

## **A Parent's Guide to Everything CV Parents Need To Know!**

The transition from elementary to middle school can be a challenging time for both students and parents. Much of the adjustment anxiety can come from not knowing what to expect and where to get help when you need it. We hope this guide will answer many of your questions and help you feel more comfortable through this exciting, yet difficult, transition.

Parents can tremendously increase the chances of a successful transition if they follow the five important suggestions outlined below:

- Make sure your child knows parent and teacher expectations.
- Teach your child the skills needed to be successful.
- Form a partnership with your child's teachers.
- Be proactive.
- Stay informed and involved.

### **Attend Important Events**

**Orientation Day** is a great time for your child to get to know the CVMS staff, students and school campus. Students take a tour of the school and have the opportunity to ask 8<sup>th</sup> grade students questions. Students are much more likely to feel comfortable the first day of school if they've attended Orientation Day

**Back to School Night** is a must for parents who want to make sure their child has a successful transition to CVMS. Attending Back to School Night shows your child you want to become acquainted with his/her teachers and work as a team with them. Make a list of questions to ask each teacher. Include these important questions:

1. How should my child get the homework when he/she is absent?
2. What is the best way to follow up on my child to make sure he/she is getting all homework turned in?
3. What is the best way to communicate with you?
4. How do you require students to organize their work?
5. What is your policy on late work?
6. What can we do as parents to make sure our child is successful?
7. How can I find out how my child is doing in your class?

### **Expectations**

#### **Parent Expectations**

Before school begins, sit down and talk with your child about what lies ahead. Talking about their fears and anxieties helps children to better deal with their emotions and handle stress. Let your child know you will be there to help. Tell your child your expectations of him/her as a successful student, allowing your child to voice his/her opinions about it. Although your child might not like or agree with your expectations, taking the time to explain why helps them feel

validated. Tell your child you will be working with him/her on a daily basis until you are sure he/she has learned the skills necessary to be successful in middle school.

### **Teacher Expectations**

The first week of school, review with your child the rules, procedures and expectations of all six classes outlined on each teacher's syllabus or website. Some teachers also provide helpful hints on what students and parents can do to ensure success. Read all information with your child and answer any questions. If unsure about a policy, email the teacher. Attending Back To School Night is also very important. It shows your child you want to become acquainted with his/her teachers and work as team to ensure his/her success.

### **Teaching Necessary Skills**

The two most critical skills that middle school students need to be successful are organizational/study skills and communication/self-advocacy skills. Many parents assume that these skills can be mastered via classroom instruction. While teachers do what they can to teach these skills, this cannot take the place of parent/child time a few minutes a day for a month or two. Students at this age need consistent one-on-one instruction over a period of time if they are to master these skills that are so critical to academic success.

#### **Organizational/study skills**

For many students, it will be the first time they have had six different teachers--each with a different style and set of expectations. Students may also not be used to taking all their supplies and belongings with them. This situation will undoubtedly require organizational skills that most students at this age have not yet acquired. Parent involvement is crucial at this point if a student is to make a successful transition. Help your child learn to stay organized, allowing him/her to feel his/her input is valued.

Help your child create a system for keeping backpack and notebooks organized starting the first day of school. Everything in the backpack should have a specific place it is kept. Decide on the number of notebooks needed. One notebook for all six classes? One notebook for odd classes and one for even? The use of dividers in notebooks will enable a child to find papers quickly and easily. Sometimes teachers will have preferences on how students keep organized. If not, it is suggested to use larger dividers for each class (math, English, etc.) and smaller dividers within each class labeled "assignments", "notes/handouts" and "tests/quizzes". It is critical that your student gets in the habit of putting every paper in its proper place right away. If your child knows you will check his/her notebook(s) and backpack every night, it will train him/her to keep organized on a daily basis.

Have your child write all assignments and due dates in his agenda for every class every day (agendas are provided the first day of school). If student has no homework, he/she should write "no HW". Check agenda daily to make sure every class is filled in.

Set up a regular weekly study schedule. Set aside 7-10 hours per week, scheduling breaks if needed. (Be specific. Ex: Mondays 3:30-5:00 pm.) When done with homework, student should

study for tests or work on projects. If there is still time remaining, student should sit quietly and read until the end of study time.

### **Nightly procedure**

Instruct your child to show you his/her agenda at the beginning of study time.

Help your child prioritize the order in which every task should be accomplished.

Make sure your child has within reach everything he/she will need to complete all assignments.

Check in periodically to ensure your child is on task and to see if he/she needs any help.

Instruct your child to show you all work completed at the end of study time. Match each assignment with the agenda. (Do not check for accuracy - this is your child's responsibility). If he/she studied for a test, take a few minutes to quiz him/her.

Check backpack and notebooks to make sure your child is organized and prepared for the next day.

### **Follow up**

Once you feel comfortable that your child has learned the organization/study skills needed, it is critical that you develop a follow up plan to ensure that the skills are mastered. It cannot be emphasized enough the importance of gradually reducing the time spent checking in with your child. Begin by checking the agenda and backpack every other day, then once a week, until you are confident your child is able to handle the academic demands on his/her own .

If this plan is implemented effectively, after a few weeks your child should develop a habit of good study skills that will bring success in middle school, and provide adequate preparation for the academic rigor of high school. If you encounter obstacles while following the plan, see [A Parents guide to Improving your Child's Grades](#) on the counseling website for troubleshooting ideas.

### **Communication/Self-advocacy skills**

While starting middle school can be challenging and often intimidating, it is important for students at this age to begin to feel comfortable asking questions if they don't understand something or need help. This may include getting clarification on the homework or asking a teacher why he/she got a certain grade on an assignment. Although it can be frightening for students at first, the more they ask, the more comfortable they will feel advocating for themselves.

Parents can help alleviate discomfort by role playing with their child to help him/her decide the best way to address the issue. The most common mistake students make is confronting the teacher at inappropriate times. Encourage your child to wait to address the issue when the teacher is not distracted by other students. Typically the best time is before or after the class bell rings or before or after school. Follow up with your child to make sure the problem is taken care of.

After allowing your child to handle the situation, if you are not satisfied with the result, it may be time for you to make contact with the teacher. If a teacher doesn't get back to you in a timely manner, please contact the counselor. It may be that the teacher's computer is down or he/she has been out sick.

## Parents As Partners

At CVMS, we believe that students have a better chance of reaching their potential if parents and teachers work together as partners in the learning process. Although it is the primary responsibility of the teacher to teach the curriculum, parents can play a key role to ensure mastery. The teacher can also help support parents in their role of teaching self-advocacy and study skills. This partnership can be compromised if the parent decides on a course of action without getting the teacher's perspective first. You can empathetically respond to your child's feelings while knowing that more information may be needed to get a complete picture of the situation. If students know that parents and teachers are working together, they are more likely to respond positively to direction.

## Stay Informed and Involved

It is important for both students and parents to know what's happening at CVMS. The best way to stay informed is through the CV website found at [www.sduhsd.net](http://www.sduhsd.net). Click on "Schools", then "Carmel Valley Middle School", then "Latest CV News and Updates". Reading the monthly Bobcat Newsletter and the Daily Bulletin will ensure that you won't miss an important event or deadline. The website also provides other important information such as school rules and policies, and a school calendar. Encourage your child to pay attention to the daily bulletin read every morning at school at 8:30 am.

Studies have shown that academically successful students are more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities such as clubs or sports. Encourage your child to find an activity that he/she enjoys. Feel free to contact us or check our daily bulletin for ways students can become involved.

Parents who are actively involved in their child's education and/or extracurricular activities have children who are more likely to be academically successful. Teaching your child the skills needed to be successful (discussed above) is a major step in that direction. However, there are also opportunities to volunteer at CV. Volunteers have repeatedly said that it help them to to stay in the loop and feel more a part of their child's life.

There are numerous opportunities to volunteer at CV. While most are during the school day, there are times that parent help is needed during evening events. Contact the CV PTSA volunteer coordinator for more information.

**Please read the FAQs (Frequently asked questions) on the counseling home page for more information.**