

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Moore Public Schools

MIDDLE SCHOOL



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Foster the leadership qualities that boost middle school success

Many people think of a leader as a boss: someone who tells others what to do. But true leadership has just as much to do with listening, learning, planning and setting an example. Leadership qualities help students develop problem-solving and communication skills and responsibility.

All children have the ability to become leaders. To foster leadership, encourage your child to be:

- **Organized.** Leaders plan ahead. They know that leaving projects to the last minute usually produces poor results.
- **Open to new ideas.** Leaders know they don't know everything. They listen and consider input from others.
- **Flexible.** Leaders don't get stuck in the rut of doing everything the same way every time. They are willing to negotiate and try new solutions.
- **Caring.** Effective leaders want to make things better for everyone.
- **Optimistic.** Leaders are enthusiastic and expect things to go right. They trust the people they work with.
- **Resilient.** Leaders know how to handle losses and move forward when things don't go as planned.



Source: B.A. Lewis, "What Do You Stand For? For Teens: A Guide to Building Character, Free Spirit Publishing.



Speak out against substance abuse

Substance abuse early in life increases the risk of addiction and damage to brain function—and it can be fatal the first time. The middle school years are a time when giving your child prevention messages is critically important.

People are more likely to turn to drugs and alcohol in times of transition, like middle school. Kids this age also want to try new experiences. Since their judgment and decision-making skills are immature, they may not recognize the risks.

To set your child straight:

- **Ask, "What have you learned in school about substance abuse?"** Reinforce those messages.

- **Discuss the dangers** of using prescription drugs improperly.
- **Set clear rules:** No use of any drug, including alcohol, cannabis and nicotine products, except as prescribed by a doctor for your child or approved by you.
- **Build a strong relationship.** Enjoy time and activities together.

Source: "Preventing Drug Abuse: The Best Strategy," National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Level up reading suggestions

Your child is growing up and learning more about how the world works. To encourage frequent reading, acknowledge this growth. Suggest that your child read:



- **News articles.** Share an article on an interesting current event every day. Ask your student to share one with you, too.
- **Books about people** your child's age who are making a difference. Middle schoolers are figuring out their place in the world and how they can contribute.

Promote accountability

To help your student learn to face up to problems and take responsibility for actions:

- **Let your child** be the one to talk to the teacher first about issues with grades.
- **Ask questions** to help your child think about potential results of actions before taking them.
- **Let your child experience** and learn from consequences.

Four study tips get results

Research points to four study strategies that improve learning and memory. Encourage your child to:

1. **Study the same** material in multiple locations.
2. **Alternate** studying different types of content in a single study session.
3. **Space out study sessions** over several days, rather than cramming.
4. **Practice recalling** learned information—by summarizing, self-testing, etc.



Source: M. Imundo and others, "Where and how to learn: The interactive benefits of contextual variation, restudying and retrieval practice for learning," *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Sage.



How can I tell if moodiness is really depression?

Q: My middle schooler has been unhappy and negative lately. Is this normal at this age, or could my child be truly depressed?

A: Hormonal changes in the middle school years can swing children's moods up and down from one minute to the next. However, poor mental health among adolescents is widespread, so you are wise to be concerned.



Depression typically lasts longer than a mood swing. Your child might be depressed if one or more of these signs persist for at least a few weeks:

- **Sadness, agitation,** anger or irritability.
- **Feelings of hopelessness,** worthlessness or guilt.
- **Loss of interest** in previously enjoyed activities.
- **Sleeping or eating** too much or too little.
- **Difficulty concentrating.**
- **Frequent headaches** or stomachaches.

The risk is higher for children who have a family history of depression, or who are under stress, have a learning disorder or are experiencing a loss. If you suspect depression, seek professional help immediately from a doctor or school counselor.



Are you teaching time management?

Middle schoolers have assignments in multiple classes. So they need sharp time management skills to complete everything on time. Are you helping your child develop these skills? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you have** your child write all academic and social commitments on a calendar?
- ___ **2. Do you ask** questions to help your child prioritize tasks? *What's due soonest? What will take the most time to complete?*
- ___ **3. Do you model** wise timing decisions? *I'm going to get started now. Waiting until the last minute is so stressful.*
- ___ **4. Do you help** your child break big projects down into manageable steps?

- ___ **5. Do you have** your child create a weekly schedule of times for completing tasks?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are instilling effective habits for using time wisely. For each no, try that idea.

"A plan is what; a schedule is when. It takes both a plan and a schedule to get things done."

—Peter Turla

Encourage language study

Research shows that when students study a foreign language, their brains physically change in ways that enhance learning. Language learning benefits your child's:

- **Memory.** The need to learn and recall new vocabulary gives the brain a workout that strengthens connections.
- **Understanding** of how language works. This aids reading, writing and test-taking.
- **Problem-solving skills.** Studies show that students who speak more than one language do better in math and science.

Mastering the challenge of learning a new language also provides a confidence boost that helps when tackling other subjects.

Source: H. Mohamed, "How speaking multiple languages changes your brain," DW.com.

Serve nutrition knowledge

A nutritious diet helps your child stay alert in class and retain information. To reinforce the need to make healthy food choices:

- **Plan meals** with your child. Set a goal to try one new healthy food each week.
- **Read food labels** together. Does that bag of chips contain more than one serving? Have your child calculate the fat and salt content in the whole bag.



Explore tutoring options

Students who consistently struggle in school may benefit from one-on-one tutoring. Ask your child's counselor about tutoring resources at school and in the community.

When working with a tutor, set realistic, short-term goals together so you can tell if the tutoring is working. Then, let the tutor take charge. If your child isn't making progress after several months, it may be time to try something or someone else.

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