

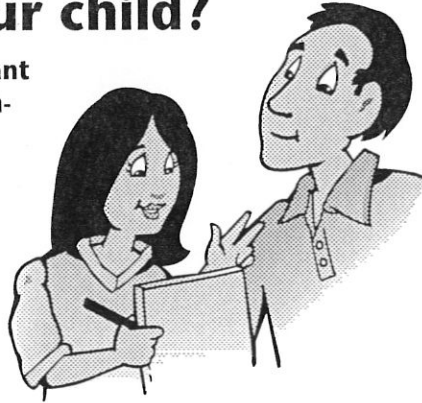
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can you stop power struggles with your child?

Q: My daughter and I are in a constant power struggle. She says I'm too controlling. But she doesn't make good decisions when I give her more leeway. What can I do?

A: Parents of middle schoolers walk a fine line. They have to keep their children safe, yet they have to encourage independence, too. This means giving kids a voice or choice—when appropriate—in decisions that affect them. It also involves allowing kids to learn from some mistakes. These steps can make the process easier:

- 1. Discuss choices** your middle schooler wants to make. When it's a risky decision, you may have to be in charge. If it's a minor issue, take a step back and offer guidance.
- 2. Brainstorm.** Together, list all the options your child has. Which ones sound best to her? Why?
- 3. Examine consequences.** Write down the pros and cons of every idea. What might feel good about the choice? What might not?
- 4. Talk about morals.** See how solutions fit with each of your values.
- 5. Decide.** Help your child determine what is best. If you can't let her make the choice herself, at least consider her opinion seriously. Treat mistakes as opportunities to learn.



PARENT QUIZ

Are you teaching your child geography?

Geography helps children understand the world. Here's a quiz to see if you're helping your child learn geography. Give yourself five points for something you always do, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

- 1. I help my child** find unfamiliar places in an atlas.
- 2. I map out family trips** with my child.
- 3. I talk with my child** about geographic landmarks, such as oceans and mountains.
- 4. I read books** about other cultures with my child.

5. I find opportunities to discuss foreign countries 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 build geography knowledge.*

"Our attitude toward life determines life's attitude towards us."
— Earl Nightingale

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

Consider how your child spends time after school

When kids get poor grades, parents may limit extracurricular activities. But this can hurt your child's connection to school. Consider other options, such as reducing TV time. Keep in mind that no extracurricular activity should take up more than 20 hours per week.

Source: Laurence Steinberg, *Beyond the Classroom: Why School Reform Has Failed and What Parents Need to Do*, ISBN: 0-684-83575-4 (Simon & Schuster, 1-800-323-7445, www.simonsays.com).

TALKING AND LISTENING

Take middle schoolers' concerns seriously

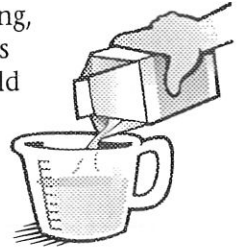
Sometimes middle schoolers worry about things that seem minor. "Lindsay didn't say hi to me on the bus." Avoid comments like, "Cheer up. It doesn't matter." Instead, show concern for your child's feelings. She'll feel loved, and hopefully she'll come to you about bigger issues down the road.

Source: "Helping Your Child Decide," National Association of State Boards of Education, 1-800-368-5023, www.nasbe.org.

REINFORCING LEARNING

Find daily opportunities to build academic skills

One way to make reading, math and other subjects meaningful to your child is to incorporate them into fun activities. For example, do the daily crossword puzzle together. Or have him measure ingredients as you prepare dinner.



Source: Rani Arbo, "Families Who Learn Together," *FamilyFun*, September 2000 (Impress, Inc., 1-800-289-4849, www.familyfun.go.com).

Helping Students Learn[®]

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Helping Students Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Lawton Middle School

December

HELPING MIDDLE SCHOOLERS COPE

Help your child remain calm on the day of a big test

In elementary school, tests may not be a big deal to kids. But in middle school, students begin to sense that test scores can affect the future. That's stressful for some. To help, encourage your child to:

- **Be prepared.** Have your child ask the teacher for tips on what to review. Then have him schedule 15 or 20 minutes a day for review.
- **Consider where he sits.** If your child thinks he would be more at ease in the front of the room or by a window, for instance, have him ask the teacher before the day of the test.
- **Develop healthy habits.** Plenty of sleep and a nutritious diet, especially before the test, can help your child feel physically comfortable. Remember to take your own advice. Tests can make parents jittery, too. But try not to show it. Say something like, "I'm so proud of the way you prepared. I have confidence in you!"



Source: Leslie Garisto Pfaff, "Test-Time Jitters," *Parents*, January 2002 (Gruner + Jahr Publishing, 1-800-777-0222, www.gjusa.com).

ENCOURAGING WRITING

Good writing starts with paragraphs

If your child dreads writing, she might need to practice constructing paragraphs. Once she's comfortable with this, finishing papers can become easier. Suggest that she:

- **Pick a topic** and come up with an opening sentence that tells what the paragraph is about. For example, "Gymnastics is the most challenging sport I have ever tried."
- **Select details** that support the topic sentence. They should explain why. "Keeping my footing on the balance beam took months to learn. Even after a year of practice, I still have trouble with my dismount."
- **Make sure each sentence** is related to the topic sentence. New ideas can be the start of new paragraphs.

Source: Susan Taylor Drumm, *Study Skills Grades 5-8*, ISBN: 0-88724-448-3 (Kelley Wingate Publications, 1-800-321-0943).

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

How well do you know your child's school?

How well do you know your child's school? Here are some interesting facts to check on: What are the school's colors? What is the school's mascot? Who is the principal? Who is the president of the parent organization? What is the school's Web site?

HEALTHY HABITS

Timers keep students on track

Your child's five minutes on the computer becomes an hour. Sound familiar? Try setting a timer for 15 minutes. When it goes off, so does the TV or computer. You can also try setting a timer for 45 minutes of homework. When it beeps, your child can have a 15-minute break.



Source: Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese, *The Roller Coaster Years*, ISBN: 0-553-06684 (Broadway Books, 1-800-726-0600, www.randomhouse.com/broadway).

BUILDING CHARACTER

Family volunteering benefits everyone

December offers many opportunities for volunteer work. Giving time as a family can build relationships and self-esteem. You might collect toys for homeless children or visit a nursing home. See what would mean the most to your child.



Source: Jan Benzel, "How to raise a grateful child," *Redbook*, December 2001 (Hearst Publishing, 1-800-888-0008, www.hearstcorp.com).