**Module 1 Part 1: Middle School vs. High School**

*This section corresponds with middle school classroom materials Module 1 Lesson 1.*

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Introduction

Objective: The student will identify at least 5 differences between middle school and high school.

Estimated time needed: 30-45 minutes

*Although most students say that they are excited about going to high school, the transition between middle school and high school can be daunting. The purpose of this lesson is to highlight the differences between middle school and high school so that you will feel more prepared to walk through those high school doors and take ownership of your education. Parents, do not assume that your child understands what high school will entail. Take the time to talk to them about these differences so that they will feel comfortable making the change.*

Materials needed:

Internet access

Introductory Video



Click on the image above to view the video.

Parents Chime In

Take a few minutes to tell your child about your high school memories. How did you feel on your first day of high school? What were you the most surprised about by high school. What are some of your strongest memories? Ask your child these questions before you begin the lesson:

What do you already know about high school?

What do you want to know about high school?

As you progress through the lesson, you will be able to get rid of any false assumptions your child might hold and clear up potential misunderstandings.

Learn About It

By now, you probably feel like you have a good handle on middle school and you understand how it works. In this lesson, we will highlight the differences between middle school and high school in the following areas:

School structure and focus

Attendance

Scheduling

Daily transitions

Middle School vs. High School

School structure and focus

**Middle School High School**

In middle school, teachers often work together in teams. These teams are able to focus on a specific group of students in that grade level. This approach enables the teacher team to consider the whole middle-school experience for their group of students. By being organized around a specific group of students (rather than a specific subject-area) these faculty teams can plan together, coordinate schedules and activities, stagger testing opportunities, and make other coordinated adjustments. The approach also allows teachers to incorporate non-academic areas of focus into the school day because each student on a team will rotate through the same teachers.

In high school, teams of faculty are organized around subject areas, and their focus is much more academic. Each faculty member in a department will connect with different groups of students each semester. In high school, you will have much more flexibility in determining the courses in your schedule. You will need to become more diligent about coordinating your activities and assignments each week, because each class will run as an independent unit. This also means that the transitions from class to class may feel more jarring than they did in middle school. High school teachers can’t coordinate schedules or processes around a student team. Therefore, each classroom environment within your day (e.g., teacher routines, personalities, preferences, grading criteria, pace) may feel very different from the other ones. This pattern is similar to what you will experience in the college environment, too.

Sometimes in middle school, *process* is emphasized just as much as the end result. You are learning about yourself and how to be strategic in academic settings. In high school, college and/or work are right around the corner. The grades you earn during your freshman and sophomore years can weigh heavily in consideration of college admission, scholarships, and other opportunities. Once you’re in high school, there is not much time for a learning curve. If you have not been quite as concerned about grades in the past, you will want to become more focused on them.

Student-centered

Emphasis on both cognitive and affective development

Subject-centered

Emphasis on cognitive development

Parents Chime In

Parents, talk to your child about the difference in how high school will be structured for them. Talk to your child about the timeline for applying to colleges. Track backwards to show how the GPA accumulated during the first two and a half years of high school will be a big factor in the high school admission process.

Middle School vs. High School

Attendance

**Middle School High School**

Missing class or missing a whole day of high school can be more detrimental than it was in middle school. When you are absent from school for part of the day in high school, you’re considered absent from the classes that you missed. This absence will be counted toward your total possible absences for the semester. You will only be counted present for the classes that you actually attend. For example, if you leave early for a doctor’s appointment in high school, you will get an absence in the classes missed, whereas it would not have counted as an absence in middle school since the full day was not missed.

Attendance is more lenient and is considered for the full day.

Attendance is more strict and is considered per semester per class.

Classes are typically offered by the semester

Course options vary depending on your plans after high school

Core academic classes are typically year-long

Course selections are mainly fixed or predetermined

Middle School vs. High School

Scheduling

**Middle School High School**

In middle school, you may make semester-by-semester changes in elective classes, but your core classes (math, social studies, English, science) typically last the full academic year. This enables your teachers to spread content over a full year and cover more ground in each class.

In high school, some classes are scheduled for a half-year, or “semester.” Therefore, content is blocked into classes that can be reasonably covered during that length of time. One good thing about this model is that you will change your schedule mid-year. Be aware, though, that your teachers will need to cover a lot of content in a shorter period of time. You will need to be ready for the more intense pace of content delivery.

During high school, you will begin to think more about your long-term personal and career goals. You will be able to select classes according to those goals. There will be a common core of classes that all students must take to graduate on specific diploma tracks; however, many high schools offer quite a bit of flexibility in course selection based on your long-term goals. You may also have the option of taking classes online or at a local community college as a part of your high school schedule.

Middle School vs. High School

Daily transitions

**Middle School High School**

In middle school, you rotate through a series of teachers with the same group of students. The teachers coordinate these class changes. When you get to high school, you will move from class to class independently, across a much larger campus. Taking too long during transitions and arriving late to class will have negative consequences. During the summer before your first day of high school, you may want to visit your high school and walk through your course schedule a few times so that you will feel more comfortable once the halls are full of students.

Few transitions during the day

Transitions are supervised and coordinated by teachers

More transitions each day

Students transition from class to class independently

Follow Up

With your parent or family member, consider the differences between middle school and high school as they pertain to these questions:

What do you think will be the biggest difference between middle school and high school?

What are you most looking forward to in high school?

What are you most concerned about?

Have you accomplished today’s objective?

**Objective:** The student will identify at least 5 differences between middle school and high school.

*If so, congratulations!*

*If not, review the Middle School vs. High School examples again and discuss the questions at the end of this lesson. Have your parent review this material with you.*

Parents Chime In

Visit the website of the high school that your child will attend. Does the site post a daily schedule or a handbook? Take some time to read through this information together.

Talk to your child about his or her vision for the future.

Talk to someone currently in high school about courses that your child might take.

Digging Deeper: