

# Helping Students Learn™

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Lawton Middle School

April

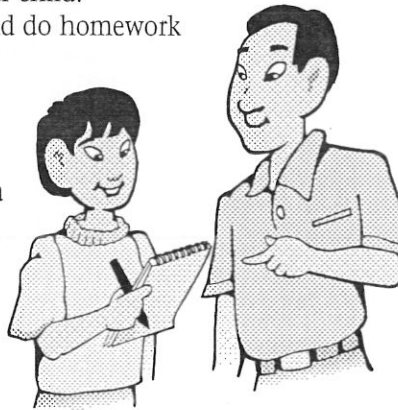
## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Help Your Child Get Organized?

**Q:** *My middle schooler is so disorganized! We've talked about his need to improve, but that hasn't helped. What more should I do?*

**A:** This is a common problem for kids this age. Changing poor habits is not something they can do alone. Help your child:

- **Stick to family routines.** Eat, sleep and do homework at about the same times every day.
- **Choose a study spot.** Include an easy-to-use system for storing supplies and filing papers.
- **Use to-do lists.** Have your child keep a small notebook handy. Suggest that he make lists of assignments, chores and other tasks.
- **Maintain a calendar.** He can note due dates, steps toward reaching goals, special events and more.
- **Be consistent.** Always putting things in the same place means your child will always know where they are.
- **Plan for the next day every night.** Confirm who will be doing what when. Lay out clothes. Pack lunches. Put schoolwork by the front door.



Source: Gail Miller, "12 Tips for Helping Disorganized Children," *The ADD/ADHD Gazette*.

## HOMEWORK

### Resolve Textbook Reading Struggles

Many children have difficulty reading textbooks effectively. If yours is one of them, suggest that your child:

**1. Skim the reading material.**

Start with the title, section headings and words that stand out. Then move on to pictures and charts. Finish with chapter introductions and summaries.

**2. Read questions at the end of each chapter.** These are big clues to the most important concepts.

Jot the questions down and leave room for answers.

**3. Keep the questions in mind**

and begin to read. Take notes about key topics, using easy-to-understand language.

**4. Make a set of flash cards.**

Put key words on one side, definitions on the other.

**5. Write answers to the questions**

at the end of the chapter.

**6. Review as much as needed.**

Pay special attention to notes and difficult sections.

Source: Susan Taylor Drumm, *Study Skills Grades 5-8*, 2002, Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company, Inc.

## MAKING DECISIONS

### Don't Solve Every Problem For Your Middle Schooler

Your child has scheduled two activities for the same day and time. Her little brother is driving her crazy. Or she borrowed a friend's Walkman and broke it. Whatever the problem, she wants you to solve it.

Often, it's better to back off. Give your child a chance to figure things out. Be available to listen to alternatives and discuss them. Talk about possible consequences.

Your child just may come up with a perfect solution. Meanwhile, she'll build important skills and self-confidence, too.

Source: Lawrence Greene, *Improving Your Child's Schoolwork*, 1996, Prima Publishing.

## REINFORCING LEARNING

### Make Time for Discussions

Here's a way to keep your child's brain active. Make a habit of discussing issues that matter to her.

For example, "Should students have homework?"

Try this each night at dinner time. If a debate arises, keep it friendly.



## YOUR CHILD AND YOU

### Ask for a History Lesson

You'll probably recognize many of the people your child studies in history.

But that doesn't mean you can't learn about them again. Ask your child to describe historical figures. Discuss opinions about the person's contributions.



Source: Vito Perrone, *101 Educational Conversations With Your 5th Grader*, 1994,

Chelsea House Publishers.

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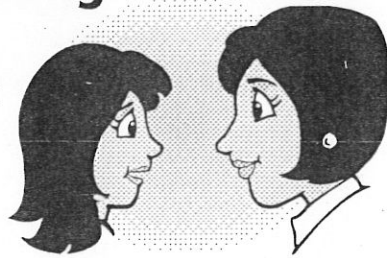
MIDDLE SCHOOL  
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## TALKING & LISTENING

### Are You Really Listening To Your Child?

In middle school, it's especially important to pay attention to what kids say. That's because opportunities to communicate are less frequent, and children who don't feel heard may stop communicating. Try to avoid these listening mistakes:



- **Over-thinking.** Instead of being attentive, you're imagining what you're going to say next.
- **Filtering.** You hear only what you want to hear. For instance, you want your child to enjoy cheerleading, so you don't take her complaints about it seriously.
- **Daydreaming.** You often drift off, and then find yourself saying, "What, honey?" or "Could you repeat that?"
- **Identifying.** You're so busy relating to everything your child says that you may not understand what she means.
- **Comparing.** You get sidetracked by assessing your child, so you miss her points.
- **Derailing.** You're quick to change the subject. Your child may think you're not interested in what she needs to discuss.
- **Discounting.** You hear what is said, but brush it off. For example, "There's nothing to be upset about."
- **Placating.** You agree with what your child says just to be nice or avoid conflict. This actually can make problems worse.

"Education is the ability to meet life's situations."  
—Dr. John G. Hibben

## PARENT QUIZ

### Do You Support Academic Success?

Staying on track academically is mostly your child's job. But there are many ways you can help. Here's a quiz to see how you're doing. Give yourself five points for something you always do, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ___ 1. I keep up with how my child is doing in school.                      | ___ 5. I tell my child how much I love and believe in him. |
| ___ 2. I encourage my child to get enough sleep and to eat nutritious food. |  |
| ___ 3. I make sure my child studies every day.                              |  |
| ___ 4. I do learning activities with my child.                              |  |

**How did you score?** Twenty or above is good. Fifteen to 19 is average. Below 15? Use the ideas in this quiz to improve your child's performance in school.

## HEALTHY HABITS

### Tell Your Child About the Importance of Self-Respect

Kids are used to being told to respect adults. But they also need to respect themselves. Talk with your child about what this means. For example, he needs to make good decisions about eating, exercising and being responsible. People with self-respect are more likely to be respected by others.

## SPENDING TIME TOGETHER

### Everyday Activities Help Reinforce Math Skills

Many everyday tasks involve math. Ask your child to help with jobs like these:

- Putting up a picture.
- Following a recipe.
- Designing a garden.
- Double-checking a bill.
- Measuring a room.
- Calculating a tip.

## FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

### Course Choices Now Affect College Opportunities

Does college seem a long way off? It does to most middle schoolers and their families. But the courses children take now affect college admission. It's important to study:

- Algebra beginning in eighth grade.
  - Geometry beginning in ninth grade.
- Colleges are impressed when students sign up for the most difficult classes they can handle, especially in math, English and science.

Source: *Think College? Me? Now?: A Handbook for Students in Middle and Junior High School*, 1998, U.S. Department of Education.



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