

# Making the Transition to Sixth Grade and Middle School

By Margie Ryerson

Entering sixth grade can be daunting for many students and their families. It is a time of huge growth and development for children, and for parents it is often the beginning of the process of "letting go."

My own wake-up came when I was in the process of calling a babysitter for our sixth-grade daughter, and the phone rang. It was a neighborhood mom calling to see if our daughter could babysit for her children!

It is easy for parents to get confused during this transition period. Sometimes our children behave in a competent, sensible manner; other times they seem to regress back to the irrational and demanding toddler stage. You can help by overlooking small transgressions and moodiness, and by offering support and encouragement whenever possible.

Sixth grade is a time of increased complexity for our children. They must adapt to a larger school, different teachers with varying styles and expectations, more homework and responsibilities, and a more complicated social environment. In addition, they may experi-

ence hormonal fluctuations leading to mood swings and physical changes. Having friends and fitting into the peer group become more important. The developmental process of discovering oneself and forming an identity usually begins around this time.

With so much going on, it's no wonder this time can involve such a huge adjustment. Change is rarely easy, yet changes are occurring on a regular basis. One sixth-grader, Kelly, came home during her first week at a local middle school crying and discouraged. She told her parents that she had no friends in her classes and that no one even liked her. Naturally her parents were dismayed and worried. The next week there was a complete turn-around: Kelly had been elected class representative to the Student Council and had been invited to hang out with several new friends.

Social issues abound in middle school. Friendships shift, cliques form, and unfortunately, gossiping and bullying are more prevalent than in prior years. Children need help navigating this new territory and learning how to problem-solve and express themselves effectively.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist with offices in Orinda and Walnut Creek. Contact her at 925-376-9323 or margierye@yahoo.com.

Parents can be avid listeners and advocates, and school personnel are highly trained and ready to assist. Be sure to utilize all available resources in your school and community to help your child with any difficulties he experiences; none are too small to tackle.

Even though your child may push you away at times, your presence at this stage is very important. You are the only ones who can provide the unconditional love and acceptance that every child needs from his parents, especially when times are challenging.

## GET CLEAN.

**TOTAL CLEAN**  
HOUSE CLEANING SERVICE  
925.376.1004

# Your child's probably ready to go to UC Berkeley.

Your children are precious, aren't they? And one of their most precious gifts is their eyes. That's why we encourage you to have your children's eyes examined first at nine months of age, again at three years, and regularly after that.

Who are we? We're the University of California Eye Center in Berkeley, a key part of UC's top-rated School of Optometry. And we can offer you a great deal of expertise with youngsters' eyes.

In fact, here at UC we've developed ways to test kids' eyes while they play, and to diagnose and treat any vision problems even before they can read an eye chart.



UC BERKELEY  
OPTOMETRY

We take most vision insurance plans, and accept all major credit cards. So bring in the whole family for their eye exams. (You'll absolutely love our Eye Wear Center, with its incredible selection of designer frames!) We'll look for you!

**Open to the Public 7 Days a week [www.caleyecare.com](http://www.caleyecare.com)  
Free parking next to Cal Memorial Stadium with appointments. 510.642.2020**

*Are you sure you are getting the education you are seeking for your child?*

*Consider choosing a Superior Education for your Child.*

## *Saklan Valley School*

can provide your child:

- **Smaller Classes** •
- **Higher Expectations and Higher Accountability** •
- **A Safer and More Caring Community** •
- **More Science and Technology Learning** •
- **Greater Critical Thinking Instruction** •
- **Greater Foreign Language and Global Studies Education** •
- **Better Character and Leadership Education** •
- **More Field Trips, Travel, and Experiential Education** •

*Call or Visit our Website Today; Spaces Still Available!*

*Small Classes Make a Big Difference*

*Preschool through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade • Van Transportation and Extended Care Available • Independent • Accredited by WASC & CAIS • Not-for-Profit*



# **Saklan**

saklan | valley | school

**Call Now to  
Schedule a Tour**

**925-376-7900**

**[www.saklan.org](http://www.saklan.org)**