For Middle School Parents

Ways Busy Parents Can Help Children Succeed in Middle School



Research shows that early adolescence is one of the most crucial periods in a child's life. It is during these years that children need a lot of adult support. Schools and families both have important roles to play in helping middle school children learn. But families have the biggest influence on their students.

The problem is that middle school parents are already very busy, so how can they find the time to help their children succeed in school?

Here are some proven tips for making the time to help your child.

QuickTips®

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Wheeler Middle School

Volunteer After Hours

It's great if you can help out at school. But you don't always have to make time during the day to be involved in your child's education. Check with your child's teachers to see if there are things you can do at home or after the school day. For example:

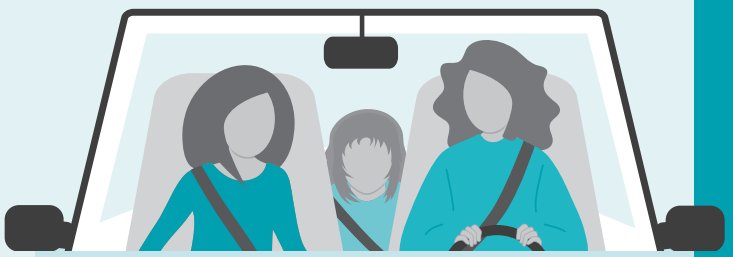
- **Collect and send in materials** a teacher needs for a class project.
- **Create a list of community resources** that support what a class is studying.
- **Serve on a committee** to address school needs.
- **Recruit other families** to volunteer.
- **Enlist businesses** to donate to a school fundraiser.
- **Put together Welcome Kits** for families new to your school.

And don't forget to attend school events held in the evening such as band concerts, plays, athletic events or art fairs.



Use Car Time

You spend a lot of time in the car alone with your child. It's a wonderful opportunity to have meaningful conversations and a real influence on your child. Think about it. There are sensitive issues you (and your child) want to discuss—from the changes puberty brings to concerns about what your child wants to do in the future. In the car you don't have to make eye contact. Your child can't "leave the room." No one can overhear you. You can go around the block again if you need more time. It's perfect.



Try these tips:

To get your child to really talk, you've got to really listen. Turn off the car radio and put away cell phones. Ask, "What would you like to talk about?" And then force yourself to be quiet and listen. Repeat the question with a silent glance if necessary, but be quiet. Listen ... wait ... and don't be surprised if you end up having the best conversation you've had in years. The privacy of the car and really listening are the secrets.

TIPS ON FINDING MORE TIME

Some families seem to fit more things into a day than others do. No, they haven't found a way to stop the clock—they've just learned to use their time more efficiently. Here are three ways to find the time to help your child:

1. Set priorities

Sit down and list what's truly important to you. (Odds are your children are at the top of your list.) Then decide how to spend your time. Make sure your decisions reflect what is important to you. Have a choice between cooking a fancy dinner or talking with your child about school? Make sandwiches or heat up leftovers, and talk.



2. Carve out one-on-one time

"Quality time" isn't enough. Children also need "quantity time" with you. Your child needs time to talk with you—time to see and hear how you would apply your experience and your values to the problems your child is facing. There's nothing like spending time alone with a family member to make a child of any age feel special. Try making an appointment to spend some time alone with your child each week. Write it on your calendar. Then, treat that appointment as seriously as you would an important business meeting.

3. Use the 'off' button



You probably have more time than you think, but it's being stolen from you and your child by digital devices! So what can you do?

- **Turn off phone notifications.** Instead, check texts, voice mail and social media at designated times.
- **Go offline.** It's amazing how much time can be lost streaming shows, surfing the internet and scrolling through social media.

Use your media-free time to help your child with schoolwork, to read together or just to talk.

Exchange Notes With Your Child

Here's an easy way to keep the lines of communication open with your child and build self-esteem and writing skills at the same time.



When you have a few free moments throughout your day, write a note to your child. Compliment your child on a job well done, write about the things you are doing at work or just say "I'm thinking about you." And ask your child to write to you.

You can exchange notes in the morning before school or right before bedtime. Middle school children need to be reminded often that their families love them. Notes are another way to say, "I love you."

Five Years From Now …

Remember, five years from now, your child won't remember the night you left the dishes in the sink. But you'll both treasure forever the memory of the walk you took together to look at the night sky.

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