



This is the newsletter of the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program, a partnership of the Settlement Sector, School Boards and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. There are eight SWIS programs in Ontario: SEPWR –Waterloo Region, SWISH - Hamilton, MSEP – Peel Region, SEPT- Toronto English, PIDEF-Toronto French, SEPYR-York Region, ALM –Ottawa French, MLO- Ottawa English and SWISEW-Windsor. For previous SWIS Newsletters, follow the links at www.Settlement.org/edguide

Feedback Requested on Proposed Pamphlets

Good Advice for Parents of Newly-Arrived Students in the Middle Grades

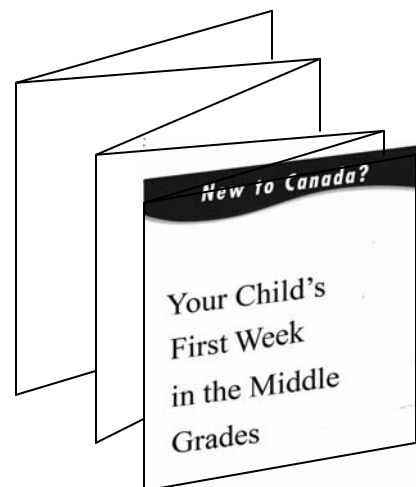
The first few months in a new country can be challenging, but there are important things that parents of middle grade students need to know and do in the first week and months.

If you had to identify key pieces of advice for parents for the first week and months of secondary school, what would they be?

The following text is based on the ideas of participants in the SEPT Cluster One Advisory Committee, which recently brainstormed that question. (See newsletter 47 for more on advisory committees). Your feedback on the text would be appreciated – send to pdorfman@cicswis.ca by May 9, 2008.

The final text must be appropriate for all middle grades in the province. For instance, some but not all middle grade students have access to lockers.

Like the already published brochures *Your Child's First Week in High School* and *Your Child's First Months in High School*, the final text will be complemented by images of happy, contented middle school students. Translations will follow.



Proposed Text – Your Child’s First Week in the Middle Grades

Intro

The first days in a new school are some of the most exciting in a child’s life. Our schools have programs designed to teach your child all the essential knowledge and skills to be successful. But schools in Canada may be very different from schools in other countries. Your child will need your help and support. Parents are expected to take an active part in their child’s schooling, to ask questions and be involved. So here are some easy ways to make sure your child is doing well right from the first week.

What Happened at School?

Choose a quiet time every day or so to ask your child, “What happened at school?” Talking about school helps students express their concerns as well as their excitement. It also helps you learn about the school and gives you a chance to offer advice and support.

Talk to friends

If you have friends or family members who already have children in school, they can give you good advice on how to help your new student. Most parents have stories to tell about the right way and the wrong way. Their experiences can give you a first hand understanding of how our schools work and how to avoid problems.

A Friend At School

One of the best ways to get through the first week of school is with a friend at your side, especially at lunch time and before and after classes. Most children are quick to make friends, so encourage or help your child to find a friend to share the experiences of school life.

Have Questions? Call the School

It is very common for parents to call or meet with teachers. As someone who is new to the school, you may have questions about how the school works or about your child’s life at school. When you have a question, call the school office staff or the teacher.

Lunches

Students are expected to bring a lunch that is ready to eat. Some bring a sandwich, a drink and some fruit. The lunch room is supervised but students are allowed to leave the building during their lunch time. Some students go home at lunchtime.

Clothes

Schools expect students to dress informally. Help your child choose clothes that will be similar to what other students wear. It helps them feel they are part of the school community. Some schools have uniforms. All schools allow students to wear religious or cultural clothing such as turbans, hijabs, skullcaps, patkas, or kirpans.

Asking For Help

Teachers know that starting school in a new country is not easy. If your child is having difficulty understanding school work, the teacher wants him or her to ask questions, either during or after class. Teachers and other school staff are ready to help with any problem at school. And many schools have settlement workers who can your family adjust to life in your new school and country.

School Supplies

Text books are provided by the school at no cost to students. But your child should bring a binder, pens, pencils and paper to the school. Many students use a back pack. The school has computers that students can use. On the weekend, students can use the free computers at the local public library.

Good Words to Know

Field trip Teachers may take students to visit a museum, park or other educational program. Your child will bring home a letter asking your permission for your child to participate.

Timetable Your child’s timetable outlines his or her schedule of classes and teachers.

P.A. Day There are one or two professional activity days in the first months of school. On these days, teachers have meetings and students don’t go to school.

Proposed Text – Your Child’s First Months In the Middle Grades

Introduction

Our programs are designed to teach your child all the essential knowledge and skills to be successful. But schools in Canada may be very different from schools in other countries. Your child will need your help and support. Parents are expected to take an active part in their child’s schooling, to ask questions and stay involved. So here are some easy ways to make sure your child is doing well in the first months and year in the new school.

Open House or Curriculum Night

The easiest way to get to know your child’s school is to come to the Open House or Curriculum Night early in the school year. At this event, you will learn about school policies and can ask questions about what your child will learn.

Important Decisions in Grade 8

In the first half of grade 8, you and your child will be asked to choose courses for grade 9. That decision will affect his or her choices after graduation, so your advice is important. You can learn more about this at the fall , High School Information Meetings, Parent Teacher Interviews or from your child’s teachers.

After School Activities

Learning to speak English is difficult and takes time, even for a teenager. After-school sports and hobby groups (like badminton, soccer and chess) are run by the teachers and are good places to practice English and make new friends at school.

What’s Happening at School ?

Most parents are busy with work, but taking a few minutes to ask your child, “What’s happening at school?” can make all the difference. It lets you know what is going well and what might be difficult. Just talking it over (and getting your advice) will often help. If the problems are serious, you may want to talk with the school staff.

Sick ? Call the School

When a child is away from school or going to be late, parents are expected to call the school. Please call each day that your child is absent.

Parent Teacher Interviews

In the late fall, parents are also expected to come to the school for Parent -Teacher Interviews. The teacher will review your child’s Report Card in detail with you and explain what you can do to help your student succeed. Interpreters are often provided, or you can bring a friend who speaks English if necessary.

Asking For Help

Teachers know that starting school in a new country is not easy. If your child is having difficulty understanding school work, the teacher wants him or her to ask questions, either during or after class. Teachers and other school staff are ready to help with any problem at school. And many schools have settlement workers who can help your family adjust to life in your new school and country.

New Address or Phone Number?

From time to time, the school may need to contact you. Make sure the school has your current phone number and home address. The school also needs to know your child’s Health Card number. When you receive it, call or send a note to the school.

Keep Talking in Your First Language

Keep talking to your child in your first language. Consider enrolling him or her in after school or weekend classes in your language. Public libraries have books in many languages so students can continue to practice reading in their first language.