



A Parent's Guide to Navigating the Middle School Transition

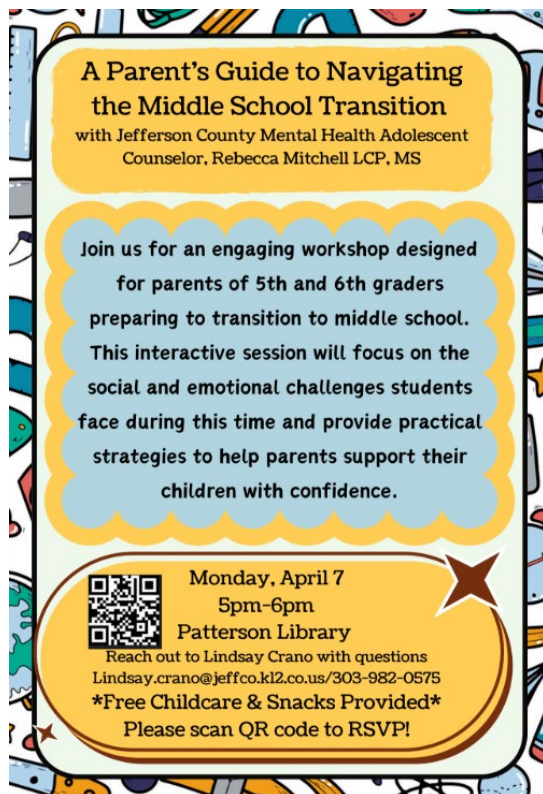
Patterson International Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

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To support students during a critical academic transition, Patterson International in Jeffco implemented a comprehensive family engagement initiative centered around a research-informed parent workshop on the transition to middle school. The goal was to pave the way for successful student experiences during an often difficult transition period.

The Family Engagement Liaison collected qualitative and quantitative data through in-person and virtual surveys, as well as one-on-one conversations with 5th and 6th grade students and their families. Centering family voice, the goal was to understand concerns, questions, and support needs from both student and caregiver perspectives. Common concerns were peer pressure, bullying, social belonging, navigating a larger campus, managing time, and coping with emotional uncertainty.

The Family Engagement Liaison coordinated personalized phone calls to parents and invitation-style tickets, high-quality handouts, thoughtfully prepared take-home bags, and a well-executed interactive presentation. This workshop equipped families with age-appropriate, evidence-based strategies that support social-emotional and executive functioning growth. Parents asked meaningful questions and left with practical tools and a clearer understanding of the middle school transition process.



Feedback surveys of the workshop revealed overwhelmingly positive responses, with participants expressing that the session was highly beneficial and impactful. Follow-up conversations revealed that parents were applying the strategies at home, reinforcing positive habits and communication with their children.

Workshop organizers have several pieces of advice for those looking to replicate the practice. Start with data and family voice. Use surveys and conversations to guide planning based on real concerns. Target transition challenges by addressing social pressures, campus logistics, emotional shifts, and executive functioning. Make it personal by going beyond emails—call families, use thoughtful invitations, and make them feel truly welcomed.

Provide practical tools through sharing clear, usable resources and keep presentations relatable and actionable. Encourage interaction and create space for questions, dialogue, and peer connection to deepen engagement. Follow up through continued support with check-ins, resources, and future touchpoints. Collect feedback and stories to refine and sustain the work. Most importantly, lead with empathy. Acknowledge that transitions are difficult—compassion builds lasting partnerships.