

## MIDDLE SCHOOL/JUNIOR HIGH QUESTION BOX

*With slight modifications, these lessons may be consolidated into a single activity. The classroom teacher could solicit the questions from students instead of gathering them in a separate lesson. They are “bundled” because they provide an extended emphasis on the importance of asking questions. In addition, the Student Resource could be used in other lessons that solicit questions from students.*

*PSC Note: These 2 lessons complement/extend the lesson: Getting Help in MS/JH (AD.5.A-5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade). The MS/JH Question Box lessons feature interaction between students in their last year(s) of elementary and a panel of MS/JH students. The Getting Help in MS/JH lesson features an adult (e.g., you OR middle school professional school counselor) who answers elementary school students’ questions about MS/JH resources. Both (adults’ & students’) perspectives are important as younger students address questions and misconceptions about the transition to MS/JH.*

**Purpose:** These two (2) lessons provide students the opportunity to submit anonymous questions about middle school/junior high (MS/JH) and have them answered by MS/JH students.

*If students in your district visit the MS/JH the year prior to enrollment, providing the experiences of this activity before the visit will accomplish 2 tasks: students get most pressing questions answered AND become familiar with several MS/JH students. When they visit the MS/JH, they will be able to focus on additional information.*

**Time:** Two 50-minute sessions      **Group Size:** Whole Class      **Grade Level:** 5 or 6 (last grade in the school)  
(Major timing/group size decisions: How will this activity be conducted so as to include each student who will make transition to MS/JH next year? The number of students and grade level sections will enter into decisions. This is an opportunity to collaborate with classroom teachers. Important consideration: small enough group so that neither elementary students nor the panel of experts are intimidated.)

*PSC Note: Anticipatory anxiety about the mysteries of MS/JH begins a year **before** the final year in elementary school; thus, in addition to this activity, you may want to do a variation during the year before or at the very beginning of the year transition to MS/JH is made.*

### Lesson 1: Questions! Questions! What Are Your Questions?

**Materials:** A question box (e.g., a decorated shoe box), [Questions! Questions! What Are Your Questions?](#) PSC/Student Resource

### Lesson 2: Questions? Questions? We Have the Answers!

**Materials:** [Middle School/Junior High: Here I Come!](#) Student Thinking Paper; Panel of Experts (four or five middle school/junior high school students): work with a middle school/junior high colleague to identify a panel of students to answer questions about life as a “middle-schooler” (or “junior-higher”); Composite list of questions for Panel of Experts and (elementary) students (see Lesson 1 procedures).

### **Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program (MCGP): Strand/Big Idea/Concept**

**Strand:** Academic Development (AD)

**Big Idea:** AD 5 Applying the Skills of Transitioning Between Educational Levels

**Concept:** AD.5.A. Transitions

### **American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Domain/Standard:**

**Domain:** Academic Development (AD)

**Standard A:** Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.

**Link to Sample MCGP Units/Lessons** (Note: The Unit listed is merely an example of how the activity fits with the MCGP Guidance eLearning Units/Lessons)

5<sup>th</sup> Grade

AD.5.A

Unit: [Transition to Middle School](#)



**Show Me Standards: Performance Goals (check one or more that apply)**

X	Goal 1: gather, analyze and apply information and ideas
	Goal 2: communicate effectively within and beyond the classroom
X	Goal 3: recognize and solve problems
	Goal 4: make decisions and act as responsible members of society

**This lesson supports the development of skills in the following academic content areas.**

Academic Content Area(s)	Specific Skill(s)
Communication Arts	<i>NOTE: This strategy supports the development of the universal skill of asking questions to solve a concern and/or alleviate anxiety about a new situation.— Learning to ask questions when transitioning to a new setting will facilitate students’ adjustment to changing expectations when making transitions in all areas of their lives.</i>
Mathematics	
Social Studies	
Science	
Health/Physical Education	
Fine Arts	

**Enduring Life Skill(s)**

	Perseverance		Integrity	X	Problem Solving
X	Courage		Compassion		Tolerance
	Respect		Goal Setting		

**Assessment: acceptable evidence of what learners will know/be able to do as a result of this lesson:**

<b>See individual lessons</b>
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**Lesson Preparation/Motivation**

*Essential Questions:* What can be done about the butterflies fluttering about when middle school/junior high is mentioned?

*Engagement (Hook):* See Lesson 1

**Procedures**

<i>Professional School Counselor Procedures:</i>	<i>Student Involvement:</i>
<p><b>LESSON ONE: QUESTIONS! QUESTIONS! WHAT ARE YOUR QUESTIONS??</b></p> <p><b>Materials:</b> <a href="#">Questions! Questions! What are your Questions Resource</a></p> <p>Prior to lesson create (or use an existing) question box. To communicate “questions are private and anonymous”, seal box and make a slot in the top so that students may drop in their questions.</p> <p><b>Advanced Preparation:</b> work with a middle school/junior high colleague to arrange for several (4 or 5) students to serve as the panel of experts and answer questions about MS/JH. <b>Obtain appropriate permission(s) for MS/JH students to travel to elementary school!</b> If necessary, make preliminary</p>	<p><b>LESSON ONE: QUESTIONS! QUESTIONS! WHAT ARE YOUR QUESTIONS??</b></p>

<i>Professional School Counselor Procedures:</i>	<i>Student Involvement:</i>
<p>transportation arrangements for Panel of Experts.  <i>PSC Note 1: Strive for alumni of the elementary school as panelists;</i>  <i>PSC Note 2: Your work will be easier if you arrange for selected students to help you sort (elementary) students' questions after this lesson.</i></p> <p><i>Throughout this lesson, systematically observe students to identify those who appear to have difficulty generating questions. In addition, systematically observe as students who are hesitant to contribute to conversations.</i></p> <p><i>Hook:</i> Open Lesson 1 by telling a true (and somewhat dramatic or traumatic) heartfelt story about one of your scary transitions when you were their age; incorporate elements of anxieties many of them probably have about making the transition to middle school/junior high.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make transition from <i>Hook</i> to lesson by saying (something like) "I still get butterflies when I think about that time in my life. How about you—what color are the butterflies that flutter when thoughts of middle school/junior high enter your mind?"</li> <li>2. Acknowledge that starting a new experience like middle school/junior high is often a bit scary! Other students have asked questions about classes such as:  "Are the teachers nice?"  "What if I don't understand something?"  And questions about things not related to classes, for example:  "Will all the girls be mean to the new girls?"  "What if I don't have time to go to the restroom between my classes?"  Each of these question (and any others) are legitimate questions—because, they are from students getting ready to make a transition to a new adventure—just like you!</li> <li>3. SHOW-ME...THUMBS UP OR DOWN...Do you have questions about middle school/junior high?  Explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Today, everyone has an opportunity to think of and write questions about ANY aspect of MS/JH.</li> <li>• All questions are anonymous</li> <li>• EVERY question is important because it is yours!</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. SHOW-ME...SHOUT-OUT (all-together; inside shouts): One question you have about MS/JH.</li> <li>5. SHOW-ME...SHOUT-OUT (one-at-a-time; inside shouts): 5 scholars, please, shout out one question</li> </ol>	<p>Students: During these lesson, courageously volunteer and be sure to speak loudly and clearly enough for everyone to hear your great ideas. Use complete sentences and conventions of standard English in speaking and writing.</p> <p><i>Hook:</i> As school counselor tells his or her story about transitions, think about what your feelings might have been in the same situation. How are they similar to the feeling you have about middle school?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Think about your middle school/junior high butterflies. Volunteer to describe them. If don't volunteer, listen and think about others' comments.</li> <li>2. Listen &amp; think as school counselor talks about questions other students have asked. Think about the questions you have about middle school/junior high.</li> <li>3. Participate in SHOW-ME...THUMBS UP OR DOWN. Continue to think about the questions you have about MS/JH.</li> <li>4. Participate in SHOW-ME...SHOUT-OUT (all-together; inside shouts): shout out 1 question.</li> <li>5. SHOW-ME...SHOUT-OUT (one-at-a-time; inside shouts): shout out a question. If you do not get to</li> </ol>

<i>Professional School Counselor Procedures:</i>	<i>Student Involvement:</i>
<p>about middle school/junior high.</p> <p>Continue with..."And...there are many more questions in each head in room."</p> <p>6. Distribute the <a href="#"><i>Questions! Questions! What are your Questions</i></a> resource: Instruct students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut the page of question marks apart.</li> <li>• Use a separate piece of paper and brainstorming skills to generate/write as many questions as they can in 90 seconds (remind students that brainstorming lists are quick; spelling/complete sentences do not matter).</li> <li>• At end of 90 seconds, review the brainstormed list, add additional questions as needed and mark the questions they want to ask the panel of experts;</li> <li>• Use the conventions of standard written English to review, refine and revise questions to submit to panel (remember: concise, clear language);</li> <li>• Transfer each question to the back one of the rectangles (using separate rectangles for each question facilitates the task of sorting questions and creating a composite list).</li> </ul> <p>Remind students: any and all questions are "OK". Encourage each student to write a minimum of five questions.</p> <p>7. Collect questions. Explain that you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather all the questions, (<i>and with the help of panel of experts[?]</i>) sort them out (e.g., combine duplicates, eliminate "fuzzy" questions);</li> <li>• Create a composite list of questions for the panel of experts.</li> <li>• Provide the composite list to the panel of experts</li> <li>• Give each of them (your students) a copy of the composite list of questions during the next lesson.</li> </ul> <p>The panel of experts will answer as many questions as possible during the next lesson.</p> <p><b>ASSESSMENT: Content:</b> Each student submits a minimum of 5 questions to ask panel of experts; questions are topic-relevant (related to MS/JH) and reflect knowledge and usage of conventions of standard written English.</p> <p><b>ASSESSMENT: Personalization of Content:</b> On the back of a left-over "???" rectangle, tell students to complete the following: When I think about going to MS/JH next year I _____.</p>	<p>shout out your question, listen and think about others' questions. Do you have some of the same questions?</p> <p>6. Follow school counselor's instructions for the <a href="#"><i>Questions! Questions! What Are Your Questions?</i></a></p> <p>Remember: brainstorming means getting as many ideas as possible on paper—with no worries about duplication or conventions of standard English.</p> <p>Review, refine and revise questions to be asked of Panel of Experts; write each question on a separate rectangle.</p> <p>Keep writing until have a minimum of 5 questions.</p> <p>7. Listen, think about and ask clarifying questions about the process school counselor will use to create a composite list of questions.</p> <p><b>ASSESSMENT: Content:</b> Did you write a minimum of 5 questions YOU have about MS/JH? Did you use the conventions of standard English?</p> <p><b>ASSESSMENT: Personalization of Content:</b> On the back of a left-over "???" rectangle, complete the following: When I think about going to MS/JH next year I _____.</p>



<i>Professional School Counselor Procedures:</i>	<i>Student Involvement:</i>
<p>them to transportation back to MS/JH.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Welcome experts to the class. Give experts their nameplates. Ask them to introduce themselves and relate their most vivid memories of their first week in middle school/junior high.</li> <li>2. Distribute composite list of questions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While distributing composite list to students, explain how decisions were made about the questions to include.</li> <li>• Invite panel members to make comments about questions and/or procedure (make sure each member of the panel has the list of questions).</li> <li>• Instruct students to look over list of questions; invite clarifying questions.</li> <li>• Tell students to listen, think and take notes on their list of questions papers. As they learn something they did not know before the experts talked, write it down and put a big asterisk next to it.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Explain and moderate the process of answering questions (be sure every panel member has an equal opportunity to answer questions, intervene if one or two panel members become over-eager about demonstrating knowledge).</li> <li>4. If time allows, place students in groups so that each panel member meets with a small group to answer additional questions and/or expand on existing questions.</li> <li>5. Summarize lesson; invite experts to make final comments; thank experts and invite several volunteers to express appreciation to experts and tell them one new idea they learned.</li> </ol> <p>Direct panel members to the individual who will accompany them to their transportation back to the MS/JH.</p> <p><b>ASSESSMENT: Content:</b> Distribute <a href="#"><i>Middle School/Junior High: Here I Come!</i></a> Thinking paper. Explain the first part of the thinking paper; instruct students to identify and list a minimum of 5 things they learned about MS/JH as a result of listening to the panel of experts.</p> <p>If students think of more than 5 ideas, instruct them to use the BONUS space (their reward for more than 5? Pride in knowing they listened and learned more than the minimum requirement—an indicator they will be a</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Listen, remember experts' names and think about their first-week stories. Could they be your stories next year?</li> <li>2. Look over composite list of questions; ask clarifying questions; prepare to take notes.</li> <li>3. Listen, think and take notes as the MS/JH experts answer your class's questions. As you learn something you did not know before the experts talked, write it down and put a big asterisk next to it. Jot down any additional questions.</li> <li>4. Participate in small group conversation with expert; ask questions; listen to/comment about other students' questions and/or comments.</li> <li>5. Think about the lesson as a whole; volunteer to tell the experts something learned during their visit.</li> </ol> <p><b>ASSESSMENT: Content:</b> Follow school counselor's instructions; thoughtfully make a list of the things you learned--More than 5?--Add bonus learning in the space provided.</p>

Professional School Counselor Procedures:	Student Involvement:
<p>successful MS/JH student!)</p> <p><b>ASSESSMENT: Personalization of Content:</b> Call students’ attention to the Reflection/Projection section of the <i>Middle School/Junior High: Here I Come!</i> Thinking Paper. Read and explain the open-ended statements; invite clarifying comments. (Statements: <i>Before this lesson, my butterflies about MS/JH were ___; now they are ___.</i> <i>When I think about going to MS/JH next year I ___.</i> <i>I used to think ___; now I know ___ (about MS/JH).</i> <i>I still want to know ___.</i>)</p> <p><b>CLOSURE:</b> Invite several students to read one of their statements; invite comments and/or questions.</p> <p>Instruct students to staple thinking papers to list of questions (thinking paper on top).</p> <p>Before collecting thinking papers, inform students that you will be reading their papers and returning them to their classroom teacher; he or she will return papers to students. The classroom teacher <b>might</b> read the papers. Is that OK? If it’s not “OK,” write “PLEASE DO NOT SHARE” at top of paper. Collect papers.</p> <p><i>After class, review students’ responses on the Middle School/Junior High: Here I Come! Thinking papers for students’ (age appropriate) level of awareness of themselves and making the transition to MS/JH. Summarize the questions students’ included in the Reflection/Projection section to aid in planning future activities. Look over the page of questions...assess their note-taking skill. If time permits, extend reviews to a comparison of students’ responses to the Middle School/Junior High: Here I Come! Thinking Paper with the notes they took to determine if there is a relationship. This may indicate need for note-taking lessons.</i></p> <p><i>Return thinking papers to classroom teacher for distribution to students. Honor the privacy of students who wrote “PLEASE DO NOT SHARE” on papers. Personally deliver papers to those students after your review.</i></p> <p>***After lesson, each student writes a formal thank-you note to the Panel of Experts. If possible collaborate with classroom teacher to plan class time for writing notes.</p> <p>Use format and academic vocabulary for writing</p>	<p><b>ASSESSMENT: Personalization of Content:</b> Find the Reflection/Projection section of thinking paper; listen to explanation, ask clarifying questions and complete the statements.</p> <p><b>CLOSURE:</b> Volunteer to read one statement; if don’t volunteer, listen to others’ comments and learn from them. Compare similarities/differences.</p> <p>Staple papers as school counselor instructs</p> <p>If you want your responses to be private between you and your school counselor, write “PLEASE DO NOT SHARE” at top of paper; give school counselor your papers.</p> <p>***Write a formal thank-you note to the Panel of Experts. Follow the guidelines you have learned in English-Language Arts for formal thank-you notes or the format your school counselor provides.</p>

<i>Professional School Counselor Procedures:</i>	<i>Student Involvement:</i>
<p>formal letters all classroom teachers use. If there are not common elements used in teaching students to write thank-you notes, following is an example format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date_____</li> <li>• Greeting (Dear __:)</li> <li>• Body (Thank you _____. I learned _____. I [appreciated] _____. I plan to [use the information] _____.</li> <li>• Closing: (Have fun the rest of the year!)</li> <li>• (Sincerely,)</li> <li>• (Signature)</li> </ul>	

**Classroom Teacher Follow-Up Activities (Suggestions for classroom teacher to use to reinforce student learning of Comprehensive Guidance Curriculum concepts)**

**Provide Classroom Teacher** with an overview to the lesson and copies of materials used: the composite list of students’ questions about MH/JH and the Student Thinking Paper *Middle School/Junior High: Here I Come!*

**Summarize Your Systematic Observations:** Identify students’ persistent misconceptions about MS/JH. Identify students who appeared to have difficulty generating questions and students who were hesitant to contribute to conversations—in small groups and with whole class.

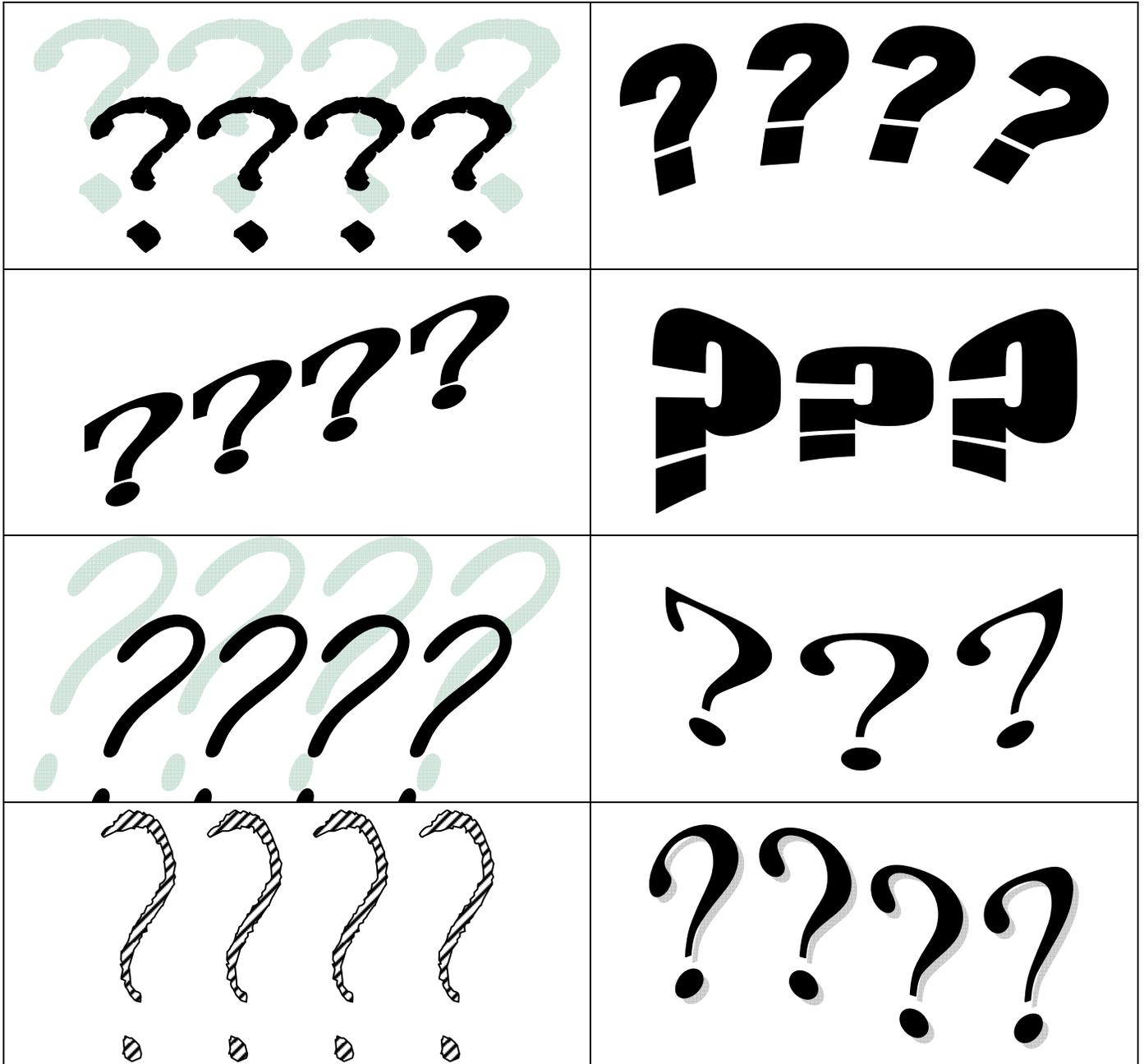
**Consult with Classroom Teacher:** Discuss your systematic observations. Does he or she validate your observations as being classroom behaviors as well? If so, collaborate with the classroom teacher to further identify the extent of the hesitancy to ask questions and/or participate in discussions/classroom conversations. Determine if the difficulty is a “will” or a “skill” issue. Do the students know HOW to formulate and ask questions and lack the confidence to take the risk to contribute publicly (will)? Or does the student lack the skill to formulate/ask questions?

**Collaborate with Classroom Teacher:** Discuss writing formal thank-you notes (e.g., allowing students class time to write notes and/or providing you the template/format used in classroom). Encourage classroom teacher to look over list of questions students have about MS/JH and, as appropriate, incorporate answers/comments in daily teaching. Collaborate with classroom teacher to plan appropriate interventions to meet learning needs to help students make the transition from elementary school to MS/JH. Interventions might include (and are not limited to) Responsive Services in the form of individual or small group counseling, additional classroom guidance activities such as preparation for MS/JH or the self-confidence to ask questions in large or small groups of class mates.

If the student behaviors are limited to classroom guidance lessons, consider reasons, for example: What are the unique factors that might be influencing these students’ responses during classroom guidance lessons? Have the behaviors occurred during other classroom guidance lessons? All lessons? Topic-specific lessons? Motivated by peers?

## QUESTIONS! QUESTIONS! WHAT ARE YOUR QUESTIONS?

**DIRECTIONS:** Cut the cells apart; on the back of each rectangle, write one question about middle school/junior high. If you have more than 8 questions ask for additional paper. Any question is "OK"; however, please be sincere. Your questions will be combined with everyone's questions and given to our panel of experts—middle school/junior high students. You will get a copy of the questions given to the panel. **DO NOT SIGN YOUR QUESTIONS!** Put them in the Question Box. If you think of more questions later, write those on separate pieces of paper and put them in the special box in the school guidance and counseling office.



## MIDDLE SCHOOL/JUNIOR HIGH: HERE I COME!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Five things I learned about middle school/junior high that I did not know before:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### BONUS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### REFLECTION/PROJECTION: Respond to the following open-ended statements:

Before this lesson, my butterflies about MS/JH were \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ; now they are \_\_\_\_\_

When I think about going to MS/JH next year I \_\_\_\_\_

I used to think (about MS/JH) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ ; now I KNOW \_\_\_\_\_

I still want/need to know \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_