

From Our Mid-August, 2010 Newsletter

## Getting Ready for Middle School



Middle school is a time when children are starting to spread their wings and become much more independent from parents. It's important for parents to stay involved in their lives at this developmental level, as they are faced with new challenges and new academic expectations on a daily basis.

At a time when middle schoolers are changing physically and emotionally, many are also now moving from class to class in a new building, often with different students in each class. Organization can often be the key to a successful middle school experience. Educator Dale Pilchman (who taught middle school for 25 years) offers these **terrific tips**:

"One of the best things you can do for your middle schooler is provide them with a set of **color coded folders**. It won't take them long for your child to learn that math is red, English is blue, history is yellow (etc). They will always put math homework in the red folder, English in the blue. No more wondering where the history assignment is: it's in the yellow folder!

Label the outside of the folder with the subject: "Math Homework"; "Spanish Homework". Label two pockets inside the folder: homework "To be completed" on one side, homework "To be turned in" on the other. Do this for each folder, and have your child place their homework in the appropriate place in the folder *each and every class, each and every day*. With parental reinforcement, your child will quickly become comfortable with this system. Using this system will ensure that homework comes home and, once completed, comes back to school!

Depending on what the teacher requires for class, you may be able to purchase notebooks or binders in the same color. We know one student who, unable to find the right size purple notebook - the color she always used for Science - just stapled purple construction paper to the front of a different colored notebook so she could continue to use "her" color-coded system! If your child only uses a notebook for a particular subject (rather than a notebook and a binder), you will want to have an extra, same colored folder for handouts. Label these folders on the outside: the red folder says "Math Handouts", the blue folder says "English Handouts", etc.

Paper folders can be easily found and are very inexpensive at this time of year. Stock up now so you have extras if needed through the year. Once they quickly get the hang of it, your student will likely use this organizational system throughout their school years.

Another great organizational strategy is to **display a large calendar in their homework area** in your house (be it near a homework desk in their room or in your kitchen). Have the student write dates for long term assignments on the appropriate squares as soon as that information is received. When are note cards due for the history report? Rough draft date? Oral presentation? Final paper? Your student will get visual cues reminding them of how long they have to do the project, and be better able to balance long term assignments with their daily tasks.

**The goal is for parents, students and teachers to all be on the same page. Parents need to be aware of the child's daily and long term assignments. The student needs to take personal responsibility for his-her work."**