



## **For 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Mentors Solving the Middle School Mentoring Puzzle**

Take a moment..... think back to when you were a young person at eleven or twelve years old. You are about to begin your middle school years. What were your fears or your expectations? What were you excited about?

This thoughtful exercise is significant, because getting in touch with our middle school selves can help cultivate empathy and appreciation for the journey our rising 6<sup>th</sup> grade mentees are about to take.

More than likely, your mentee is having similar feelings to your middle school self... and then some. There are many unknowns and new and different experiences waiting. Both mentor and mentee might be wondering, "*How is middle school going to be different?*" It's a puzzle!

We've researched and collected some great information to help you put the pieces together, and prepare for this exciting next step.

### **What is it all about?**



With middle school just a few months away, be aware that your mentee might be feeling anxious about attending a new, bigger school. Be ready to offer a listening ear and warm heart, as he/she approaches the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **[Middle School-Mentoring Tips](#)**



### **Your mentee is growing as a young person.**

In addition to the new challenges of middle school, our mentees are experiencing changes developmentally. While this is an individual and continual process, the link below outlines the typical developmental characteristics of a middle school student.

### **[Developmental Characteristics of Eleven-to-Thirteen Year Olds](#)**

**Your mentee's independence  
will increase in middle school.**



Middle school brings lots of opportunities to learn and practice independence. The bar is set higher, and the student must rise to the occasion. More academic responsibilities and freedom to move about on their own are just a few differences from grade school.

**Major Differences – Elementary vs. Middle**



**The connecting puzzle piece:  
YOU**

All of this change may leave both you and your mentee wondering “What’s next?” If you feel your mentee growing away from you, resist the temptation to relax the mentoring boundaries by visiting less frequently or by bringing him/her excessive gifts or food. You may wonder, “Does he/she want to continue the mentoring relationship?” leaving you with the urge to ask your mentee directly, “Do you want me to be your mentor in middle school?”

Before you ask this question, we want you to assume the answer is yes! Your mentee needs your help with the transition to middle school, whether he/she realizes it or not. Once you get there, you will notice the inevitable changes in your mentee. Remember, with change comes opportunity!

Thoughtful questions you can ask your mentee:

*“Now that you are in middle school, what do you want our mentoring to be about?”*  
(Your mentee does not want you to change, but the mentoring to evolve.)

*“If you could change something about our visits, what would it be?”*

The logistics of middle school mentoring will be different. Remember that you are not alone! Your Mentor Director will be here to guide you through this process. When asked to share her advice for mentors, a seasoned middle school professional had this to say: “Middle school students want limits, even though they will test each one. They can teach you as much as you teach them, so be open to learning new things!”