

# PARENTING THROUGH MIDDLE SCHOOL

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## Insights and Advice from Principals

Principals play a fundamental role in your student's school experience. Your student is immersed in an environment that is bursting with different personalities, motivations, and needs. The principal manages this environment by working with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other professionals in the community to provide a safe and stimulating learning environment. The transition to middle school can be a unique, exciting, and somewhat challenging experience. Here are highlights from our interviews with elementary and middle school principals.

### Meet the Principals

#### Dr. Dael Angelico-Hart, Principal

*Dr. Angelico-Hart has been an administrator for over 30 years and is currently the principal of a K-8 middle school. Her areas of concentration include literacy and the arts.*

#### Josh Baldner, Principal

*Josh Baldner has been an educator for 15 years. Prior to working as an elementary school principal, he was a language arts teacher and assistant principal for a middle school.*

### What they have to say....

#### How do elementary students change, as they get ready for middle school?

*"The changes that they are experiencing in their bodies and developing independence are the primary things that then carry over into school anxieties...anxieties about friendship and the newness of middle school." (Josh Baldner)*

#### What do late elementary students need to be prepared for middle school?

*"There is a real awareness on the part of teachers to up the homework load a little bit and expect more of students with things they complete outside of class. We make conscious efforts to try to prepare students for the increased workload." (Josh Baldner)*

#### What is the best part of working with middle school aged children?

*"I really like their energy! There's nothing like that if you are working with them on a project, around ideas, or decorating for a dance. They have a very special kind of energy." (Dr. Dael Angelico-Hart)*

#### How can parents best support their middle school student?

*"Think big picture, big picture, big picture and avoid getting into the little battles. Encourage them and recognize the anxieties they may have. Talk to them about having a love of learning." (Josh Baldner)*

*"The parent's role is supposed to be one of supporting not actually doing things for them. That can be as much as making sure you are cleaning up the kitchen while they are doing their homework, so that your presence is still there." (Dr. Dael Angelico-Hart)*

*"Ask good questions: Is your homework done? How was your English test? What did you do in social studies today? Don't be discouraged if he or she answers, 'Nothing.' Just ask more detailed questions like: Are you still working on that project in social studies?" (Dr. Dael Angelico-Hart)*

#### Final thoughts?

*"Part of the letting go process is not doing everything for them, not getting too involved. You need to advocate for them, but you also need to push them to start advocating for themselves. You have to be the guide at their side" (Dr. Dael Angelico-Hart)*

*"They're still kids. They will talk like mini adults and say things like mini adults. In many ways, they will even appear to be like mini adults. But, they are very much kids. They very much still want their parents. They very much want structure. There is safety in the predictability of knowing which things you are going to say no to, and what boundaries you have as a parent." (Josh Baldner)*

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—Dr. Dael Angelico-Hart

**Parenting Through Middle School** is a short, easy-to-use tool kit for parents with middle school aged children. We use helpful video clips, audio interviews, focused articles and downloadable tools so you, as parents, can learn what to expect, what you need to know, and how you can best support your changing child.

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