

SOCIAL CHANGES

in Middle School

We recognize that each child's journey is different through middle school. It is a time to foster their independence and encourage them to explore new opportunities.

At this age, your child is **detaching** from you and childhood in order to start developing more **independence** and **individuality**.

Middle School is the place where your child will create a 2nd family outside of home; their friends. This family that they establish is filled with friends that are **becoming different** the same way as they are; it is a balance of **companionship** and having an **understanding**. Along with security may come the notion of “**be like us**”, meaning they have to **conform** in order to be in the friend group.

The “**be like us**” mentality can have both positive and negative outcomes; a positive example is it could make a child who is normally shy and quiet, step out of their comfort zone and become outgoing – a negative would be the **Five Social Cruelty Behaviors**: teasing, exclusion, bullying, rumoring, and ganging up. The target are the people who are perceived as “different” from the **social norm** and absorb insecurities from attackers.

Puberty is a big deal at this stage. Your child's body changing drastically. They become more **self-pre-occupied** with **personal appearance**. They are developing a **social self**, while **comparing** themselves to their peers. Elementary age, they have a confidence in what they do, but at this age they start to realize some of their peers could be better at things than them which may develop **insecurities** or **anxiety**.

At this age, children are **exploring** their sexuality and what they find to be attractive. The most important part in this, as a parent, is to be **understanding** and **open** to conversation. Making the concept of dating, attractions, and sexuality **taboo** will make your child closed off and uncomfortable to communicate with you.

Things You Can Do As A Parent: be as understanding as possible, give your child space but remind them that you are always there to talk, create an environment when your child knows that he/she can come to you, be mindful of your child's social media accounts, and **know your resources** – you and your child have many resources provided through the district to help guide you in any circumstance.

Contact the Family Engagement Center at 845-680-1059 or awalker1@socsd.org for any questions or concerns!