

Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Moore Public Schools

MIDDLE SCHOOL



January 2026

Empower your child to go into tests confident and prepared

Thumping hearts, sweaty palms and worry are a just few of the physical and emotional symptoms many middle schoolers feel before a test. But when students know they are prepared for tests, they tend to be less nervous about them.

To help relieve test anxiety, offer reassurance that you will always be satisfied by your student's best effort. Then, encourage your child to use these preparation strategies:

- **Ask the teacher** what the test will cover if your student is unsure. Few things are scarier than the unknown.
- **Start studying well in advance.** Help your child schedule several short study sessions in the days leading up to the test. Then if something is confusing, there will be time for your child to get help before the test.
- **Take a self-test.** Recalling and applying knowledge reinforces it in your child's memory. If there are questions or sample problems in the book for the class, your child can answer them. Or, you can help your child create a practice test based on class notes.
- **Practice relaxation techniques,** such as deep breathing. Your child can also visualize being able to answer questions easily after studying.
- **Make healthy choices.** Regularly getting enough sleep and eating a nutritious breakfast supports success on tests.



Actions define bullying

Middle schoolers don't always recognize bullying if a popular child is the one doing it. Tell your child to focus on what is happening. Are the actions hurtful? Are the words mean or meant to cause sadness, fear or embarrassment? If so, it's bullying—even if the bully is someone everyone likes and the person being bullied has few friends. Your child should alert an adult.

What led to poor choices?

Adolescents sometimes decide to do things they know are wrong. Helping them think through those choices afterward can strengthen their sense of integrity. Ask your child questions like:

- **What got in the way** of telling the truth?
- **Were you trying** to impress someone?
- **Would you want** to be known as someone who does that?



Prevent digital distraction

Middle schoolers regularly turn to digital media for information and entertainment, and many think that digital multitasking can help them with schoolwork. But texting, surfing and streaming while working can hurt performance. To help your child stay focused:

- **Discuss the fact** that multitasking doesn't work. Digital multitaskers wind up making more mistakes and their studies take longer.
- **Set limits** on device use during study time, such as: Only one computer window open at a time and unneeded devices go in a different room.



Source: K.E. May and A.D. Elder, "Efficient, helpful, or distracting? A literature review of media multitasking in relation to academic performance," *International Journal of Education Technology in Higher Education*, Springer.



Help your child resolve to start fresh

By January, many students need a little help reviving the routines and habits that support academic achievement. For a strong second half of the year, encourage your child to make some school-related New Year's resolutions.

Suggest that your middle schooler resolve to:

- **Work toward a new goal.** What would your student like to accomplish? Discuss what it will take to do it. Having clearly defined steps to follow makes it easier to do what's necessary.
- **Get organized.** This should include cleaning out book bags and filing papers regularly.
- **Maintain a schedule.** Help your child reestablish a work time and plan to take a short study break every hour or so to get up and move around. This improves focus and retention.
- **Prioritize.** Your child can resolve to create daily to-do lists and then identify the most important tasks. These are the ones that should be completed first.

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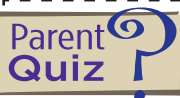
I don't know how to engage these days. What can I do?

Q: I care about my eighth grader's education. But I can't really help with a lot of schoolwork and my child doesn't want me to come to school. How else can I help?

A: Helping with schoolwork—especially in subjects that aren't your strongest—can be a challenge. But there are many other meaningful ways to support your child's success in middle school:



- **Have frequent conversations** about what your middle schooler is learning and would like to learn more about. Look for opportunities for your child to pursue these interests, by reading, shadowing someone, etc.
- **Help your child block out enough time** for schoolwork and studying. Falling behind makes learning more difficult and can leave students feeling overwhelmed. Send your child a message of support by doing your own quiet work during study time.
- **Contact your child's teachers.** Let them know you want to support them and your child. Ask for specific ways you can reinforce your student's skills in their subject.
- **Be active in the school community.** Meet other families. Join the parent-teacher group to stay current and learn how families can help.



Are you making reading seem like fun?

Students often claim they don't have time to read for fun. But pleasure reading builds their comprehension and vocabulary skills. Are you encouraging your child to make time for reading? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you plan** regular times when the whole family reads?
- ___ **2. Do you ask** for your child's help with tasks that involve reading directions, such as cooking or building things?
- ___ **3. Do you place** interesting reading materials in every room of your home?
- ___ **4. Do you look** for articles and books to share that relate to your child's interests?
- ___ **5. Do you let** your child see you reading for pleasure and share exciting tidbits?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are showing your child that reading is important and enjoyable. For each no, try that idea.

"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

—Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

Highlight STEM role models

Exposure to role models can boost your child's interest in STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). To find effective role models:

- **Read biographies** of people in fields from oceanography to astronomy with your child.
- **Discuss discoveries** in the news. Share articles and videos about the people making them.
- **Point to relatable** role models, like a local pharmacist or college student majoring in a STEM field. Seeing "regular people" succeed makes their achievements seem within reach.



Source: "Which Role Models are Best for STEM? Researchers Offer Recommendations in New Analysis," NYU News.

Foster school success traits

To instill character traits in your child that will pay off in school, reinforce:

- **Positive behavior.** Notice it, talk about it and offer praise for showing it.
- **Emotional balance.** Model how to look for the bright side of situations.
- **Respect for others.** Expect your child to use polite manners, be on time and listen to others' ideas and opinions.

What type of pressure is it?

Peers take on more influence in the middle school years—and it isn't always bad. Here's how to respond when peer pressure is:

- **Positive.** Your child's friends like to earn good grades and stay physically fit. Encourage these friendships and activities.
- **Neutral.** Your child copies a friend's hairstyle or style of dressing. Do nothing.
- **Negative.** Supervise hangouts with friends whose behavior is a concern.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

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