



Institute on Executive Functioning™

## Tips for Parents of New Middle Schoolers That Address Their Child's Executive Function Needs

With the start of school soon approaching, executive function (EF) skills are crucial to help support your middle schooler's success. EF skills such as social/emotional needs, organization, planning, setting priorities and time management, and communication/flexibility are vital. Focus on EF skills needed for a successful transition for middle school instead of pointing out all of the summer behaviors that will change with the start of school (i.e., staying up late playing video games, oversleeping and missing the bus v. scheduling a reasonable amount of sleep and being at the bus stop on time).

### *Tip #1:*

#### **Addressing Your Child's Social/Emotional Needs - Accentuate the positive aspect of the start of school — Examples of talk starters**

- Seeing old friends and getting to know new ones.
- Having more personal control over what they do (walking from class to class on your own or with a friend instead of in a line with your class).
- Having the personal control of choosing the route to your next class.
- Being able to explore new interests with classes in foreign languages, technology, design, etc.
- Having more teachers to engage with during the day rather than just a few.

- Choosing clubs and activities.
- 

### *Tip #2:*

#### **Addressing Your Child's Organization, Planning, Setting Priorities and Time Management Needs - Talk about scheduling in a problem-solving manner — Examples of talk starters**

- Let's think about how much sleep you need and what time you should go to bed.
  - Let's think about how much time it takes you to get ready for school and eat breakfast. How can I help you in this process?
  - Let's look at the time you need in order to get to school or the bus on time, and you can help determine what time you should awaken to be ready to leave the house. (Approach it as a trial to see how it works, knowing it may have to be tweaked. Practice the wake up time gradually the week before school starts).
  - Let's look at your after school responsibilities and work out where you need to be and how you will get there. (Flexibility is important because practices, games, meetings, etc. are often rescheduled for various reasons).
  - Let's schedule in some time for the things you like to do for fun.
  - What about homework this year? There may be opportunities to begin or even finish written or computational homework in school, but let's make a plan for when you will complete the rest and study.
- 

### *Tip #3:*

#### **Addressing Your Child's Communication/Flexibility Needs - Talk about how your role as parent will**

## **change and determine before and after school procedures - Examples of talk starters**

- What is my role in awakening you? — reminding you to set your cell phone alarm, my calling you once, etc.
- What about what you will be wearing? Do I need to do anything?
- Should I make you breakfast or will you take care of it yourself?
- Are you taking a lunch or buying? If you are taking, who is packing and when?
- How will you remember to gather items for practice, meetings, etc. and bring them to school? Will you will need a designated location near the door for these items?
- Do you have a check list for reminders? Does your checklist meet your needs for that day?
- What are your after school considerations? Will you text or call me to check in? If staying after school, how will you get home?
- What are your responsibilities such as care of pets, younger siblings, etc.? What if you need backup?
- What is your plan for change in case activities are cancelled, the school day is shortened, etc.? How will you communicate this?

---

Content provided by Strosnider & Sharpe, [www.instituteonexecutivefunctioning.com](http://www.instituteonexecutivefunctioning.com),  
authors of the EF Guidebook, Corwin, 2019.

---