


# BEING “IN THE MIDDLE”

MIDDLE SCHOOL AS A  
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL TRANSITION



# **TONIGHT'S WORKSHOP AGENDA**

- 1. What do we know about the middle school transition?**
  - 2. What does Gateway provide for our students' social and emotional needs?**
  - 3. Restorative Practices: Building empathy, resolving conflicts**
  - 4. What can you do at home for your middle school student?**
  - 5. Discussion**
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# What is a Middle Schooler?

What is a middle schooler?

I was asked one day,  
I knew what he was,  
But what should I say.

He is noise and confusion.  
He is silence that is deep.  
He is sunshine and laughter,  
Or a cloud that will weep.

He is swift as an arrow.  
He is a waster of time.  
He wants to be rich,  
But cannot save a dime.

He is rude and nasty,  
He is polite as can be.  
He wants parental guidance,  
But fights to be free.


He is aggressive and bossy.  
He is timid and shy.  
He knows all the answers,  
But still will ask "why?"

He is awkward and clumsy,  
He is graceful and poised.  
He is ever changing,  
But do not be annoyed.

What is a middle schooler?

I was asked one day.  
He is the future unfolding,  
So do not stand in his way.

# MIDDLE SCHOOL IS...

- **A transition from having one teacher to several different teachers in several different rooms.**
  - **More responsibility, rigor, assignments = more organization.**
  - **A period of time when students want to become their own person, and get involved in their own choice of activities.**
  - **A time when tremendous physical, cognitive, and emotional changes are going on AND when there is a wide variety of maturation among different children.**
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# WHAT IS GATEWAY DOING TO PREPARE STUDENTS?


- Advisory Curriculum
- Restorative Practices
- Social Events
- Athletics
- Clubs



# **ADVISORY**


- **Small groups of students (15-18 in a group) meet everyday for at least 30 minutes.**
- **Sample Schedule:**
  - Monday is Community Circle**
  - Tuesday is Social Skills Lessons**
  - Wednesday is Assemblies and Advisory Clubs**
  - Thursday is Study Hall and Academic Check-ins**
  - Friday is Community-building Activities**
- **Students celebrate birthdays, discuss challenges, and develop trusting relationships with a small group of students and that one “charismatic” adult**

# Advisory Social Skills focus

- ✓ Empathy and Communication: Working in Groups, Friends and Allies, Considering Perspectives, Disagreeing Respectfully, and Being Assertive
  - ✓ Bullying Prevention: Recognizing Bullying and Bystanders
  - ✓ Emotion Management: Brain and Body and Calming-Down Strategies
  - ✓ Problem Solving: Using Action Steps and Making a Plan
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# **RESTORATIVE PRACTICES**

**A Restorative Approach involves putting our focus on:**

- **Reflecting upon and learning from challenges**
  - **Developing empathy (understanding who was **AFFECTED** by what happened)**
  - **Learning how to resolve conflicts**
  - **Repairing the harm done rather than just choosing a consequence**
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# **RESTORATIVE QUESTIONS**

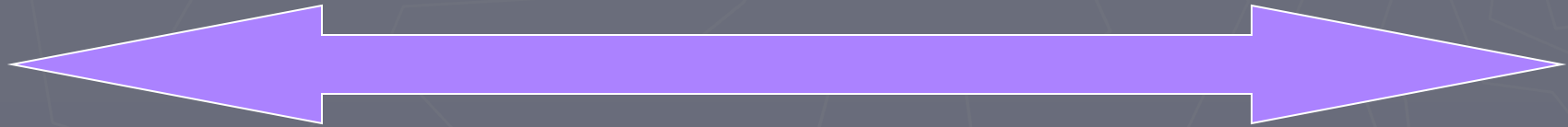
When responding to conflict, a restorative approach consists in asking the following key questions:

- 1. What happened, and what were you thinking at the time?**
- 2. What have you thought about since?**
- 3. Who has been affected by what happened and how?**
- 4. What about this has been the hardest for you?**
- 5. What do you think needs to be done to make things as right as possible?**

# Continuum of Practices

Informal

Formal



Affective  
Statements

Restorative  
Questions  
(Impromptu dialogue)

Pro-active  
Circles


Responsive  
Circles

Restorative  
Meetings/  
Conferences

# WHAT CAN WE DO FOR OUR PRETEEN AT HOME?



# **QUESTIONS AND TIPS FOR PARENTS**

- **Keep talking to your child. (DO think about when and how you ask questions)**
  - **Shift gears from the direct involvement you have with a younger child to the support system a teenager needs.**
  - **Make your child feel special by letting them know how much you love him or her.**
  - **As always, take cues from her behavior and know that if she wants to talk about it, she will.**
  - **Find the balance between helping your child manage things and becoming a micromanager of your child.**
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# RESOURCES

- *A Parents' Guide to the Middle School Years* by Joe Bruzzese, MA
- *This American Life* podcast "449 Middle School"
- *Tweens: What to Expect From – and How to Survive – Your Child's Pre-Teen Years* by Andrea Clifford-Posten
- *Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen* by David Walsh and Nat Bennett
- *Life Strategies for Teens* by Jay McGraw
- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey
- *The Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools* by Lorraine Stutzman and Judy H. Mullet
- *The Restorative Practices Handbook for Teachers, Disciplinarians and Administrators* by Bob Costello, Joshua Wachtel, and Ted Wachtel

# DISCUSSION

- What changes or challenges have you encountered with your child as they have transitioned to middle school?
  - What strategies work for your child?
  - How can we work together as parents and guardians to support our young adolescents?
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