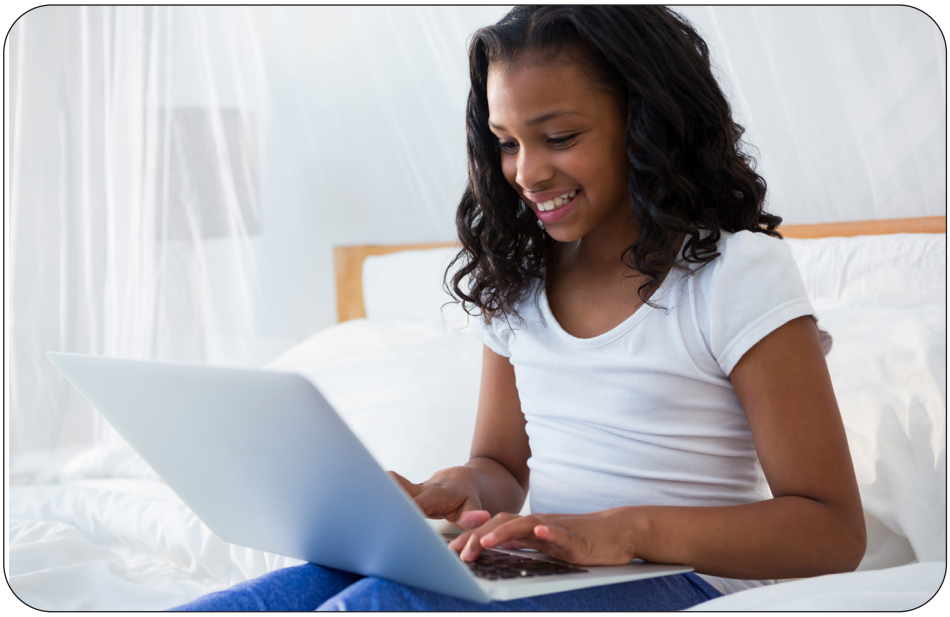
Middle School
Parents
February 2021
Vol. 24, No. 6
Enterprise City Schools
Parent & Family Engagement

still make the difference!



Why is it so important for your middle schooler to be in class?

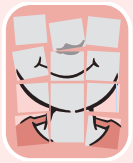
Every day of school is important—whether students are learning in person or online. The consequences of missing classes and instruction can be especially tough on your child, especially during the second half of the school year. Here's why:

- **Every class is packed** with essential material due to limited instruction time caused by pandemic responses and challenges.
- **Once the year is half over,** many teachers turn a serious eye to the end-of-year exams. The pace of instruction picks up.
- **In just a few weeks,** teachers will also begin to review for these exams. This review will go on at the same time as regular teaching.
- **Your child may have** more assignments as a result of faster instruction and review. The more time she is out of class, the more the schoolwork piles up, which can overwhelm your middle schooler.

To support your child's attendance, continue to:

- **Emphasize to your child** the importance of being in every class. She should arrive on time prepared and ready to participate.
- **Accept no excuses** except true illness or emergency for having your child miss a class.
- **Avoid making appointments** or plans for your child that would require her to miss a class.

Use report cards to set goals and celebrate effort



Whether your middle schooler's report card is good or bad, you can use it as a valuable learning opportunity. With your child:

- **Talk about it.** Are there many surprises? Discuss them with him. If you're upset about a particular grade, remember to stay calm. Yelling will just shut down communication with your child. Calmly say, "I'm disappointed about that C in English. We need to talk about it some more."
- **Set goals.** Use your child's report card to help him chart a course for the rest of the year. If he did well, talk about how he can keep up the good work. If he struggled, brainstorm ways to improve things going forward. "You did a great job of turning in your science homework, but you stumbled on tests. What if I start quizzing you each night of the week leading up to a test?"
- **Celebrate.** Straight A's are a reason to celebrate, but if your child worked hard and brought up a grade in a class, he deserves a big pat on the back. Always acknowledge your child's effort.

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Effective ways to handle your middle schooler's emotions



Just when you thought your child had outgrown tantrums, along comes adolescence. Preteens are notorious for their strong emotions. Here are tips for handling your child's angry outbursts:

- **Stay in control.** Overreacting to your child's anger only adds fuel to the fire. Give your child some space and time to settle down. Resume your discussion when you're both calm.
- **Avoid harsh punishment.** It's tempting to yell, "You're grounded for a month!" when you're upset. But discipline should be designed to teach, not punish.
- **Don't give in.** If you've made a good decision, stick to it. Show your child that pleading and tantrums will not change your mind.
- **Offer choices.** Giving your middle schooler a sense of power can reduce frustration and outbursts. Say things like, "You can finish your report either before you go on a run or after. It's your decision."

"The child supplies the power but the parents have to do the steering."

—Dr. Benjamin Spock

Three skills help students prepare for college and careers



Your middle schooler may not know what he wants to do after he graduates from high school—and that's perfectly OK.

However, there are some skills your child can start building now that will help him be successful—whatever his future plans may be. They include:

1. **Communication.** From factory floors to hospital operating rooms, on-the-job success depends on communication. You can help your child strengthen his speaking and listening skills at home. If he wants you to rethink a rule, have him build a case and present it to you. Why does he want to stay up later on the weekends? How has he shown he is responsible enough for this change?
2. **Critical thinking** and problem solving. Middle schoolers often see things they'd like to change. There's a school policy that doesn't seem fair. The science equipment needs an upgrade, but the school lacks the budget. Instead of just listening to your child complain, help him think about how *he* could help solve the problem. Perhaps he can share his idea with the principal.
3. **Decision making.** Suppose your child is wondering if he should sign up for an honors math class next year. To help him think through the choice, make a T chart. Have him put the reasons *for* on one side and the reasons *against* on the other. When he sees the pros and cons, he can make a more informed choice.

Source: B. Cook, "College and Career Ready: What It Means for Middle School Students: Helping students develop the skills they know they need to succeed," Association for Middle Level Education, niswc.com/mid_skills.

Are you helping your child with time management?



Time management can be a real challenge for kids. The challenge gets greater as they get older and have to deal with complicated projects and schedules. Students may feel the pinch particularly during the second half of the school year.

Are you doing all you can to help your teen manage her time? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___**1. Do you encourage** your teen to write all of her academic and personal commitments on a calendar?

___**2. Do you talk** with your teen about her priorities and explain that when she can't do everything, she should focus on what's most important?

___**3. Do you suggest** your teen make and follow a schedule each week?

___**4. Do you show** your teen how to break down large assignments and tasks into smaller, more manageable steps?

___**5. Do you set an example** by using your time wisely?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your teen learn how to manage her time. For *no* answers, consider trying those ideas.

Middle School Parents still make the difference!

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1283

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Published monthly September through May.
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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

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Be aware of the dangers of social media for middle schoolers



The average middle schooler spends an alarming nine hours a day engaging with social media. It's no surprise that kids are turning to social media in an effort to stay connected to friends they can't socialize with because of the pandemic.

However, not everyone your child interacts with online is a real friend. Who has 639 friends in real life anyway?

In addition, middle schoolers' brains are just not wired to use social media responsibly. Their frontal cortex, which is what helps adults manage distractions and plan ahead, is not well-developed yet. This leaves them vulnerable to damaging effects of social media such as distraction, sleep loss and depression.

To protect your child:

- **Delay.** If she isn't on social media, wait. The longer you delay, the better.
- **Set limits.** Don't allow devices at mealtime. Keep devices out of your child's bedroom overnight.
- **Talk about what is appropriate** to post and what's not.
- **Stay connected.** Follow her social media accounts and be sure she knows you will look at them.
- **Create a family account.** This lets your middle schooler stay in touch with friends, but in a safer space.
- **Schedule family time.** Middle school is a time when your child needs you more than ever. So plan time to do things together—with the devices turned off!

Source: E. Abi-Jaoude and others, "Smartphones, social media use and youth mental health," *CMAJ,* Canadian Medical Association, niswc.com/mid_social3.

Responsibility includes sense of duty, self-reliance and persistence



Of course you want your child to become a responsible person. But does she know what that means?

To help her understand what being responsible looks like, talk about the traits that most responsible people share. Suggest ways she can model those same traits.

For instance, responsible people usually demonstrate:

- **A sense of duty.** They do what they're supposed to do—even if they don't feel like it. For your child, that might mean getting ready for school on time, completing assignments on time and doing her chores.
- **Self-reliance.** They value self-sufficiency, so they do as much as they can for themselves. True, your middle schooler is too young to be completely self-reliant. But she can take a big step toward becoming more responsible. Empower her to handle many of her own tasks, such as doing her own laundry.
- **Persistence.** They don't give up, and they don't abandon goals that seem out of reach. Your child can demonstrate persistence by hanging in there when the going gets tough. If she doesn't earn a spot on the debate team this year, for example, she can sharpen her skills this year and try again next time.

Source: M.S. Josephson and others, *Parenting to Build Character in Your Teen,* Boys Town Press.

Q: I am so frustrated with how ungrateful my son seems to be. So many people are struggling these days, but no matter what I or others do for him or give him, it's never enough. How can I get him to stop taking people and things for granted?

Questions & Answers

A: Behavioral psychologists say all children are born with feelings of gratitude. Unfortunately, kids can lose this natural inclination. One way is by giving them rewards regardless of how they behave. Another is to give them too many things, with nothing expected in return.

To help your son regain a grateful attitude:

- **Model gratitude yourself.** Let your son see you writing thank-you notes or returning a favor. Thank your son for things.
- **Check your attitude.** If you're focused on material things, your son will be, too.
- **Sensitize your son** to others who have less. Kids realize how fortunate they are when they see others with less.
- **Start a tradition** of sharing gratitude. Have everyone around the dinner table tell what they feel grateful for in the last week.
- **Discuss gifts** and kind gestures. Note how wonderful it was for someone to take the time to do something nice.
- **Separate privileges** and gifts from rights. If your son wants something extra, ask him to perform a chore in return.
- **Praise your son** whenever he does show gratitude.
- **When your son isn't thankful,** don't ignore it. Take him aside and remind him why gratitude is important.

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It Matters: Reading

Share reading strategies with your child



Middle school students need to know how to read for meaning. They also need to be able to identify the main idea and draw inferences (read between the lines). Studies show that about one in four middle schoolers can't do these things.

To boost your child's reading skills, encourage her to:

- **Ask questions.** Good readers are curious. Before reading an assignment, your child should look it over and review the images and words in bold type. What questions do they raise in her mind? As she's reading, have her jot down other questions. When she's finished reading, she should be able to answer all of her questions.
- **Learn new words.** As your child reads, she should write down any new words she learns along with their meanings.
- **Find the main idea.** After your child reads an assignment for class, she should ask herself, "What was the main idea?" Paying attention to the main idea can help your child focus on what's important in her reading.
- **Work on fluency.** Middle schoolers should be able to read 100-160 words per minute, depending on the difficulty of the text. Look for short articles that will interest your child and time her reading. Then, challenge her to read at a faster pace and still grasp the main idea.

Source: A.G. Boardman, *Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers,* Florida Center for Reading Research.

Three adjustments can keep your middle schooler reading

Your child's elementary school years are well behind him, and high school looms ahead (maybe even next fall). Keep his progression to young adulthood in mind as you help him select reading material.

To encourage reading that feeds his maturing understanding of the world:

1. **Tap into** your middle schooler's more sophisticated ability to comprehend and care about current events. Read a newspaper in print or online every day and share at least one article of interest with your child. Challenge him to share an article each day with you as well.
2. **Ask your child** to pick a book for the two of you to read and discuss. You'll show him that you think reading is important—and that you value his ideas.



3. **Help your child** find books about kids his age asserting themselves to make a difference. Middle schoolers are beginning to think about their place in the world and the difference they can make.

A strong vocabulary is key for middle school reading success



In middle school, the reading material is more complex and contains advanced vocabulary. Having a broad vocabulary will give your child an advantage.

Encourage your child to:

- **Read.** Your child should read every day. And he should read a variety of materials—novels, short stories, newspapers, magazines and websites. The more reading material your child takes in, the more words he will encounter. He should look up any words he doesn't know.
- **Talk.** Introduce new words when you have conversations with your child. This is a great exercise for everyone in the family.
- **Practice.** Reading and hearing all these new words may not mean much if your child doesn't use them. Challenge him to use one or two new words a day.

Source: C. Snow, "Building vocabulary to improve reading in middle school," Harvard Graduate School of Education.