

**E**xcitement and anxiety often co-exist in an adolescent who is about to enter middle school. Conflicting thoughts race.

Wow! I'll have four, five or even six teachers spicing up each day. And I'll get to change classrooms every 45 minutes.



**Sam Kane**



But wait, there's bound to be more homework.

How will I keep track? I'll have tons of books! Where will I keep them? Ahhh ... I'll have a locker — my own!

But what if I leave my book in my locker, or forget my locker combination?

This ambivalence can contribute to an initial feeling by students — and their parents — that middle school's demands are insurmountable.

But rest easy.

Students can help ensure academic success by cementing some basic study habits:

1) When it comes to homework, rely on an assignment notebook, not your memory. Why clutter memory with what page your fraction problems are on? Reserve memory for how to do the fractions.

2) Write each subject every day in the assignment book. And be specific; don't enter "bookwork" but "Page 87, Numbers 1-30 odd." (When your mom or dad writes an appointment on their calendar, do they write "11 a.m.: client; 11:30 a.m.: other client"? Of course not. They name the client.) Include long-term assignments and upcoming tests.

3) Study, in short bursts, for about 1 1/2 hours on average per weeknight: First, do what's due tomorrow, tackling your toughest subject first. Next, work on long-term assignments. Then, study for upcoming tests. Finally, each evening take time to review.

4) Knock Ds and Fs out of the realm of possibility in most classes by abiding by a simple premise: Do all assignments.

Parents can foster good study skills by implementing interventions as needed:

1) Check the assignment notebook daily, and help your student establish study priorities.

2) Check each assignment for completeness and overall quality, asking for correction as needed. Don't just ask, "Did you do it?"; instead say, "Show me."

3) Some schools have a homework hot line. At Colina Middle School in Thousand Oaks, virtually every academic teacher posts the daily assignment on the hot line. A parent may call, compare what he hears to what the student has written in the assignment book, and help him keep a more accurate calendar.

4) Some schools allow for assignment notebook monitoring, with teachers' initials signifying that what was listed is correct.

5) Some have guided study or a similar program. At Colina, parents can contract for a recorded phone call any time the student misses submitting an assignment. No call equals peace of mind.

Played right, the transition to middle school can be smooth, with student and parent teaming toward success.

— Sam Kane is a counselor at Colina Middle School in Thousand Oaks. If you are interested in commenting on an issue related to education in the Conejo Valley, please call Jean Cowden Moore at 496-7256 or e-mail her at [jcmoore@staronline.com](mailto:jcmoore@staronline.com).