

Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Moore Public Schools

MIDDLE SCHOOL



November 2025

Improve reading comprehension by helping your child build skills

When reading to learn, students need to identify the major points in a text. They must also draw *inferences* (use evidence in the text to grasp meaning that is not directly stated). Research shows that about one third of eighth graders struggle to do these things.

To help your student strengthen these important reading skills:

- **Encourage your child to scan** the text before beginning to read. What questions do the headings, graphics and words in bold type raise? After completing the reading, can your child answer the questions?
- **Help your child learn new words.** When encountering unfamiliar words in reading material and in life, suggest that your child write them down, along with their meanings.
- **Ask your child to tell you about** the reading. What was the main point of the chapter or passage? What supporting details did the author provide to back it up?
- **Help your child build reading fluency.** Share short articles that will interest your child. Time your student reading them. Challenge your child to read faster and still identify the main points. Being able to read quickly and easily aids understanding.



Source: "NAEP Reading Assessment 2024," National Assessment of Educational Progress; A.G. Boardman, *Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers*, Florida Center for Reading Research.



Support success in meaningful ways

Studies show that middle schoolers benefit when their families are engaged in their education. As your student develops independence, you may be less involved in daily schoolwork, and your engagement can evolve.

Here are three activities which can make a real difference to your middle schooler's achievement:

1. **Setting clear expectations.** When students know their families believe they can learn and expect them to stay in school and give it their best effort, they become more motivated.
2. **Extending learning topics.** Look for related science videos to

watch together, historic sites to visit, plays to act out as a family, projects to manage together, etc.

3. **Planning for the future.** Help your child think about academic and personal strengths and learn about careers that involve them. Together, research the education needed to prepare for them.

Source: D. Viadero, "Scholars: Parent-School Ties Should Shift in Teen Years," Education Week.

Sharpen online awareness

Many middle schoolers are unable to tell the difference between factual content online and ads. Teach your child to:

- **Recognize code words.** "Sponsored content" is an ad.
- **Read more.** Sometimes a site will summarize or take one sentence from another source out of context. Reading the original source provides clarification.
- **Follow links.** Do they lead back to trustworthy sources or company pitches?

Source: *Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning*, Stanford University History Education Group.

Promote weekend learning

Does your child have too much idle time on weekends? Here are a few ideas to keep your student busy and learning:

- **Cook together.** Offer some recipes to choose from and help your child prepare a simple meal.
- **Start a book club.** Let your child pick a book to read together. Discuss it over a tasty treat.
- **Be hometown tourists.** Ask your child to research interesting local places. Visit and let your child be your guide.



Start off on a career path

Families want children to grow up and find satisfying work that suits their interests. To help your child take the first steps:

- **Urge your student** to discover interests through activities such as school clubs and volunteering.
- **Discuss your own job** experiences. Could your middle schooler shadow you or a coworker at work?
- **Explore career-related classes** your child could take in high school.



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What can I do to find out about my child's school life?

Q: We're a few months into the school year, and I feel out of touch as far as assignments and test schedules go. How can I stay up-to-date without seeming nosy? Should I just leave these things up to my child?

A: You're not being nosy—you're being engaged! Staying aware of what is going on at school is important. To get the information you need:

- **Ask your child** for regular updates on each class. If your student doesn't want to talk about them every day, set aside 15 minutes for a weekly chat. Knowing you are going to ask may motivate your child to keep track. And if a problem is brewing, your child has a built-in time to tell you about it.
- **Read school communications** for families. In addition to letters home, check the website, family portal, social media, emails, etc. If you need help accessing them, ask the office staff.
- **Ask your middle schooler's teachers** if there is a class website or other method for learning about activities in their class.
- **Attend school events and workshops** when you can. You can connect with school staff and other families, and find out more about what is going on at school.



Are you teaching social media safety?

Social media platforms like YouTube, Tik Tok, Snapchat and Instagram are popular with many middle schoolers—and that comes with risk. Are you reinforcing safe rules for social media use? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you check** your child's privacy settings regularly and discuss the dangers of sharing specific personal data?
2. **Do you talk** about why your child should not post or share inappropriate photos or hurtful comments?
3. **Do you explain** that people online may not be who they say they are, and it is not OK to meet them without you?
4. **Do you insist** that your child alert you to hurtful or scary posts by others?

5. **Do you say** that you will monitor your child's online activity from time to time?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child learn to use social media responsibly. For each no, try that idea.

"While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life's all about."

—Angela Schwindt

Enrich everyday activities with a little math practice

Building your child's comfort with math is as easy as working it into activities you already do together. To work on:

- **Measurement**, have your child calculate the area of a room, double a recipe, measure books for a new shelf, etc.
- **Arithmetic**, give your child a grocery receipt. Ask, "How much did we spend today on vegetables?"
- **Statistics**, have your child read graphs in news articles and interpret them.



Foster a healthy body image

Many adolescents don't like what they see in the mirror—and that can have a negative impact on their school performance. To help your child have a positive body image:

- **Discuss the changes** puberty brings.
- **Focus on fitness**, not weight.
- **Don't criticize people's bodies** or appearance—or your own.
- **Suggest unfollowing** social media that makes your child feel unattractive.

Source: S. Gregg, "Positive Body Image: Why It Matters, How to Help Students," UA News Center, University of Alabama.

Offer support that counts

Feeling supported at home helps students do their best in school. In a survey, middle schoolers said they'd like their families to:

- **Show interest** in their schoolwork.
- **Listen to them** when they talk.
- **Offer guidance** without lecturing about mistakes.
- **Notice when they do** things right.

Source: A. Jackson and others, *Making the Most of Middle School: A Field Guide for Parents and Others*, Teachers College Press.

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