

# MIDDLE SCHOOL



# THRIVE

# GUIDE

*Let's make these years some  
of their favorite memories*



EASTERN CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOL

# WHAT DO YOU

## REMEMBER ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL?

**FOR SO MANY OF US**, middle school was not a favorite part of growing up. Almost no one gets through it without experiencing a healthy dose of confusion, angst, heartache, awkwardness, and *outright crisis*.

Maybe that's where your child is at right now — things are hard for one reason or another at their school and you know they need a better option. Maybe your family is relocating and you need a great school and some continuity for your student. Or maybe you're looking ahead a few years and see kids at your child's future school who are disrespectful, struggling, or acting *way too grown up* with dating, relationships, and sex — and you want a safer, more nurturing environment for them.

Whatever the reason for your search, Eastern Christian School's Wyckoff Middle School program would be a welcoming environment for your child. If you are just now considering the benefits of a private, Christian education, you may be among the many parents who are surprised — blown away, really — to discover the welcoming, intimate learning community here among students, teachers, and engaged parents. And academic standards are anything but second-rate at EC — they'll be ready to succeed in high school and long after.

This guide was designed to help parents with the common struggles and painful changes middle schoolers experience. We've included tips to help your child thrive during these years.

Here's to better middle school years than many of us had!

Sincerely,



**SUZANNE KRAAI**  
Director of Enrollment



# OH, PUBERTY.



You remember the riot of hormones. The clumsiness. Seeing your body transform and watching everyone you know become such different looking and sounding people. Here are some keys to helping your tween thrive through this time.

## SUFFERING COORDINATION



The growth spurts that will radically change your child's height, weight, and body shape mean their motor skills will be a bit off for a while.

- Look for creative ways to exercise with them as they develop new agility.
- Be ready to be *extra* understanding when things get spilled, broken, etc.
- Dig up some old photos of you at that age and compare notes and stories.

## PHYSICAL MATURITY

The beginning of your child's sexual maturity (and all that goes with it) is some of the most intense, dramatic change they will ever experience.

- Be ready to normalize the process and changes. Let your child know what to look for and expect.
- Remember you don't have to figure out how to help them on your own! Do your best to be prepared beforehand with detailed resources.
- Aim for open, honest, ongoing talks (instead of One Big Talk About Sex).
- When you're stumped, use it as a chance to read and learn together.

## ENERGY SPIKES AND CRASHES

These highs and lows will mirror a lot of the other extremes in their life right now.

- Cultivate a new, engaged, healthy pre-bedtime routine for better sleep.
- Be serious about balancing screen time with extra-active play/exercise.

## TIPS FOR SCREEN MANAGEMENT:

- Limit screen time throughout the day.
- Prohibit solo screen time behind closed doors.



## CONFUSING FEELINGS

At this age, the child you've loved and known so well can start to seem like a completely different person. The first thing you can do to help is: *remember that's normal!*

### Here are some other trusted reminders:

- Respect the change in boundaries/sharing/intimacy that comes with growing up and talk about where to draw new lines.
- Keep pursuing your child and quality time, and if they shut you out or won't open up, don't take your hurt or frustration out on them.
- Be ready to pray with them or share about your own feelings, but be the *best, most empathetic listener in their world.*
- Use art, movies, books, and stories as ways to jumpstart conversations about difficult topics or talk about them a little more indirectly.
- Remember that a hug in a hard moment often says more than the best advice.

# MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMICS

## SOLIDIFYING LIFELONG PURSUITS

**It's understandable (and lamentable!) that middle school often gets the short end of the stick in people's minds.**

— “IT’S JUST SOMETHING TO GET THROUGH.”  
— “IT’S A TRANSITIONAL TIME.”

**WHEN WE SAY AND THINK THESE THINGS** — as if our kids are caterpillars tucked in cocoons, waiting to emerge as butterflies in high school or college — we miss the vitally important learning and discovery of these wild years! Here's a brief, closer look at the academic milestones of a *thriving* middle schooler.

Early foundations in literacy and math and other major disciplines begin to blossom into more sophisticated interest (or disinterest). *Talk with your child about their favorite subjects — and help them **explore why** they like them, too.*

Strategies for studying and taking tests — and the feelings students have about those things — really start to solidify in these years. ***Try different strategies** for both to find ones that fit with your child's learning style and needs.*

Extracurriculars, athletics, hobbies, field trips, and so much of what happens outside of the classroom play a very important role in what happens in the classroom. *Encourage your child to try out for that team, take trips, sample new interests, and work to **show them how academic fundamentals are connected** to all these real-world pursuits.*

At Eastern Christian School, each academic discipline is housed under the umbrella of theology — understanding God and our relationship with him and his creation holds all other studies together and gives them meaning. ***Invest in your child's faith**, their developing life of prayer, and their study and exploration of the Bible's wisdom, poetry, history, and other riches.*



# MIDDLE SCHOOL @ EC

A WELCOMING, RIGOROUS,  
LOVING PLACE TO LEARN



When students and parents visit our campus they feel the difference here almost immediately. Our school is home to both upper elementary students (fourth and fifth grades) and middle school students (sixth, seventh, and eighth graders) — but even with that range of

ages and social norms — there is a remarkable friendliness here. Older students look out for younger students. Instead of cliques, you see inclusive friend groups without high walls or hard edges. Teachers truly know and love each of the students at EC, and it shows.

## ***SURVIVE***

EASTERN CHRISTIAN  
HELPS YOUR CHILD THRIVE

## ***THRIVE***

Tread lightly around that one teacher.

All my teachers obviously care for me.

Don't forget your locker combination.

My locker doesn't need a lock!  
I can trust my classmates.

Too many questions are a bad idea.  
Don't draw too much attention.

Teachers love to engage with me.  
Questions are encouraged - that's how we learn.

Just don't stick out. If you go along with the  
"in crowd," no one will notice and you'll be ok.

Be myself! God made me uniquely in His image.  
Why wouldn't I want to be me?!

Stay away from the bullies. Don't mess  
with them and they won't mess with you.

What bullies?

I'm stuck with the same group of kids every class.

I get to interact with lots of different friends and  
teachers across multiple classes throughout the day.

# THE ACADEMIC RIGOR AND FAITHFUL FOUNDATION TWEENS NEED TO SUCCEED

**We enjoy a beautiful space and a loving community, but the academic underpinnings at EC prepare students for the best colleges.**



**Our faculty** are fully-invested professionals, strangely (and wonderfully) wired to love middle schoolers, and required to continue pursuing cutting-edge professional development.

**Our academic curriculum** spans an impressive number of core disciplines and integrates critical elements of Biblical study, applied technology, health issues, fine arts, and more for a truly well-rounded, rigorous three years of study.



*To learn more about our middle school academics, scan the QR code to download our Middle School Curriculum Overview PDF.*



**Here are some ways you'll see the Christian faith integrated into our middle school community:**



We view and teach each discipline through the lens of scripture and a Biblical worldview that gives value and meaning to each sphere of life and provides a cohesive connection between them.



We put our faith into action with age-appropriate service learning opportunities that address needs and missions work at home and abroad.



We worship together. The weekly chapel service brings our whole community together in a meaningful and sacred way.

▶ **Read more about the Biblical Distinctives at [easternchristian.org](http://easternchristian.org).**

# OUR TEACHERS

ON THE FRONT LINES OF HELPING STUDENTS THRIVE

The teaching and educational credentials of our faculty are impressive. Their unflagging enthusiasm for not just teaching, but for knowing, guiding, and instructing students in this particular age and stage is rare, and a gift. It shows — *our students love their teachers*. Here are a few of the many faces of the folks that are invested in your child's success at Eastern Christian School.



**BRENNA DUFFY**

**GRADES 6-8 WRITING TEACHER  
GIRLS' MS SOCCER COACH**

Brenna is a graduate from EC who has recently moved back to NJ after graduating from Calvin University with a degree in Writing. Brenna is happily engaged to Isaac Petersen, and they plan on getting married this upcoming July. Brenna is passionate about creating a love for literature and writing in her students. She enjoys cultivating meaningful relationships with her students in various ways. Brenna also coaches Middle School girls soccer. Outside of teaching, Brenna's passions include baking, reading, hiking and kayaking, and finding new and unique restaurants. Brenna and her fiancé attend Emergence Church.



**JOYCE BREUR**

**GRADES 7-8 ENGLISH TEACHER**

Joyce lives with her husband in Oakland, NJ. She loves to read all of the newest books, so she can recommend them to her 7th and 8th grade students. Aside from reading and other hobbies, she mostly enjoys making memories with her family.

*How does Mrs. Botbyl feel about her students?*

**"I WOULDN'T WANT TO SPEND MY DAY WITH ANYONE ELSE!"**

**LIESL BOTBYL**

**GRADES 7-8 SCIENCE TEACHER**

Liesl is also an EC graduate who understands both the value of education here and the joy of giving back to the next generation of middle schoolers. She loves dreaming about what is going to help our students be better learners and even better keepers of God's world.





## MIDDLE SCHOOL

518 Sicomac Avenue  
Wyckoff, NJ 07481

## VISIT OUR CAMPUS TO SEE HOW YOUR CHILD CAN THRIVE!

The very best way to understand all the value and opportunities for your child at Eastern Christian School is to come and experience it for yourself.

You'll see the way the students love and care for one another, the professional excellence and kindness of our faculty, the impressive facilities, amenities, and so much more.



**COME TO AN  
OPEN HOUSE EVENT.**



SCAN ME

**SCHEDULE A PERSONAL  
OR GROUP TOUR.**



SCAN ME

**LET YOUR CHILD  
COME FOR A STUDENT  
SHADOW EXPERIENCE.**



SCAN ME



# EASTERN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

*We've got an option that's just right for your child and family.*

**Drop us an email at [admissions@easternchristian.org](mailto:admissions@easternchristian.org) or call today: (973) 427.4729**