

Know Your Kids: From elementary to middle school
By: Michael Moorehead

For most – if not all kids –the change from elementary to middle school is a big deal. To begin with, transitioning students go from being “top dogs” at their elementary schools to the “babies” of the middle school.

And then comes the homework ... I had no idea I was going to get so much homework or how I was going to get it all done. I imagined the endless nights that I would have to spend slaving over a piece of paper with pencil in hand while my parents ate pizza and watched my favorite TV show, *Myth Busters*, without me.

However, after my first few days in middle school, the homework gods showed me the way to unlock the secret of doing homework on the bus, after lunch and between classes, utilizing free time I never dreamed I'd have.

Now, some kids would come home and say they've done their homework, when they really didn't. But I wasn't one of them, because unlike elementary school teachers, middle school instructors warned students that if they didn't complete their homework they would be held back from fieldtrips. And we all know fieldtrips are what keep kids going, because going to school without being able to go on school outings is like doing chores, but not getting paid an allowance!

Something else incoming sixth-graders need to get used to is having an EXTREMELY HEAVY backpack. Middle-schoolers must have a binder, paper, five notebooks, pencils, six or more folders, colored pencils, a calculator, textbooks, a book to read, a lunchbox if they aren't buying lunch and anything else necessary.

When I've griped to my well-meaning, yet naïve, parents about the overbearing burden of an overloaded backpack, they've said, “You don't HAVE TO carry all that stuff on your back. Why not use a roller backpack?”

To anyone but a middle-schooler, that doesn't sound like such a bad idea. That's because it's in middle school kids learn roller backpacks are in reality “shoe magnets.”

One time I hurt my back while roller skating and had no choice but to use one of those wretched rolling “kick-me,” packs. In less than one week, the pack was kicked so brutally, so many times that the metal handle bent to the point where I couldn't retract it. Imagine if there had been something fragile in there – like my science project that I needed so I can go on the next fieldtrip.

At this point, the transition between elementary and middle school may sound like a punishment. However, it does have its upside too. A few of the advantages of middle school are it makes creating new friends easy, strengthens bonds with old friends and brings kids one step closer to becoming adults – although personally, I don't know if being an adult is any better.

Michael Moorehead, author of *The Student From Zombie Island*, just completed sixth grade at Kyrene Middle School in Kyrene Corridor.