

Dear parents and students,

The transition from elementary to middle school is often an exciting, yet nerve-racking time for students. Best case scenario would be that each rising 6th grader feels prepared to enter middle school. As educators or parents, we can greatly enhance students' comfort level with this change by exposing them to common concerns that arise in middle school and equipping them with skills necessary to be successful. The **SOARING to Middle School** guide is a supportive reference for parents and students transitioning to middle school.

SOAR Bucks!



The middle school has an impactful positive behavior system that awards students “money” for exemplifying positive behavior that is connected to our core virtues. Students earn **SOAR bucks** to which they are responsible for keeping a card that has their earnings to purchase items at our **SOAR Bank**. The items to purchase have been notably food/trend items that students enjoy. The goal is to **NEVER** have money taken away from their account, but are encouraged to increase it as often as possible!

SOAR Feathers!

Students can receive a **SOAR feather** from their teachers and students when they are showing positive behavior, success, and representing a core virtue of the month. The **Falcon** visits classrooms every Friday and chooses a feather. Those students whose feathers are chosen and announced over the intercom for a weekly prize. Most middle school students choose homework passes or additional **SOAR bucks**! The students love this tradition and we are excited to keep it going!

MIDDLE SCHOOL LIFE

What are Academy Classes?

Academy is an enrichment course program where students can choose a course that interests them each quarter (some courses are longer than one quarter). These courses are graded with a detailed course description and grading criteria. Some courses that are offered next year include: Advanced Band, Theater, Forensics, Mind Boss, Stitching and Stirring, Guitar and more! All students will register for these courses this summer and will pick up their schedule during Back to School Night.

What is Advisory?

Every middle school student will have an Advisory class. This class is structured around community building, academic support, social and emotional learning curriculum, unity activities, and “nest” pride! This class is valuable for each student’s academic and AACS core virtue growth! Students connect with classmates and teachers. Beginning this school year, 2023-2024, the 6th grade class will have the same advisory teacher throughout middle school! Our 6th grade Advisory will focus on executive functioning as well. We are excited for this new Advisory class structure and its benefit towards academic, culture and pride at AACS!

Middle School Planners

Even though most middle school teachers provide class information in Google Classroom, this school year, planners will be required for students to organize their learning and activities. During Advisory, students will have the opportunity to organize their planners and transfer their class information. In addition, the planner will have a hall pass section to which students have to fill out and sign by a teacher in order to be dismissed from class for any reason (bathroom breaks, meet with a teacher, etc.). This new hall pass system will be new for ALL middle school students.

AR and iReady My Path Expectations

Both Accelerated Reader and the iReady My Path programs are built to meet students' individual academic needs in order to accelerate their learning. Accelerated Reader is a school wide program to initiate the love for reading and monitor student reading progress. In addition, it is a literature course requirement in middle school that is graded. iReady is Aurora Academy's data collection system that monitors student progress in math and reading. The iReady program is a mandatory expectation for all students to complete in a timely manner and taken seriously. We teach our students to always present their most excellent self when completing these assessments. In addition, these diagnostic tests ensure AACS is providing the necessary resources and instructional tools to support ALL student learning.

Locker Expectations

Probably the most anticipated thing about becoming an AACS Falcon Middle School student is having a locker. We highly encourage students to "turn" their lockers into a unique space that is a clear reflection of who they are and keep it **ORGANIZED!** You are welcome to come visit the school in the summer and get measurements of the locker so you can purchase organizers and decorations for the inside of the locker. **Our lockers are a respectful privilege and we ask all students to be mindful of closing and moving items away from the door so that the locker does not get damaged. It costs the school a lot of money to repair and/or replace the lockers.** There is a combination code for each locker, so there is no need to purchase a lock. Lastly, the advisory teacher will assign the lockers to the students. **Students cannot request a new locker.**

Cell phone policy (parent/student handbook)

Students can be successful and safe with a limited amount of cell phone use in a school setting. According to the Aurora Academy cell phone policy, students are not to have cell phones turned on and in their possession no time during the school day. Students are allowed to have their cell phone turned on and in use at the end of the school day outside. The main excuse we receive from students for their reasoning to use a cell phone is to contact parents; this is when it is important to have support from parents. Our front desk is easily accessible and has all family information to contact if needed. A student should not use their cell phone to contact parents. This conversation happens first with you. In addition, review consequences if a cell phone is confiscated.

Student Survival Tips for Middle School Transition

1. Get Organized

- Get used to checking IC daily on assignments.
- Color-code your folders and notebooks or create bouncers for periods 1-4 and periods 5-8.
- Keep your locker and backpack cleaned out.

2. Do your homework

- You will have more homework.
- Schedule your time wisely.
- Give yourself a certain amount of time every night for homework and studying.
- **Don't wait until an assignment/project is due - start early.**
- Keep track of your homework assignments and their due dates. Check IC.
- If you are absent, check IC for missed work and check in with your teachers the day you return.

3. Talk to your Teachers

- Ask questions. If you are unsure of an assignment, what you need to be doing, or of anything, just ask. Your teachers are there to help you.

4. Get involved in extracurricular activities

- Find things you enjoy - sports, clubs, activities, and get involved. This is a great way to meet new people and to have fun. Choose an Academy course that interests you!
- Listen to the morning announcements for upcoming events.

5. Get good grades

- Turn your homework in on time, ask questions and take advantage of extra-credit opportunities if available.
- Remember to get absent work and check-in with your teachers when you return.

6. Stay Healthy

- Get a good night's sleep and limit screen time on phones and computers.

7. Talk to your parents and keep them informed of what is going on in your middle school life.

8. Find an adult you trust to talk to you when you have problems.

9. Choose your friends wisely.

10. Come to school and have fun!

Parent Survival Tips for Middle School Transition

For children going into middle school, there are many anxieties, apprehensions, and fears to deal with and overcome. Middle school work is harder. There are more classes and teachers—all with different expectations and personalities. If you have a child who is entering middle school for the first time, know that it is normal for your child to express concern.

- **Don't be too anxious about your child going to middle school.** Talk about the middle school experience in a positive way! Your enthusiasm and support can help make this BIG change in your child's school life a positive one.
- **Help your child develop an organizational strategy.**
 - a. Designate a study space and set a study time.
 - b. Buy your child the necessary folders and binders to stay organized.
 - c. Remind your child to take care of their (school's) Chromebook and be mindful to not lose the chromebook and/or charger
 - d. Conduct a weekly clean-up
 - e. Keep a master calendar for assignments and events.
 - f. Prepare for the week/day ahead.
 - g. Provide help and support while your child is learning to become more organized.
 - h. Check your child's planner.
- **Utilize assignment and grade tracking resources (Google Classroom & Parent Portal)**
 - a. Check the Infinite Campus Parent Portal: homework is updated weekly.
 - b. Check your child's teachers' Google Classrooms for assignments and homework.
 - c. You can access the Parent Portal through Infinite Campus.
 - d. Read all newsletters from AACCS and teachers. They have many important updates and information. (Make sure you're signed up for email communications.)
- **Talk about social skills.** Talk about traits that make a good friend. Discuss how words and actions can affect other people. Practice skills needed for difficult social situations.
- **Openly communicate with your child.** Keep the lines of communication open between your child and school staff. Be informed, listen, and talk to your child.
- **Get involved as a parent.** Attend parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights and other events where you can connect with your child, child's teachers, and school.
- **Help your child be their own advocate.** Encourage your child to discuss problems and solutions with teachers on their own, but be ready to help as needed. If a problem arises in a particular class about assignments/homework, email the teacher directly. Email the counselor with family or social concerns.

- **Monitor your child's social media accounts.** Social interactions that occur outside of the school environment can carry over to the classroom and/or school spaces. It is important to monitor your child's social media accounts and discuss the importance of maintaining positive and safe spaces for communication before situations arise at school.

