

The Challenging Middle School Years

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For parents whose first child is heading to middle school, there may be some pride that their first-born is growing up and moving on to the next level. For parents who have been through the middle school years with an older child, you may experience fear or nervousness, mixed with the pride.



First, let's recognize that entering middle school creates stress on students that can decrease motivation, challenge relationships with friends and parents, and hurt self esteem. Since no two kids

experience hormonal changes the same way, middle school students face a whirlwind of emotions and situations that make all of these issues more difficult to anticipate and manage.

Second, middle school education is new and different academically. While elementary school offers a sense of order and "sameness," middle school prepares students to move – move from class to class, and move from being instructed on their every move to learning to think for themselves. Class sizes tend to be bigger, homework tends to be more involved, and it is easy for students to feel distracted, disconnected, unorganized or even panicked about what they need to do.

While the public school system does a good job in preparing many for high school, many children may be better suited to smaller class sizes allowing them to be more engaged in academics, as well as

build confidence, explore artistic interests, participate in community service projects and learn critical thinking skills. Exploring private school options, such as **St. John's Lutheran School** on Silas Creek Parkway in Winston-Salem, may be the right move.

"There is nothing easy about raising a middle school child," says Tom Baldwin, Director of Admissions & Community Service at St. Johns. "I personally have been through it twice, and as a teacher, I know first-hand the issues that face students everyday. At St. John's, we recognize the challenges of adolescence and help students realize their potential in a safe and friendly environment. We also realize that the middle school years are the perfect time to learn about teamwork, build leadership skills, and grow a wider interest in the world through commitment to work and active community service."

With **smaller class sizes**, St. John's middle school teachers can give **more focused attention** to students. There are many opportunities for kids to explore and experience challenging academics, visual and theater arts, science, athletics and service to others while growing in faith.

"Every student at every grade level is involved in one, some or many community services projects," Baldwin says. "This allows students to put their skills into action, and it introduces them to news skills that they really need, such as organizing and planning. But beyond that, community service forces kids out of their bubble and they begin to look at issues facing others in the community. This experience also **prepares students** for the responsibilities they will face in high school and in **looking ahead** to college applications."

St. John's Lutheran School is conveniently located at 2415 Silas Creek Parkway in Winston-Salem. Call (336) 725-1651, or visit StJohnsFalcons.org.



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