at: <http://www.act.org/aap/>. Although most of the ACT information is pretty easily located, one section of the website is somewhat difficult to find. Information for students with disabilities is located at: <http://www.act.org/aap/disab/index.html>. Here are a couple of special items students should be aware of:



ACT has established policies regarding documentation of an applicant's disability and the process for requesting accommodations.

Effective with ACT Assessment score reports issued after September 1, 2003, ACT no longer flags scores achieved with extended time as "special."

If you currently receive accommodations in school due to a professionally diagnosed and documented disability, you may provide documentation to support a request for one of the several options. Be sure to review the testing options chart located at: <http://www.act.org/aap/disab/chart.html>.

The ACT Assessment is offered only in English. Accommodations (including extended-time testing) are not available solely on the basis of limited English proficiency.

New to High School?

In the move from middle school (MS) to high school (HS), you have probably noticed some differences between the way collaboration and study skills are provided.

In MS, each student is part of a team made up of 4 core teachers and a study skills teacher. Classes are located close together and teachers collaborate with each other daily. The study skills teacher provides support within these core classes as well as assisting students with academic assignments during the study skills class.

The HS model is not organized with a core academic team. Collaborators are sometimes available to provide support in the regular academic classes. A separate study skills class teaches learning strategies to help students in their classes. The study skills teacher also provides support for academic assignments within the study skills classroom.

What To Really Expect from Study Skills

The secondary special education department offers Study Skills classes in each of its middle and high schools. Students receive direct instruction in study skill strategies for the first ten minutes of the period and the rest of the class time to work on assignments from core classes. Students are taught strategies to become independent learners and improve their organization and time management. Strategies include learning styles, note taking, listening skills, and test taking.

Study Skill teachers collaborate with regular classroom teachers and case managers to support students in all academic areas. Students also work on their individual IEP goals in a Study Skills class or may get a pass to go there if they need extra time to take tests or finish projects. Parents can expect to see quarterly grades from the Study Skills teacher on their child's progress.



Questions about the HSGQE?

The STeP Center is sponsoring a Options Seminar on October 16th at Wendler Middle School. This miniconfernece is free to students, parents and teachers. Presenters, including the key note speakers will provide answers to questions about the HSGQE as well as explain how the new state regulations apply to students who may need to take an alternate assessment.

See the brochure at the end of this newsletter for complete details and registration information! Hope to see you there!



Scholarship Watch

This newsletter article is dedicated to helping parents and students who are planning to graduate high school and enter a postsecondary educational institution. Here are two excellent resources to review!

The **Yes I Can! Foundation for Exceptional Children** will be accepting applications, beginning August 30, 2004, for the Stanley E. Jackson Scholarship Awards (Awards 1 through 4, below) and the Sara Conlon Memorial Scholarship Award (Award 5, below). These scholarships are to be applied toward full-time, post-secondary education or training during 2005-2006. Post-secondary education or training includes two and four year undergraduate college programs or vocational, technical or fine arts training programs.

Another excellent resource is the **Guide to Financial Aid for American Indian Students** located on the web at: <http://www.ncddr.org/rr/post/guide.html>. The Guide to Financial Aid for American Indian Students includes information about private scholarships and fellowships which are available exclusively for American Indians. Many of these scholarships have specific eligibility requirements based on field of study. Because these awards are reserved for American Indians, it is often required that the applicant be able to provide proof of tribal enrollment. Although this document is a few years old - its resources are still very extensive!



What's New At the One Stop? Customized Employment

Customized Employment strives to individualize the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both. It is based on the strengths, needs and interests of the person seeking employment. The job is also designed to meet the specific needs of the employer. Customized jobs are developed through job carving, self-employment or restructuring the job responsibilities to fit the needs of the individual with a disability. The primary driver of customized employment is the individual not the labor market. Jobs are created or altered to fit the needs and abilities of the employee.

The One Stop Job Center in Muldoon is one of several Job Centers in the state that are involved in the development and implementation of Customized Employment opportunities for people experiencing a disability. If you or someone you know is in need of a customized job placement contact Tom Rainey at the Muldoon One Stop for more information.

Options Seminar

Alternate Assessment Options

8:30 am

Registration

9:00 am - 9:45 am

Alternate Assessment Options - Participation Guidelines; Understanding the New State Regulations (Linda Richardson, Coordinator Secondary Special Education, and Kris Selman, Secondary Special Education Teacher Consultant). Learn about who should participate in an alternate assessment and how the state regulations apply to students and alternate assessments.

10:00 am - 11:30 am

Learning Styles - Using a Learning Inventory to Aid Your Middle School Student (Sandi Toth and Phyllis Seeba, Secondary Special Education Teacher Consultants). Discuss how learning inventories can assist parents and students in improving use of study strategies.

504 Planning for Post Secondary Education (Eudor Fraczek, Teacher Consultant, STeP Center). When students with special needs go on to college, they often require special accommodations. Find out the best way to plan post secondary educational supports for your student.

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) 101 (Pat Cochran). This workshop is an introduction to FAS and will provide the knowledge base essential to understanding and working with individuals who have had prenatal exposure to alcohol. This is a minimum 4-hour workshop. Participants wanting certification hours will be required to attend 100% of the sessions. The curriculum has been approved for education hours for AK DEED; AK CCDPC; AK Bd. of LMFTs; AK Chapter of NABCC; AK Bd. of Nursing; AK Bd of Psych/Psychological Associate Examiners; AK Bd. of Prof. Counselors; and AK Bd of Social Work Examiners.

Wendler Middle School
Saturday, October 16th
9:00 am to 1:00 pm

To register for this free seminar, call 742-3874 or e-mail: Step@asdk12.org

▶ Register by October 14th!

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Supporting Your Middle School Student (Deb Maynard, Teacher Consultant, STeP Center). Learn new strategies to help your student experience success in the middle school environment.

Self Determination Skills for Successful Transition (Kelly Donnelly and Carl Evertsbusch, Center for Human Development). Explore the fundamentals of self determination for students and how they relate to activities across the life span.

Q&A: All About the HSGQE (Linda Richardson, Coordinator Secondary Special Education). Do you have questions about the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam and your child? We have the answers!

