Parents and Students:

On behalf of the Union County Board of Education and our Superintendent, Dr. Mary B. Ellis, we extend a heartfelt welcome to all new middle school students in Union County Public Schools. The next three years of education will provide many transitions for young adolescents and their parents. Students will begin the process of becoming teenagers, and parents will experience their children’s desire for more independence. It is vital that home and school provide collective support for the student in order that he/she may develop independent learning skills. Through a strong cooperative partnership, we can assist our students in adjusting to the social, physical, and emotional changes as each may grow and discover the aspects of becoming healthy, happy, and successful teenagers.

Our middle schools aim to meet the needs of all students by promoting opportunities for their social, emotional, academic, and physical growth. Guided by the school system’s mission in “Preparing All Students to Succeed,” our pupils will learn to balance their academic responsibilities with various activities. This will be accomplished through providing middle-level curriculum that implements 21st century instructional skills.

The purpose of this curriculum guide is to present students and parents with an overview of all aspects of the academic and social life in Union County Public Schools. Enclosed are instructional guidelines which are aligned with the new Common Core, our national curricular standards for language arts and mathematics, and the North Carolina Essential Standards, which include science, social studies, physical education/health, foreign language, CTE, and the arts curricular areas. As our teachers and leaders believe that all students can learn, you will find that middle school curriculum is broad, flexible, and rigorous, and we strive to provide a variety of services to meet our students’ needs. Additionally, tips and strategies for assisting students are included as parents aim to support all aspects of their children’s education.

As a parent or guardian, you are an essential part of your child’s total school program. We hope you will find this information helpful and that you will use this guide as a reference throughout the middle school years. We welcome you as a partner in your child’s education.

John A. Jones, Jr., Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services
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<td>School Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUTHBERTSON MIDDLE</td>
<td>1520 Cuthbertson Road</td>
</tr>
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<td>EAST UNION MIDDLE</td>
<td>6010 W. Marshville Blvd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARVIN RIDGE MIDDLE</td>
<td>2831 Crane Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONROE MIDDLE</td>
<td>601 E. Sunset Drive</td>
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<td>PARKWOOD MIDDLE</td>
<td>3219 Parkwood School Road</td>
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<td>PIEDMONT MIDDLE</td>
<td>2816 Sikes Mill Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORTER RIDGE MIDDLE</td>
<td>2827 Ridge Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH PROVIDENCE</td>
<td>500 S. Providence Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUN VALLEY MIDDLE</td>
<td>1409 Wesley Chapel Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEDDINGTON MIDDLE</td>
<td>5903 Deal Road</td>
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Successful schools for young adolescents are characterized by a culture that includes:
- Educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so.
- Courageous, collaborative leadership.
- A shared vision that guides decisions.
- An inviting, supportive, and safe environment.
- High expectations for every member of the learning community.
- Students and teachers who are engaged in active learning.
- An adult advocate for every student.
- School-initiated family and community partnerships.

Therefore, successful schools for young adolescents provide:
- Curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.
- Multiple learning and teaching approaches that respond to student diversity.
- Assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning.
- Organizational structures that support meaningful relationships and learning.
- School-wide efforts and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety.
- Multifaceted guidance and support services.

Used with permission from National Middle School Association, www.nmsa.org

- Robert Ricken
  The Middle School Years: Love Me When I'm Most Unlovable

I'm looking forward to going to the middle school. I'm excited and a little nervous. Somehow all the kids seem to like it, but they love telling horror stories about what goes on there. My parents are the ones who are really nervous. If they ask me once more if I'm scared, I think they'll convince me that I am!
The Union County Public Schools has nine middle schools and one specialty school serving grades 6–8 located throughout the county. The middle school program strives to provide for the unique needs of the adolescent while helping the student make the transition from the elementary school to the high school. The objectives of the program are as follows:

- Teachers and students are organized into interdisciplinary teams for instructional purposes. Students are grouped as a team with teachers who provide the challenge of the secondary curriculum and the support of the elementary classroom.

- Every student will be well known by at least one adult within the school. There are weekly relationship building opportunities provided throughout the year.

- The curriculum plan provides for integrated lessons, individualized instruction, continuous progress, personal development, and an introduction to areas of organized knowledge. The curriculum builds upon and extends the elementary skills and, at the same time, introduces the students to a world of knowledge that will be encountered at greater depth in senior high school.

- Flexible scheduling is utilized during the school day with some form of “block” schedule to facilitate efficient use of time.

- A wide range of exploratory activities is provided to enrich the curriculum with appropriate experiences and extracurricular activities.

- All programs are designed to meet the unique learning requirements of the middle school student. Varied strategies are used, beginning with the concrete, moving to pictorial representation, and concluding with the abstract.

- Community involvement is encouraged so as to build a positive relationship between school, home, and the community. Involvement from community volunteers and human resources is beneficial to students.

In addition to the nine traditional 6-8 middle schools, South Providence School provides an alternative learning environment for students in grades 6-12. The most likely candidates are those students who are at-risk for failure due to academic, attendance, and behavioral needs. Placement of these students is initiated through a completed application package submitted to a central screening committee. Upon acceptance to the program, students must be in attendance in their home school until an intake meeting is held at South Providence School. The main goal of the program is to develop academic skills, self-esteem, character and social skills necessary for the success in high school completion, as well as becoming contributing members of society.

An effective middle school program is created around the unique developmental needs of the young adolescents it serves. Because the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of this age group are so different from those in elementary and high school, it is
necessary to customize the educational program. The middle school is a bridge between the elementary and high school; therefore, the program is a blend of the two.

**CORE CURRICULUM**
Middle schools require English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies for all students in grades six, seven and eight in time periods which would equate to approximately four (4) hours or the majority of the school day. English/Language Arts is taught in an integrated manner during one continuous block of time. In addition, Health/Physical Education is required for all middle school students.

**GRADING SCALE**
Beginning with the 2015-2016 year, the state of North Carolina will be using a ten-point grading scale for all students as shown on the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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**EXPLORATORY CURRICULUM**
A variety of exploratory classes is offered at each school in the areas of music, visual arts, theater arts, world languages, and careers/technology. The goal is to expose middle school students to a variety of experiences that allows them to build self-identity and confidence. Exploratory classes also foster students' creative nature while they begin making decisions about their future. The length of these classes may vary from six weeks to a year.

**HEALTHY ACTIVE CHILDREN**
To address health issues such as overweight, obesity, cardiovascular diseases and Type II diabetes, students in middle school participate in physical activity for a minimum of 30 minutes daily. This is achieved through regular physical education class and/or through activities such as recess, dance, classroom energizers or other curriculum based physical education activity programs.

**CHARACTER EDUCATION**
Character education is learning how to make good decisions and choices and is taught through modeling, climate, and curriculum. Character education integrates positive values into every aspect of the school day by instilling in students the important core, ethical values, such as respect for self and others, responsibility, integrity, and self-discipline.

**MEDIA**
An integral part of middle school is the media program, which enhances, supports, and expands learning by teaching information skills appropriate to the curriculum, as well as providing materials and services. The instructional component of the media program is to help students develop skills in locating, assimilating, and applying information effectively.
GUIDANCE
Guidance is an important part of the middle school program. School counselors promote student success, provide preventive services, and respond to identified student needs. Counselors address academic, career, and personal/social development for all students by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. Parents, educators, and counselors should work collaboratively to assist students with educational and career planning.

School counselors recognize their primary obligation for confidentiality is to the student but balance that obligation with an understanding of the family or guardians’ legal and inherent rights to be the guiding voice in their children’s lives (ASCA Code of Ethics).

The role of the school counselor in regards to confidentiality is:

• To support the students right to privacy and protect confidential information received from students, the family, guardian and staff members
• To explain the meaning and limits of confidentiality to students in developmentally appropriate terms
• To provide appropriate disclosure and informed consent regarding the counseling relationship and confidentiality
• To inform students and the family of the limits to confidentiality when: Student poses a danger to self or others, Court ordered disclosure, Consultation with other professionals in support of the student i.e. colleagues, supervisors, treatment teams, and other support personnel
• To keep personal notes separate from educational records and not disclose their contents except when privacy exceptions exist
• To seek guidance from supervisors and appropriate legal advice when their records are subpoenaed
• To assert their belief that information shared by students is “confidential” and should not be revealed without the student’s consent
• To adhere to all laws protecting student records, health information, and special services (i.e., HIPAA, FERPA, IDEA)

ACADEMICALLY AND/OR INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED
The Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted Program (AIG) in Union County Public Schools provides AIG identified (formally identified through testing) middle school students with accelerated and enriched curricula in both English/Language Arts and Mathematics. In addition to the NC Standard Course of Study, the homogeneously grouped English/Language Arts classes use strategies and materials that meet the advanced needs of AIG learners. Students also participate in an advanced in-depth study of Latin and Greek word stems and derivatives, along with literature and grammar that are differentiated in order to meet the accelerated intellectual needs by including culminating projects and seminars that require critical thinking and analysis. The 8th grade AIG, English/Language Arts course is English I for high school credit. The AIG middle school mathematics curriculum accelerates and compacts the North Carolina Standard Course of Study into two years, 6th and 7th grades, so that a strong foundation is built for 8th grade Math I for high school credit. (Final placement into Math I and/or English I is subject to local guidelines.) For more information about the AIG program, please visit the website at http://aig.ucps.k12.nc.us.
CREDIT BY DEMONSTRATED MASTERY
Section 13 of the State Board of Education Policy GCS-M-001 provides a Credit by Demonstrated Mastery policy (CDM). Credit by Demonstrated Mastery is the process by which LEAs shall, based upon a body-of-evidence, award a student credit in a particular course without requiring the student to complete classroom instruction for a certain amount of seat time. “Mastery” is defined as a student’s command of course material at a level that demonstrates a deep understanding of the content standards and application of knowledge as demonstrated by: (1) scoring a Level V on the End of Course exam where applicable, or a final exam (provided by the state or developed locally) and (2) producing an artifact which requires the student to apply knowledge and skills relevant to the content standards. LEAs may require additional requirements, such as performance tasks.

Students who demonstrate mastery, through the process as determined and allowed by the NC Department of Public Instruction, shall receive credit for the course toward graduation requirements. Credit shall be indicated on the student’s transcript as a Level III (College Preparatory) course with a grade of “pass”. The school shall not grant a numeric or letter grade for the course and shall not include the grade in the student’s grade point average (GPA) calculation.

Students planning to pursue the distinction of North Carolina Academic Scholar should read Credit by Demonstrated Mastery Guidelines carefully. At the present time, courses required for the North Carolina Academic Scholar designation are not allowed to be completed through the CDM method.

For a complete listing of courses that may be completed by eighth graders as Credit by Demonstrated Mastery, please visit the Secondary Education website at ucps.k12.nc.us.

HIGH SCHOOL COURSES TAKEN AT MIDDLE SCHOOL
Union County Public Schools has established criteria which allow middle school students to receive graduation credit for the following high school courses: Math I, Math II, World Language I, and English I. These courses meet the graduation requirement and count towards the number of credits needed for high school graduation. To fulfill the requirement, students must pass the course and score a Level III, IV, or V on any EOC associated with the course, if applicable. The course must conform to the high school course of study. Although the courses will count toward graduation requirements, the GPA will only be computed with courses taken during the high school years.

Students transferring to UCPS from an out-of-state middle school with high school credit listed on their transcripts will be given credit for the high school courses meeting N.C graduation requirements and NC State Board of Education Policy.
### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

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<td>In 6th grade, students apply skills they learned in earlier grades to make sense of more challenging books and articles. That includes learning about how authors try to influence readers and find reasons to support their ideas. Focusing on how authors make their points and support their arguments with evidence and reasoning helps 6th grade students sharpen their ability to write and speak with more clarity and coherence. Students also will expand their vocabularies and use new words in their stories, reports, and essays. To meet these literacy goals, students must devote significant attention to precise details in their reading and when writing.</td>
<td>In 7th grade, students will analyze, define, compare, and evaluate ideas when reading, writing, speaking, and listening. He or she will continue to analyze how themes in fiction and nonfiction develop over the course of a book or article. Readings will include classic and contemporary pieces that represent diverse perspectives. In particular, 7th grade students’ ability to cite specific evidence when offering an interpretation of a text matures. They use relevant evidence when supporting their own points in writing and speaking, making their reasoning clear to readers or listeners or constructively evaluating others’ use of evidence.</td>
<td>To prepare for bigger challenges in high school, 8th grade students must grapple with major works of fiction and nonfiction that extend across cultures and centuries. As they work diligently to understand precisely what an author or speaker is saying, students also must learn to question an author’s or speaker’s assumptions and assess the accuracy of his or her claims. They also must be able to report findings from their own research and analysis of sources in a clear manner.</td>
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<td>• Analyzing how chapters of a book, scenes of a play, or stanzas of a poem fit into the overall structure of the piece and contribute to the development of ideas or themes</td>
<td>• Citing several sources of specific evidence from a piece when offering an oral or written analysis of literature</td>
<td>• Citing the evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what is explicitly stated and/or implied from a book, article, poem, or play</td>
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<td>• Gaining knowledge from materials that make extensive use of elaborate diagrams and data to convey information and illustrate concepts</td>
<td>• Analyzing works of fiction to see how events advance the plot and how setting shapes the characters</td>
<td>• Analyzing where materials on the same topic disagree on matters of fact, interpretation, or point of view</td>
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<td>• Evaluating the argument and specific claims in written materials or a speech</td>
<td>• Determining an author’s point of view or purpose in a nonfiction work and analyzing how the author takes a position different from other authors</td>
<td>• Learning how authors support their ideas through word choice, sentence and paragraph structure, and other methods</td>
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<td>• Presenting claims and findings to others orally, sequencing ideas logically, and accentuating main ideas or themes</td>
<td>• Organizing and focusing his or her own writing, including supporting statements and conclusions with evidence and showing that the evidence is accurate and reliable</td>
<td>• Building writing around strong central ideas or points of view; supporting the ideas with sound reasoning and evidence, precise word choices, smooth transitions, and different sentence structures</td>
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<td>• Writing arguments that provide clear reasons and relevant evidence using credible sources</td>
<td>• Conducting research in response to a specific question by drawing on evidence from several credible literary or informational sources to support an analysis or reflection</td>
<td>• Planning and conducting research projects that include several steps and use many credible and documented print and digital sources</td>
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<td>• Writing brief reports that examine a topic, have a clear focus, and include relevant facts, details, and quotations</td>
<td>• Avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citations (e.g., footnotes, bibliography)</td>
<td>• Analyzing the purpose of information presented in diverse media (e.g., print, TV, web) and evaluating its social, political, or commercial motives</td>
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<td>• Conducting short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and sharpening the focus based on the research findings</td>
<td>• Evaluating a speaker’s key points and reasoning, asking questions, and stating his or her own well-supported ideas in discussions</td>
<td>• Presenting findings and claims to others, emphasizing key points with relevant evidence and sound reasoning, adapting speech to the audience and the formality of the setting, and responding to questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reviewing and paraphrasing key ideas and multiple perspectives of a speaker</td>
<td>• Presenting claims and findings to others emphasizing main points, making eye contact, speaking loudly enough, pronouncing words clearly, and using formal English when necessary</td>
<td>• Using strong, active verbs to create a clear picture for the reader (e.g., walk, skip, meander, lurch, limp)</td>
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<td>• Recognizing variations from standard English in his or her own and others’ writing and speaking, and using this knowledge to improve language use</td>
<td>• Using common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to defining the meaning of a word (e.g., semi-, semiannual, semicircle)</td>
<td>• Interpreting figures of speech (e.g., irony, puns) and developing a large vocabulary of general academic words and phrases</td>
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*from Parents’ Guide to Student Success. Washington: National PTA.*
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<td>The skills and understanding that students will gain during 6th grade are among the most important foundations for college and career readiness. These include working with ratios and rates and working with variables and variable expressions—the building blocks of algebra. Many topics will remain a major emphasis throughout the middle school years and into high school.</td>
<td>In 7th grade, students will grow in skill and understanding as they continue the previous grade’s work in proportional relationships, equations, and positive and negative numbers. These topics will remain a major emphasis throughout the middle school years and into high school. A good command of rates and proportional relationships, including percentages, is also an important life skill.</td>
<td>In 8th grade, students will learn a number of skills and ideas that he or she must know and understand to be ready for college and career. Students will continue to learn how to write and reason with algebraic expressions. Students will also make a thorough study of linear equations with one and two variables. Building on previous work with relationships between quantities, students will be introduced to the idea of a mathematical function. Students will prepare for high school geometry by understanding congruence (same shape and size) and similarity of geometric figures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understanding ratios and rates, and solving problems involving proportional relationships (e.g., if it took 7 hours to mow 4 lawns, then at that rate, how many lawns could be mowed in 35 hours? At what rate were lawns being mowed?)</td>
<td>• Analyzing proportional relationships (e.g., by graphing in the coordinate plane), and distinguishing proportional relationships from other kinds of mathematical relationships (e.g., buying 10 times as many items will cost you 10 times as much, but taking 10 times as many aspirin will not lower your fever 10 times as much)</td>
<td>• Understanding slope, and relating linear equations in two variables to lines in the coordinate plane</td>
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<td>• Dividing fractions and solving related word problems (e.g., how wide is a rectangular strip of land with length 3/4 mile and area 1/2 square mile?)</td>
<td>• Solving percent problems (e.g., tax, tips, and markups and markdowns)</td>
<td>• Solving linear equations (e.g., (-x + 5(x + 1/3) = 2x - 8)); solving pairs of linear equations (e.g., (x + 6y = -1) and (2x - 2y = 12)); and writing equations to solve related word problems</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Using positive and negative numbers together to describe quantities; understanding the ordering and absolute values of positive and negative numbers</td>
<td>• Adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing positive and negative numbers, and solving related word problems</td>
<td>• Understanding functions as rules that assign a unique output number to each input number; using linear functions to model relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Working with variables and expressions by generalizing the way numbers work (e.g., when adding numbers, the order doesn’t matter, so (x + y = y + x); likewise, properties of addition and multiplication can be used to rewrite (24x + 18y) as (6(4x + 3y)), or (y + x + y = 3y))</td>
<td>• Solving word problems that have a combination of whole numbers, fractions, and decimals (e.g., a woman making $25 per hour receives a 10% raise; she will make an additional 1/10 of her salary an hour, or $2.50, for a new salary of $27.50)</td>
<td>• Analyzing statistical relationships by using a best-fit line (a straight line that models an association between two quantities)</td>
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<td>• Understanding the process of solving simple equations</td>
<td>• Solving equations such as (1/2(x - 3) = 34) quickly and accurately, and writing equations of this kind to solve word problems (e.g., “I knocked over a carton of milk, and 3 cups were spilled before I set the carton upright again. When I poured out the remaining milk equally into two measuring cups, there was 3/4 of a cup of milk in each one. How much milk was originally in the carton?”)</td>
<td>• Working with positive and negative exponents, square root and cube root symbols, and scientific notation (e.g., evaluating (\sqrt{36 + 64}); estimating world population as (7 \times 10^9))</td>
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<td>• Writing equations to solve word problems and describe relationships between quantities (e.g., the distance (D) traveled by a train in time (T) might be expressed by an equation (D = 85T), where (D) is in miles and (T) is in hours)</td>
<td>• Solving problems involving scale drawings</td>
<td>• Understanding congruence and similarity using physical models, transparencies, or geometry software (e.g., given two congruent figures, show how to obtain one from the other by a sequence of rotations, translations, and/or reflections)</td>
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<td>• Reasoning about relationships between shapes to determine area, surface area, and volume</td>
<td>• Using statistics to draw inferences and make comparisons (e.g., deciding which candidate is likely to win an election based on a survey)</td>
<td>• Understanding and applying the Pythagorean Theorem ((a^2 + b^2 = c^2)) to solve problems</td>
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*from Parents’ Guide to Student Success. Washington: National PTA.*
A well-planned science curriculum provides opportunities for inquiry, experimentation and technological design. UCPS strives to provide a seamless integration of science content, scientific inquiry, non-fiction writing and technological design into instruction. This type of instruction will reinforce in students the notion that “what” is known is inextricably tied to “how” it is known.

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<tr>
<th>GRADE 6</th>
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<tr>
<td>The major concepts and skills studied in sixth grade are:</td>
<td>The major concepts and skills studied in seventh grade are:</td>
<td>The major concepts and skills studied in eighth grade are:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understand the properties of waves and the wavelike property of energy in earthquakes, light and sound waves.</td>
<td>• Understand motion, the effects of forces on motion and the graphical representations of motion.</td>
<td>• Understand the properties of matter and changes that occur when matter interacts in an open and closed container.</td>
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<td>• Understand the structure, classifications and physical properties of matter.</td>
<td>• Understand forms of energy, energy transfer and transformation and conservation in mechanical systems.</td>
<td>• Explain the environmental implications associated with the various methods of obtaining, managing, and using energy resources.</td>
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<td>• Understand characteristics of energy transfer and interactions of matter and energy.</td>
<td>• Understand how the cycling of matter (water and gases) in and out of the atmosphere relates to Earth’s atmosphere, weather and climate and the effects of the atmosphere on humans.</td>
<td>• Understand the hydrosphere and the impact of humans on local systems and the effects of the hydrosphere on humans.</td>
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<td>• Understand the earth, moon, sun, solar system, and the properties, structures and predictable motions of celestial bodies in the Universe.</td>
<td>• Understand the processes, structures and functions of living organisms.</td>
<td>• Understand the history of Earth and its life forms based on evidence of change recorded in fossil records and landforms.</td>
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<td>• Understand the structure of the earth and how interactions of constructive and destructive forces have resulted in changes in the surface of the Earth over time and the effects of the lithosphere on humans.</td>
<td>• Understand the mechanisms of cellular reproduction, patterns of inheritance and external factors to potential variation among offspring.</td>
<td>• Understand the hazards caused by agents of diseases that affect living organisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand the structures, processes and behaviors of plants that enable them to survive and reproduce.</td>
<td>• Understand how biotechnology is used to affect living organisms.</td>
<td>• Understand how organisms interact with and respond to the biotic and abiotic components of their environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understand the flow of energy through ecosystems and the responses of populations to the biotic and abiotic factors in their environment.</td>
<td>• Understand the evolution of organisms and landforms based on evidence, theories and processes that impact Earth over time.</td>
<td>• Understand the composition of various substances as it relates to their ability to serve as a source of energy and building materials for growth and repair of organisms.</td>
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### Grade 6

The major concepts and skills studied in sixth grade are:

- Expand the knowledge, skills, and understandings of North Carolina and the United States acquired in elementary school by connecting those studies to their first formal look at a study of the world.
- Focus on the discipline of geography by using the themes of location, place, movement, human-environment interaction, and region to understand the emergence, expansion, and decline of civilizations and societies.
- Take a systematic look at the history and culture of various world regions including the development of economic, political, and social systems.
- Learn about civilizations, societies, and regions in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.
- Recognize and interpret the “lessons of history”; those transferable understandings that are supported throughout time by recurring themes and issues.

### Grade 7

The major concepts and skills studied in seventh grade are:

- Expand upon the knowledge, skills and understanding acquired in the sixth grade examination of early civilizations.
- Study the world from the Age of Exploration to contemporary times in order to understand the implications of increased global interactions.
- Focus on the discipline of geography by using the themes of location, place, movement, human-environmental interaction and region to understand modern societies and regions.
- Understand conflict and cooperation, economic development, population shifts, political thought and organization, cultural values and beliefs, and the impact of environment over time.
- Examine various civilizations, societies, and regions in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.
- Recognize patterns and connections between facts and related ideas in order to reach a deeper understanding of the content.
- Interpret the “lessons of history”; those transferable understandings that are supported throughout time by recurring themes and issues.

### Grade 8

The major concepts and skills studied in eighth grade are:

- Integrate United States history with the study of North Carolina history. This integrated study helps students understand and appreciate the legacy of our democratic republic and to develop skills needed to engage responsibly and intelligently as North Carolinians.
- Focus on critical events, personalities, issues, and developments in the state and nation from the Revolutionary Era to contemporary times.
- Analyze the relationship of geography, events and people to the political, economic, technological, and cultural developments that shaped our existence in North Carolina and the United States over time.
- Recognize patterns and connections between facts and related ideas in order to reach a deeper understanding of the content.
- Interpret the “lessons of history”; those transferable understandings that are supported throughout time by recurring themes and issues.

The standards are organized around five strands: history; geography and environmental literacy; economics and financial literacy; civics and governance; and culture. The strands will not be taught in isolation, but will be woven together in an integrated study that helps to tell the complete story of our state and nation.
**NC ESSENTIAL STANDARDS**

**HEALTHFUL LIVING**

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE 6</th>
<th>GRADE 7</th>
<th>GRADE 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Areas:</td>
<td>Focus Areas:</td>
<td>Focus Areas:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn about decision making and goal setting.</td>
<td>• Learn about stress management.</td>
<td>• Learn about problem solving strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand positive stress management techniques.</td>
<td>• Understand healthy relationships and behaviors.</td>
<td>• Understand decision making and goal setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus upon the relationship between healthy expression of emotions and behaviors.</td>
<td>• Learn about depression and mental health.</td>
<td>• Use dietary guidelines to plan healthy, nutritious meals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Study Dietary Guidelines for Americans.</td>
<td>• Use My Plate and Food Fact Labels to plan and employ healthy nutrition and fitness.</td>
<td>• Understand the relationship of nutrition to the prevention of disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyze Food Fact Labels.</td>
<td>• Apply lifelong nutrition and health-related fitness concepts.</td>
<td>• Discuss eating disorders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discover lifelong nutrition and health-related fitness concepts.</td>
<td>• Focus upon health risks associated with alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.</td>
<td>• Understand the health risks with alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss health risks associated with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.</td>
<td>• Understand wellness, disease prevention and recognition of symptoms.</td>
<td>• Study chronic diseases (asthma, allergies, diabetes, epilepsy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus upon risk reduction behaviors to protect self and others from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.</td>
<td>• Learn about the immune system.</td>
<td>• Discuss global environmental problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand wellness, disease prevention, and recognition of symptoms.</td>
<td>• Evaluate health information and products.</td>
<td>• Learn about the Heimlich and CPR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyze health information and products.</td>
<td>• Discover basic first aid and injury prevention.</td>
<td>• Discuss healthy and unhealthy relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss the protection of environment.</td>
<td>• Understand healthy interpersonal communication and relationships.</td>
<td>• Advance skill in team, individual, dual sports, outdoor pursuits, and dance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand healthy interpersonal communication and relationships.</td>
<td>• Demonstrate a more advanced level of competency in manipulative skills that impact the quality of movement patterns.</td>
<td>• Integrate strategies and tactics within a game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasize motor skills and movement needed to perform a variety of physical activities.</td>
<td>• Apply game strategies and tactics in a variety of games and activities.</td>
<td>• • Focus upon the relationship between physical activity and calorie intake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand the importance of a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the 21st Century, the importance and value of quality physical education and personal fitness is being recognized as never before. This growing awareness is accompanied with the knowledge that childhood is the time to begin the development of active and healthy lifestyles. In recent years, a growing body of research, theory, and practical experience has sharpened our understanding of the beneficial aspects of our Physical Education programs and those aspects that are counterproductive.
## THEATER ARTS
The student will:
- Use movement, voice, and writing to communicate ideas and feelings.
- Use performance to communicate ideas and feelings.
- Analyze literary texts and performances.
- Understand how to design technical theatre components, such as costumes, sets, props, makeup, lighting, and sound.
- Analyze theatre in terms of the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which it was created.
- Understand the traditions, roles, and conventions of theatre as an art form.

## MUSIC EDUCATION
The student will:
- Apply the elements of music and musical techniques in order to sing and play music with accuracy and expression.
- Interpret the sound and symbol systems of music.
- Create music using a variety of sound and notational sources.
- Understand the interacting elements in order to respond to music and music performances.
- Understand the global, interdisciplinary, and 21st century connections with music.

## VISUAL ARTS
The student will:
- Use the language of visual arts to communicate effectively.
- Apply creative and critical thinking skills to artistic expression.
- Create art using a variety of tools, media, and processes, safely and appropriately.
- Understand the global, historical, societal and cultural contexts of the visual arts.
- Understand the interdisciplinary connections and life applications of the visual arts.
- Use critical analysis to generate responses to a variety of prompts.

Although each program is designed for individual grade levels, it is important to remember that all students do not fit into neatly prescribed categories of learning. Therefore, students should be individually assessed and consequently presented with appropriate art opportunities.
Career development is a lifelong process by which individuals develop and refine their self-identity as it relates to life and employment decisions. Middle school students have reached a critical age where they can explore career decision making and develop future educational plans. Career development experiences for middle grades students are designed to be exploratory in nature and do not develop specific skills. The mission of the Middle Grades Career Development Program is to allow all students to participate in activities designed to explore career decisions so that they are more prepared to make wise decisions about future career goal choices in high school and beyond.

As a participant in the Middle Grades Career Development Program, the student will:

- Explore self-awareness.
- Use computers and technology.
- Learn sources of up-to-date career information.
- Complete career interest inventories, a learning styles assessment, and other assessments relating to career decisions.
- Participate in hands-on career exploration activities.
- Be aware of employment training opportunities available in and beyond high school.
- Be familiar with employment opportunities available in Union County and surrounding geographic areas.
- Develop a four-year plan outlining tentative courses to take in high school.

Beginning in middle school, students will have the opportunity to register with CFNC.org. This site will allow students to plan for college and careers. High School Career Development Coordinators, Career Technology Education Teachers, academic teachers and/or counselors will work to help students in developing a quality education plan.
The Information and Technology Essential Standards (ITES) for media and technology identify the essential knowledge and skills that all students need to be active, lifelong learners in a technology-intensive environment. Technology is undergoing rapid change, and new and improved technological advances appear almost daily. The standards are designed to form the foundation for continuous learning and to be applicable to ever-changing innovations. To become technologically proficient, the student must develop these skills over time through independent, collaborative, and blended instructional approaches to the curriculum and learning opportunities. These skills are necessary for all students and will be introduced and refined collaboratively by all teachers as an integral part of the learning process. In addition, the use of the student netbook within the district’s 1:1 initiative will allow exposure and mastery of the ITES clarifying objectives.

The ITES standards represent the “must have” information and technology skills/knowledge that each student must have in order to achieve success at the next level. The standards are designed to be delivered by classroom teachers in all curricular areas and grade levels. Goals and strategies are implemented through integrated activities in all content areas rather than through one specific course.

Standards covered by each grade level include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE 6</th>
<th>GRADE 7</th>
<th>GRADE 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student will:</td>
<td>The student will:</td>
<td>The student will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyze resources to determine their</td>
<td>• Evaluate information resources based on</td>
<td>• Evaluate information resources based on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reliability, point of view, bias, and</td>
<td>specified criteria.</td>
<td>specified criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevance for particular topics and purposes.</td>
<td>• Use technology and other resources for</td>
<td>• Use technology and other resources for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use technology, and other resources, for</td>
<td>assigned tasks.</td>
<td>assigned tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the purpose of accessing, organizing, and</td>
<td>• Apply a research process to complete</td>
<td>• Apply a research process to complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharing information.</td>
<td>given tasks.</td>
<td>given tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apply a research process for</td>
<td>• Apply responsible behaviors when using</td>
<td>• Apply responsible behaviors when using</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaborative and individual research.</td>
<td>information and technology resources.</td>
<td>information and technology resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apply responsible behaviors when using</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information and technology resources.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus areas for Grades 6-8:
• Responsible and safe use of online resources
• Using Copyright and Fair Use Guidelines
• Refining application skills including word processing, multimedia, databases and spreadsheets
• Locating and retrieving information from the internet and online databases
• Evaluating resources and information for accuracy and usefulness
• Selecting and using a variety of technological tools to develop projects in content areas
In order for today’s students to function in the 21st century, they must be able to acquire, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information Literacy Skills curriculum emphasizes the problem solving, critical and creative thinking, decision making, and cooperative learning that prepare students for the challenges in society.

The curriculum is more than lessons to be taught at a fixed time. It offers the wider window of opportunity to connect learning with meaningful experiences. In collaboration with all classroom teachers, the media coordinator focuses on student involvement, activity, and action. Through the integration of process and content, today’s learners will be better educated to live in a democratic society.

The learner will:
- **EXPLORE** sources and formats for reading, listening, and viewing purposes.
- **IDENTIFY** and **USE** criteria for excellence to evaluate information and formats.
- **RELATE** ideas and information to life experiences.
- **EXPLORE** and **USE** research processes to meet information needs.
- **COMMUNICATE** reading, listening, and viewing experiences.

**LAPTOP 1:1 INITIATIVE**
Students and teachers in grades six, seven, and eight will again be involved with the district’s laptop 1:1 initiative. Information, policies, and procedures related to this project can be found in the UCPS Laptop 1:1 Handbook. This manual is presented to parents during the laptop orientation. Handbooks may also be located and downloaded through the middle school’s website.
World Language programs vary per school for length of study and languages offered.

Programs vary between:
- Exploratory Courses
- Beginning Courses
- Continuing Courses
- High School Level One for high school graduation credit

**High School Level One** is available for high school graduation credit at some middle schools for Chinese, French or Spanish for 8th graders who met the criteria for course entry.

**PROGRAM GOALS:**
All three programs (Beginning, Continuing, and High School Level One) introduce students to knowledge about the language and provide students the opportunity to practice proficiency while learning about the relevant world culture. The emphasis is placed on the development of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) with special attention given to the listening and speaking skills first. Grammar, rather than being the focus of instruction, is integrated into lessons. The three programs vary as to the depth and duration of study as well as the starting point.

According to North Carolina World Languages Essential Standards, as learners make connections to literacy, language, other disciplines, and communities that speak the language of study, the learner will:
- Use the language to engage in interpersonal communication.
- Understand words and concepts presented in the language.
- Use the language to present information to an audience.
- Compare the students’ culture and the target culture.

**PARENT TIP:**
Make life with your middle school student more enjoyable!

Don’t take things personally. Although he or she may not say so often, your young adolescent loves and admires you.
6th grade programs are exploratory in nature and usually last six weeks. Exploratory programs permit students to understand the basics of language learning that will help them decide on their path to more formal language study.

- The French and Spanish 6th grade program topics include: greetings, introductions, classroom instructions and objects, numbers and dates, describing friends and family as well as some basic actions.
- The Chinese 6th grade program topics include: greetings, introductions, classroom instructions and objects, numbers and ages, facial features, describing people’s height and facial features. Students learn the fundamentals of character strokes and are able to read and write some basic characters while using the phonetic version of the language, pinyin.

7th and 8th grade beginning programs focus on understanding and using the language while laying the foundation for high school credit programs.

- The French 7th – 8th grade program topics include: introductions, numbers, classroom instructions, numbers, greetings, ages, likes and dislikes, preferred activities, classroom subjects and times, school objects, colors, sports, hobbies, weather, months, seasons, foods and beverages, places to go, things to do, and describing family members. Amount covered depends on the duration of the course.
- The Spanish 7th – 8th grade program topics include: greetings, introductions, dates and days, weather, seasons, time, introductions, classroom instructions, likes and dislikes, personality descriptions, school classes, foods and beverages, good health, leisure activities, sports, places in the community, families, celebrations, age and ordering in a restaurant. Amount covered depends on the duration of the course.
- The Chinese 7th – 8th grade program topics include: greetings, introductions, countries, nationalities, family members, numbers, homes, foods and drinks, students and school classes, dates and days of the week, and time. Students learn the fundamentals of character strokes and are able to read and write some basic characters while using the phonetic version of the language, pinyin, as a pronunciation tool.
The following guidelines were mutually developed by representatives of each middle school in order to provide a degree of consistency among the schools:

- The honor organization at the middle school, whether National Junior Beta Club or National Junior Honor Society, is considered a service and leadership club or group. Entrance is based on high academic achievement and outstanding citizenship and character.

- **Affiliation:** Middle schools may affiliate with the National Junior Beta Club and/or the National Junior Honor Society.

- Seventh and eighth grade students may be considered for membership into the NJHS/NJBC.

- Math, science, social studies, language arts, and health/physical education are to be included in determining grade averages for membership into either club. A minimum average of 92.00 is required for entrance into the National Junior Honor Society and minimum of 92.00 for the National Junior Beta Club. This minimum of 92.00 must be in grade-level, or above, classes and may not be the results of rounding. A student’s discipline record will also be considered for membership eligibility.

**Induction into National Honor Society or Beta Club:**

**Grade 6:**
No induction

**Grade 7:**
After 5th six weeks grading period using grades from 7th grade only

**Grade 8:**
After 3rd six weeks grading period using grades from 8th grade plus grades from 7th grade*
*7th grade final report card grades counted twice, 8th grade semester grades counted once

**Conduct for all inductees:**
No more than one “N” in any subject
No “U” in any subject from time of entry in 7th grade
Any member whose average on any individual reporting period falls below 92.00 in National Junior Honor Society or in National Junior Beta Club for any grading period will be on probation for one grading period. A member may be on probation only once. If the grades are not brought up to meet the requirements during probationary grading, the member will be automatically dismissed. Any student with a discipline referral resulting in ISS (in school suspension) or 1 (one) day of OSS (out of school suspension) will be placed on probation for the current school year. Any additional assignment to ISS or more than one day of OSS during the current school year will result in immediate and permanent dismissal. Once inducted, the first “N” on conduct in any subject results in probation. The second “N” in any subject results in dismissal. The first “U” on conduct results in dismissal. A member who is on probation may attend meetings, but may not vote or participate in club activities. Students dismissed will not be eligible to return.

All classes, including cultural arts and Health/PE, will count toward honor roll. To be on the “A” Honor Roll, a student must have all A’s on his/her report card for the grading period.

To be on the “A-B” Honor Roll, a student must have all A’s and B’s on his/her report card for the grading period. A minimum of one A is required for the “A-B” Honor Roll.

David Puckett
Reflections From a Teacher’s Heart

The Middle Years
It’s not easy…
Teaching the kids in the middle…
They’re so headstrong,
    they know it all.
They’ve forgotten how to walk.
They’ve remembered how to cry.
They’re grown-up one day,
a child the next.
They hate the way they look.
They hate the way you look at them.
They hate their name.
They have little respect for anyone or anything.

They’re hard.
They’re hard to love...
They’re hard to teach…
They’re hard to understand…
They’re hard.

Help me remember,
There’s only one thing harder than
teaching the kid in the middle…
Being one!
PROMOTION/RETENTION OF STUDENTS
To be promoted to the next grade, middle school students must demonstrate grade level proficiency by scoring a Level III or above on READY EOG Assessments in reading and math. Students must pass English/Language Arts and Mathematics. In addition to English/Language Arts and Mathematics, the student must also pass two (2) of these three subjects – Science, Social Studies, and Health/Physical Education. Students who do not meet promotion standards may be required to attend accountability review meetings at the conclusion of the school year.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS
The policy also provides special exemptions for some students with disabilities or who have limited English proficiency. Although exempted, all students must take some form of assessment and retest. Eventually, limited English proficient students must meet the same requirements as other high school students in order to receive their diploma.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES
Students not meeting the READY EOG standards or those at risk of not meeting the standards will be provided focused interventions. A Personalized Education Plan (PEP) is an individually designed plan, usually focused on just the academic needs of the student, but may also address behavioral problems if they are the cause of a student’s lack of proficiency. The PEP will be developed after the student has scored below the proficiency level on the READY End of Grade test or local assessments. Focused intervention strategies, such as extended school day programs (after school and/or Saturday academies), tutorial sessions, intensive parental involvement, special homework assignments, within-class grouping, multi-age grouping, and reduced class size are some of the intervention strategies that might be used by a school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE 6</th>
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</tr>
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</table>
| InView Test  
READY EOG Reading Assessment  
READY EOG Math Assessment | READY EOG Reading Assessment  
READY EOG Math Assessment | READY EOG Reading Assessment  
READY EOG Math Assessment  
READY EOG Science Assessment  
READY EOC Math I Assessment (specific students only) |
CENTRAL ACADEMY OF TECHNOLOGY & ARTS
Central Academy of Technology & Arts (CATA), Union County’s first magnet-based high school, offers focused curriculum in the fields of pre-engineering, information systems, medical sciences, performing arts, teacher preparation, and transportation systems. Regular academics, such as English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and world language, are integrated with the technology curriculum. Instruction includes high-tech concepts required in today’s international market by the most progressive businesses in America and abroad.

More information and the application process for eighth graders interested in attending this high school can be found at http://cata.ucps.k12.nc.us.

UNION COUNTY EARLY COLLEGE
Union County Early College is a non-traditional public high school offered through the New Schools Project and the Governor’s office. Early College is a five year program (grades 9-13) which offers students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma as well as an associate degree in college at no cost to the student.

Limited enrollment, smaller class size, and supportive teacher relationships inspire and help students succeed in becoming college ready through the challenging high school curriculum. Each year, rising ninth grade students can apply for consideration for admission. Students must live in Union County, be performing on grade level, ready to work hard and take difficult courses with teacher help, and be ready to make new friends from all other middle schools. Eighth grade students will be informed of the application process through the counselors at the middle schools. For more information visit the website at http://ucec.usps.k12.nc.us.

-Special Purpose High Schools-

- Robert Ricken
  The Middle School Years:
  Love Me When I’m Most Unlovable

Do you see me when you look at our faces?
Am I just part of the crowd?
Do you even know my name?

Did you notice:
I typed my book report?
I bought a binder for my lab work?
I smile during your class?

I look for any sign of recognition.
A good grade is okay, but a personal comment makes my day.
### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>MORAL AND ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Are intensely curious</td>
<td>• Are concerned about their physical appearance</td>
<td>• Are optimistic and hopeful</td>
<td>• Seek peer approval and acceptance</td>
<td>• Have a strong sense of fairness in human relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Face decisions that may affect long term academic values</td>
<td>• Experience fluctuations in metabolism causing extreme restlessness and listlessness</td>
<td>• Exhibit erratic emotions and behavior</td>
<td>• Torn between desire for independence and desire to please</td>
<td>• Face hard moral and ethical questions for which they are unprepared to cope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Argue to convince</td>
<td>• Develop physically at different rates; girls develop earlier than boys</td>
<td>• Are moody and restless; often feel self-conscious, lack self-esteem</td>
<td>• Show rebellious behaviors toward parents, but are dependent on parental values</td>
<td>• Are dependant on home and church for moral and ethical choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rate personal concerns 1st and academics 2nd</td>
<td>• Have poor levels of endurance, strength, and flexibility and lack physical health</td>
<td>• Are easily offended and sensitive to criticism</td>
<td>• Use peers and media role models as sources for standards of behavior</td>
<td>• Ask broad unanswerable questions about life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Begin as concrete thinkers, then move to abstract thinkers</td>
<td>• Consume large amounts of improper foods</td>
<td>• Search for adult acceptance</td>
<td>• Take sarcasm at face value, yet heartless in their own comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exhibit unorganized behavior</td>
<td>• Prefer engaging</td>
<td>• Are optimistic and hopeful</td>
<td>• Seek peer approval and acceptance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prefer engaging</td>
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<td>• Torn between desire for independence and desire to please</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from National Middle School Association

- Robert Ricken

The Middle School Years:
Love Me When I'm Most Unlovable

Am I an adult or child?

I'm allowed to watch the house for a little while, but never for a weekend.

At the movies, I pay adult prices; However, I'm not allowed to see R-rated films.
I ask again, "Is a teenager an adult or child?"
The first tip is thinking ahead... One of our best tools as parents is being prepared. As your son or daughter gets to the middle school years, get ready for at least occasional conflicts. Think through what is truly important to you. Is the youngster’s hairstyle as important as homework? Isn’t curfew more of a concern than crabiness? Obviously, dawdling is a lot easier to accept than drugs. As these give-and-take situations start, know ahead of time what areas you are willing to negotiate and what areas are absolutes.

Break down big chores into small parts. Sometimes young people feel overwhelmed by tasks, especially those they’ve let go for a long time. A disastrous bedroom, twenty-three overdue math assignments, a long-term project that’s “suddenly” due in a few days (or hours!); all of these cause the preadolescent to choose to give up rather than get started.

Help your child by setting up smaller goals: clean off your bed; get five assignments done tonight; assemble the materials for the project. Preadolescents have trouble structuring tasks so that they are more approachable. In an even and off-hand way, we can help them in this.

Encourage your middle schooler to keep a daily list (weekly is too much) with a few things on it to be done that day. It may be necessary to assign a specific time to each task. When the task is completed, draw a line through it to show accomplishment.

Don’t hesitate to remind your middle schooler about appointments and due dates. Try to think ahead about materials required for a project (unless you look forward to late-evening visits to K-Mart). This will not last forever. When this same child was learning to walk, we held his or her hands and made the path smooth. Now he or she is learning to take on a tremendous assortment of life-tasks and changes; hand-holding (but not the firm, physical grip previously necessary) is needed for about a year or so as your middle schooler gets started on the road to being a responsible adult.

Be willing to listen — but don’t poke or pry. Kids this age value independence and often seem secretive. Keeping to themselves is part of the separateness they are trying to create. Let them know you’d love to help them, but don’t push them into a defensive position.

If your child is in the midst of a longtime friendship that is falling apart, the best thing you can do is stand by and be a good listener. It is devastating for us to see our children hurting, but taking sides or intervening is not appropriate, nor will it help. Preadolescents do survive these hurts, especially if they know we are there to listen to their pain.

Friends are people who accept us as we are. They listen, they don’t needlessly criticize, they back us up when we’re right and pick us up when we’re down. Be a friend to your middle schooler; some days kids feel you’re the only one they have.
All friendships have ups and downs. Children need to learn that being “best friends” isn't always smooth sailing. People have differences of opinion and even get angry, but they still care for each other. This is what’s going on when we get involved in those “I-hate-her-she-is-so-stuck-up-and-how-could-she-do-this-to-me” conversations. As parents we must help our kids see that one problem doesn’t ruin a relationship, but stubbornness might. Middle schoolers have a lot of spats and falling outs, but often the friends are back together again in a short time.

When reprimanding, deal only with the precise problem, don’t bring in other issues. “The trash is still here, and I want it out, now,” is better than, “You are so lazy! I told you to take that trash out two hours ago and it’s still here! You’d live in a pigsty, wouldn’t you? Well, you aren’t the only one in this house, you know…”

If the issue is minor, keep things light. The shoes on the floor, the wet towel on the bed, the carton left open; these are maddening, perhaps, but not earth-shattering. Call attention to them in a humorous way, so your middle-schooler knows you want action but you aren’t being punitive. “Either the cat’s smarter than I thought or you left the milk carton open on the counter. One of you please put it back before it spoils.”

Don’t use power unless it’s urgent. Parents have the ultimate power, and kids know it. We don’t have to “prove” it to them at every turn. Save your strength for those really important issues you’ve decided are non-negotiable. Eventually kids are going to possess power of their own, and we want them to be able to use it wisely.

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