

## Back To School

# It's all routine

Middle-school students must take charge of daily preparation habits for success

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Staff Reporter

Entering middle school is a big step, and no student wants to trip on it.

Sixth-graders may be the youngest crowd in middle school, but the newfound sense of independence and responsibility

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

that comes with being a sixth-grader can be breathtaking, said **Frannie**

**Foltz**, director of middle-school admissions at **Hathaway Brown School** in Shaker Heights.

"The girls love it when they transition from primary to middle," Foltz said. "It's a new space, so it feels very official to them."

Each teacher at Hathaway Brown's middle school teaches a different subject, so students have the increased responsibility of bringing the proper materials to each class and navigating the relationships between different faculty members.

"With the middle school, there's some finessing and a huge learning curve for students overall," Foltz said.

With so many changes happening, parents must work on giving their child space, Foltz advised.

"We like to ask the parents to partner with us," she said. "We always want the students to recognize that the parents are all looking out for their best interest. Sometimes the best interest is to allow the kids to fall. That's where the learning curve happens."

The tools kids learn in middle school are some of the first they gain that can translate outside the classroom, Foltz

said. Some students learn to use iPads or voice recorders and parlay those skills into home video projects and other ventures.

The school also heavily stresses preparation, said Foltz, noting that some students come from as far away as Fairlawn — 34 miles from the school — to attend.

"I don't know many moms who are going to go, 'Let's go back and get your math book, Honey,'" Foltz said. "We'll help them troubleshoot and ensure the next day that they bring everything."

Students at Fuchs Mizrahi School in Beachwood undergo a similar transition

as the students at Hathaway Brown, said head of school Rabbi Barry Kislowicz.

"The focus of responsibility starts to shift from teacher and parent to the student," he said. "You have

to plan your assignments, know how to pace yourself, develop organizational skills. That's a change that we see."

Middle-schoolers also see an increase in experiential programming like team-building exercises.

"The students in the middle school are really given the opportunity to build their own community and their own environment," said Kislowicz, citing the middle school's student council as an example. The council makes decisions and creates programs, including a student-planned Chanukah party for which students cook, provide the entertainment and create the educational content.

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