

PARENT transition

Service Experience

The middle school brain is in the midst of a complete overhaul. In this developmental stage, most students are naturally selfish and self-obsessed. As your students head into eighth grade, it's a great time to encourage them to become more aware of the needs of others. So we have provided some parent/student service opportunities to help you facilitate this.



Remember these tips for better conversations with middle schoolers:

Don't Freak:

Panic shuts down conversations. Don't act shocked by what they tell you (even though you may be). Try answering with, "Me too. I remember that I experienced something similar when . . ."

Be Real:

You'll have to model vulnerability. Students have a highly sensitive "phony detector."

Go with the flow:

Never force conversation. Quantity time leads to quality time. The great conversation might not come in the next few days, but you're laying the groundwork for a meaningful conversation in the future.

Begin with the end in mind:

This transition in your relationship is a long process. They are not going to be mature adults for a number of years. However, you need to start cultivating your relationship now so that it will thrive later.

Options on how to do this:

Local service project

Nothing shows middle schoolers the importance of serving like modeling it for them. You'd be surprised how impactful a single Saturday morning can be on the hearts of students. For a list of great middle school-appropriate projects, check out howtoberich.org or floostudentministries.org.

Transit Service Line

As 8th graders finish their fall semesters, watch for information regarding Transit Service Line. These student/parent mission trips are specifically designed to give students a taste of mission while helping parents transition their relationships with their students.

Regardless of the service project you choose, here is a discussion guide to aid you in your debrief with your student.

Discussion Guide

Try not to get too frustrated with your students. As mentioned before, most students at this developmental stage are naturally selfish and self-centered. It is a well-documented phenomenon. That's why it is so important to get them out of their comfort zones—to give them experiences where they come in contact with people who have different backgrounds and different needs. As students serve others and become aware of the world around them, try to help them debrief their emotions by having conversations after each experience.

Start by reading Matthew 25:34–40 together:

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Parents: Can you remember the fears and anxieties you had the first time you went on a mission trip or service project?

Parents: Did today remind you of any of those fears?

Students: Were you surprised by anything you saw or experienced today?

Parents: The verse we just read said that when we serve others, we serve Jesus. How does that shape your willingness to serve others?

Students: The verse specifically mentions feeding the hungry, giving drinks to the thirsty, inviting in the strangers, giving clothes to the needy, taking care of the sick, and visiting people in prison. Can you think of any other ways you've seen or heard of people serving? Do you want to try any of those?

