

# On Your Way to Middle School Success

## Leader's Guide



This Leader's Guide provides ideas for discussion and additional activities. While the exercises are self-instructive, they are much more meaningful when they're used as a vehicle for discussion, and as a way to provide information specific to your school.

### **Middle School – a new adventure** – Page 2

Before looking at page 2, ask students to think about how middle school is new or different for them. Talk about how change can be difficult and stressful.

**Table of Contents** – Go over the Table of Contents. Discuss how it takes more than studying hard or being smart to be successful in middle school.

### **Be in School Every Day** – Page 3

Discuss the importance of regular attendance and ask students to check the appropriate boxes regarding their attendance. On average, how many days did your students miss last year? Discuss the reasons students miss school. Which of these reasons are valid?

### **Know Your School** – Pages 4-5

**School Calendar** – Get a copy of your school's calendar. If your students have planners, go over the important dates (vacations, holidays, test dates, etc.) and have your students write them in their planners. Encourage students to put these dates on their calendar at home.

**Attendance and Tardy Policies** – Discuss your school's attendance and tardy policies and procedures.

**Code of Conduct / School Rules** – Go over your school's code of conduct and school rules. Discuss the reasons for these rules and the consequences for not following them.

**Where Do You Go for Help?** – Use this activity to discuss situations students may encounter in middle school. Emphasize the importance of letting someone know if they have a problem or concern.

**People to Know** – After students fill in the blanks, discuss the roles of school counselor and principal. If possible, ask a counselor and/or principal to speak to the group about what they do. Go over all the people in your school who are there to help students (librarian, tutors, coaches, etc.).

### **Be Organized** – Pages 6-7

**Organization Survey** – Have students take the organization survey. Do the results accurately reflect your students' organization skills? What was the class average?

**Tip** – Do your students have a regular morning routine? Do they have a nighttime routine? Why are routines helpful?

**To be Organized...** – Read through the first list and ask students to put a check mark by the things they already have. Read through the 2nd list and ask students to put a check mark by the things they consistently do. Can your students add items to these lists?

**Improve Your Organization Skills** – Ask students to write down two things they can do to be more organized. Encourage students to make a real effort to do these two things for one week.

### **Succeed in Class** – Pages 8-9

**What Kind of Student Are You?** – Have students complete the survey. Do their scores accurately reflect the kind of students they think they are? What is the class average?

**Tip** – Read the 6 tips and ask if students have any to add.

**Homework** – Ask students to answer the questions regarding their homework. On average, how much time do your students spend on homework? How do most of your students feel about the amount of homework they have?

**Improve Your Homework Grades** – Which were the top two or three items checked by your students?

### **Set Goals** – Pages 10-11

**Academic Goals** – Do any of your students regularly set academic goals?

Ask students to fill in the "Academic Goals" grid. Remind students to set goals that are realistic.

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## Leader's Guide (pages 11-17)

**Setting Goals** – Discuss how setting short-term goals (e.g., getting all As and Bs this semester) can help students reach a long-term goal (e.g., going to college).

**What are your goals?** – Ask students to write down 3 academic goals and 3 non-academic goals for the semester on a sheet of paper. Have them fold it, put their name on the outside, and turn it in to you. At the end of the semester, return the sheets to your students so they can see if they were able to meet their goals.

**Get Involved** – Pages 12-13

Have students match the “Reasons to Participate” with the “Student Quotes.” If any of your students are involved in school activities, ask them to share their experiences.

If working with new middle school students, ask a couple of older students to come and talk about the activities they are involved in, to share how these activities have added to their middle school experience, and to tell students how they can get involved.

**Get Involved in School Activities** – Have students check the box(es) of the activities they are interested in. Go over what activities your school offers in each of these areas.

Also discuss activities available to your students outside of school (church, scouting, sports, etc.).

**What do you like to do outside of school?** – After students have written down three activities they enjoy, ask them to put an **A** beside the ones that are active (requiring action or movement) and an **I** beside the ones that are inactive. Then ask students to put an **S** by the ones that are solitary (they do alone) and an **O** by the activities that involve others.

Remind students that it's best to have a variety of activities. They should have some activities they do with others, and some they do alone. It's also important for students to be involved in activities that require physical movement.

**Writing Activity** – Have students write a one-page paper about their favorite out-of-school activity.

**Have Good Character** – Pages 14-15

Discuss what it means to have good character (a person who has values, someone we look up to and admire, etc.). Ask students for examples of people they think have good character. Discuss the quote *“Character is what you do when you think no one is looking.”*

Go over the words the students circled.

**Is It Cheating?** – Discuss your students' answers. Did most of your students agree on which ones were cheating? Is cheating a problem at your school? Do students care if other students cheat?

**Courtesy and Respect Survey** – Have students complete the two surveys and follow the scoring directions. Compare student scores. Did students score themselves higher than their classmates? Would your school be a better place if students were more courteous and respectful?

**Outside Activity** – Ask students to keep track for one day of how many times they hear a student say *“please,” “thank you,”* or *“excuse me.”*

**Dealing with Bullies** – Pages 16-17

After students take the “Bully Quiz,” go over their answers. Have your students ever witnessed physical bullying in your school? Discuss emotional/social bullying. Is this something your students have experienced or witnessed? Talk about cyberbullying and the effects it can have.

Discuss your school's policy on bullying.

**How to Deal with a Bully** – Go over these points and encourage students to tell someone if they are being harassed, intimidated, or bullied. Also discuss the fact that while we don't have control over someone else's behavior, we do have a choice as to how we react.

**Your Experience** – How did your students answer these questions?

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## Leader's Guide (pages 18-29)

### **Make Good Choices** – Pages 18-19

Have students take the "Choices Quiz." Acknowledge the fact that it's not always easy to do the right thing.

Discuss the rewards students get for making good choices and decisions (extra privileges, parent's approval, more freedom, etc.). Also discuss the consequences for poor choices and decisions. What are the possible consequences for cheating on a test, skipping school, etc.?)

**Smoking, Drinking and Drugs** – Do your students ever feel pressure to smoke, drink, or try drugs? How does the media try to influence their choices?

Ask students to role play situations in which they are asked to do something they shouldn't do – or don't want to do.

### **Get Along with Teachers** – Pages 20-21

Discuss the fact that part of a student's education is learning how to get along with teachers who have different teaching styles, sets of rules, and personalities.

**How would a teacher describe you?** – After circling the words they think a teacher would use to describe them, ask students to write in any other adjective(s) they think a teacher might use.

If they were a teacher, would they want a student like themselves in their class?

**Getting Along at School** – Read through these points. Discuss positive and negative body language, and how our body language communicates what we're thinking and feeling.

Have students demonstrate positive and negative body language when sitting at a desk (negative – slouching, looking bored, eyes half closed, etc.).

**Be Prepared for Class** – Have students complete the survey. How many students scored a 10?

Are your students happy with how they get along with their teachers? What are some things they can do to get along with their teachers better?

### **Get Along with Parents** – Pages 22-23

**How to Get Along with Parents** – Read through the seven suggestions and ask students to circle the number(s) of any they should try to work on.

**Parent Interview** – Have students interview a parent (or an adult they admire) and complete this page.

**Writing Option** – What things do you enjoy doing with your parents? What family traditions are important to you?

### **Be Healthy** – Pages 24-25

Discuss the importance of taking care of body and mind.

**Staying Healthy** – Have students complete the activity. Which of the five areas did most students feel needed improvement?

**Dealing with Stress** – Discuss stress and how we feel when we're under a lot of stress (heart pounds, anxious feeling in stomach, etc.). What are some things in middle school that might cause stress (e.g., taking tests, worrying about grades, a difficult class, homework, a big game)?

As a group, try each of the relaxation techniques. Ask students to share how they deal with stress.

### **Plan for the Future** – Pages 26-29

Discuss the importance of choosing a career that matches your interests, abilities, and values.

Have students complete the activities on pages 26, 27, and 28. Discuss their responses.

Ask students to choose a career they're interested in learning more about. Have them write a one-page report on this career (what people in this occupation do, job outlook, education requirements, earnings, etc.).

**How Will You Prepare for Your Career?** – Discuss the six different ways students can prepare for a career. Is their 1st or 2nd choice the best way to prepare for the career they chose to research?