

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Lawton Middle School

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Is procrastination preventable?

Q: My daughter does everything at the last minute—homework, studying, projects and more! What can I do to help her?

A: Time management doesn't come naturally to middle schoolers. They need to learn about planning ahead.

These ideas can make a difference:

- **Insist on organization.** A child who doesn't keep her room, desk and backpack neat is likely to have trouble even finding her schoolwork.
- **Set some ground rules.** When will your child do her homework? For how long?
- **Practice prioritizing.** Suggest that your child list things she needs to do. Which are most important? Exactly when will she do them? Break big jobs into manageable parts.
- **Schedule free time.** Hanging out with friends, daydreaming and reading are great ways to relax and gain energy for more difficult tasks.
- **Stay on schedule.** If your child does the same thing every day (such as pack up schoolwork at night, put it by the front door, and go to bed at 9:00 p.m.), she'll settle into a helpful routine.
- **Cheer the progress your daughter makes.** Compliment her efforts whenever you can.



STUDY SKILLS

Use graphics to boost comprehension

By middle school, it's essential for students to understand pictures and tables that appear in textbooks and other materials. Sometimes these graphics are even included on tests.

Encourage your child to:

- **Read maps often.** Talk about them with your child. Let him be the "navigator" on family trips if he enjoys it.
- **Use the newspaper.** Have him read stories that contain graphics, such as charts and weather maps. Ask him how they add information or clarify ideas.
- **Create graphics.** Have him keep a record of something, such as how he spends his allowance. Have him make a chart that reflects the data.

Source: Marguerite C. Radencich and Jeanne Shay Schumm, *How to Help Your Child with Homework*, ISBN: 1-57542-006-06 (Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

BUILDING CHARACTER

Encourage your child to keep commitments

Middle schoolers can be fickle. Yesterday, your child was sure he wanted to take piano lessons. Today, they're "boring." Don't let him back out too easily. Kids need to learn to follow through on promises, even when they don't feel like it. Next time, he'll think more carefully about making a big commitment.

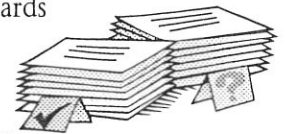
Source: Rosemarie Clark, Donna Hawkins and Beth Vachon, *The School-Savvy Parent*, ISBN: 1-57542-072-4 (Free Spirit Publishing, Inc, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

REINFORCING LEARNING

Help your child identify facts that need review

When your child needs to memorize information, flash cards can work wonders.

Each time she reviews, have her divide cards into two piles: "know it" and "don't know it." She should review the "don't know it" cards twice as often.



Source: Jonathan Mooney and David Cole, *Learning Outside the Lines*, ISBN: 068486598X (Fireside, 1-800-331-6531, www.simonsays.com).

COMPUTERS & THE INTERNET

School Web sites can help promote conversation

Ask a middle schooler what's going on at school and you might only get a grunt. Try checking the school's Web site. Use what you learn to communicate better with your child. You can also help keep your child informed.



Source: "... And Your Family," *Bottom Line Personal*, January 15, 2000 (Boardroom Inc., 1-800-274-5611, www.bottomlinepersonal.com).

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MIDDLE SCHOOL

COPING WITH MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

Expect a range of moods from your middle schooler

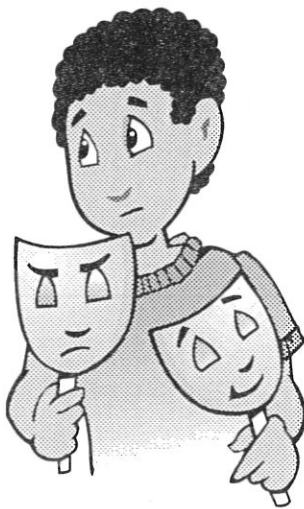
Moody middle schoolers can be frustrating and confusing. One moment they're happy, and the next they're angry. Middle schoolers get testy at home because:

- **They're comfortable with parents.** They often unload on the people with whom they feel safest.
- **They want to be grown up.** Some middle schoolers think they sound wise when they criticize parents.
- **They feel stressed.** Middle schoolers can be overwhelmed by the changes happening in their lives. They may respond with anger or sarcasm.

So how should parents react? The answers may surprise you:

- **Remember the past.** How did you feel and behave at your child's age? There's a good chance that you have some things in common.
- **Discuss solutions.** Instead of blowing up at your child, stay calm. Lead by example. Ask for his suggestions about how to improve things.
- **Be sympathetic.** You don't have to allow constant outbursts, but you can respond with love. "I know you feel horrible, and I want to help."

Source: Robin Goldstein with Janet Gallant, *Stop Treating Me Like a Kid!* ISBN: 0-14-017945-3 (Penguin Books USA Inc., 1-800-788-6262, www.penguinputnam.com).



PARENT QUIZ

Are you raising your child to be resilient?

Take this quiz to see if you're helping your child bounce back from difficult experiences. 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 identify emotions she's feeling.
2. I ask my child to suggest ideas to solve her problems.
3. I show my child that I have confidence in her.
4. I let my child pursue hobbies that make her happy.
5. I tell my child that mistakes are opportunities to learn.

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

"If you must hold yourself up to your children as an object lesson ... hold yourself up as an example and not as a warning."
— George Bernard Shaw

HELPING MIDDLE SCHOOLERS COPE

Understand your child's need for friendships

If your child asks to bring a friend on family outings, it doesn't mean she's rejecting you. Middle schoolers love their families, but they also need good friends. After all, only peers know what it's like to be a middle schooler these days. So be as understanding as possible of your child's desire for friends. Make them feel welcome. It will build your child's security and confidence—and mean the world to her.

Source: Donald E. Greydanus, *The American Academy of Pediatrics Caring For Your Adolescent Ages 12 to 21*, ISBN: 0-553-07556 (Bantam Books, 1-800-726-0600, www.randomhouse.com/doubleday).

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Plan to get things done

Sometimes the key to getting something done isn't doing it, it's planning to do it. To-do lists can help. Have your child note jobs and check them off when he's finished. If a task is particularly large or tough, help him figure out how to complete it in steps.

Source: Barbara A. Lewis, *Being Your Best*, ISBN: 1-57542-063-5 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Use everyday math to build your child's skills

Kids don't have to sit down with math books to build math skills. They can do everyday activities that require math. For example:

- Save and budget money.
- Halve or double recipes.
- Compare prices at stores.
- Measure things around the house.
- Build models.

Source: Shari Henry, *Homeschooling, The Middle Years*, ISBN: 0-7615-2092-9 (Prima Publishing, 1-800-726-0600, www.primapublishing.com).



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