

Helping Students Learn™

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

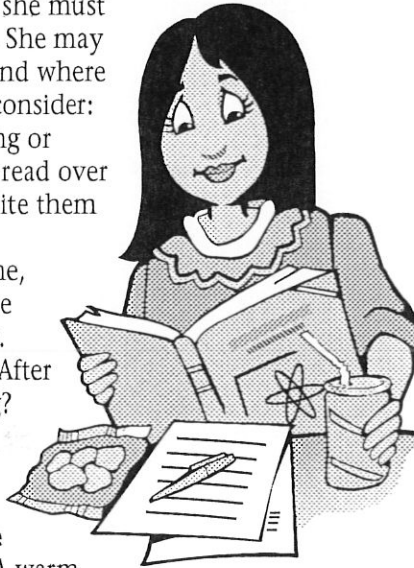
Lawton Middle School

HELPING MIDDLE SCHOOLERS COPE

How Does Your Child Learn Best?

Now that your child is in middle school, she must take more responsibility for her learning. She may find it helpful to determine how, when and where she works well. Here are some things to consider:

- **Does she learn best** by seeing, hearing or doing? For example, would she rather read over spelling words, spell them aloud or write them repeatedly?
- **Does she concentrate better** at home, at the library or someplace else? Maybe that's where she should do homework.
- **What time of day** is she most alert? After school, after dinner or in the morning?
- **Is she able to study** with someone else? Does soft background music relax or distract her?
- **What lighting and air temperature** does she prefer when concentrating? A warm softly lit room, for example, or a cool, bright one?
- **How often does she need a break?** Should she prepare small snacks ahead of time?



Once your child answers these questions, she will have a study profile of herself. If she sticks to what works best for her, she can improve homework habits.

Source: Ron Fry, *Get Organized*, 2000, Career Press, Inc.

REINFORCING LEARNING

Taking Good Notes Improves Grades

There is no substitute for taking good notes.

To take useful notes, your child needs to listen closely. Certain phrases hint at what might be on the test, such as "the main idea," "an important point" and "something to keep in mind." Sometimes a teacher repeats herself. If information is

Source: Susan Taylor Drumm, *Study Skills Grades 5-8*, 2002, Kelley Wingate Publications.

worth repeating, it's probably worth writing down.

Your child also needs to look closely. When the teacher puts something on the board, he should jot it down.

Nobody will catch everything the teacher says. If your child doesn't understand something, he should ask about it during or after class.

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Make Calculating Averages Interesting for Your Child

Averaging numbers is a skill your child will use throughout life. Give him plenty of opportunities to practice at home.

Choose a topic he likes, such as soccer. You might have him average the number of goals his team scores per game.

The key is to make averages seem interesting, not intimidating.

Source: Vito Perrone, *101 Educational Conversations with Your 6th Grader*, Chelsea House Publishers.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Use Responsibility Charts

Many kids have busy schedules. They want to remember their responsibilities, but they get over-

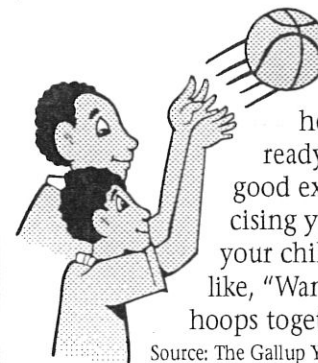
Responsibilities	
~~~~~	Nov. 4
~~~~~	Nov. 13
~~~~~	Nov. 17
~~~~~	Nov. 19
~~~~~	Nov. 25

whelmed. If your child has this problem, a simple wall chart can help. It should list priorities and due dates. You might find this idea so successful that you use it yourself!

Source: Barbara A. Lewis, *Being Your Best—Character Building for Kids 7-10*, 2000, Free Spirit Publishing.

## HEALTHY HABITS

### Promote Regular Exercise



Exercise has many health benefits. And

healthy kids are ready to learn. Set a good example by exercising yourself. Encourage your child by saying things like, "Want to shoot some hoops together?"

Source: The Gallup Youth Survey, "Most Teens Participate in Sports, But Younger Ones More So Than Older," *YouthViews*, March 1999, The George H. Gallup International Institute.

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Should Your Child Quit an Activity?

**Q:** My middle schooler loved being in the computer club at school. But suddenly he wants to quit. Should I let him?

**A:** The first step is to explore his reasons for wanting to drop this activity. Has he truly lost interest? Perhaps he's just upset because something happened with a classmate. Or maybe he has become self-conscious.

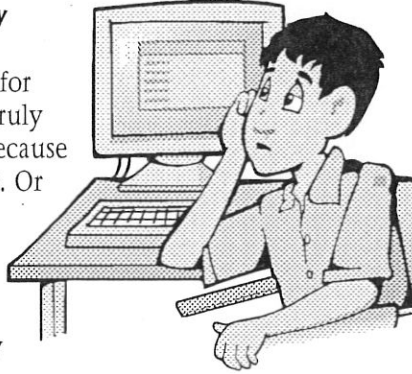
The latter is common at this age. Sometimes a middle schooler's changing body makes him feel awkward. Other times he's embarrassed by even the smallest mistake.

In these cases, encourage him not to give up. Talk about what he enjoys about the activity. Remind him that many people struggled at this age, but got through it.

Also talk with your child about what else he is doing. If he's involved in four activities, no wonder he wants to quit something. He may need to pick a favorite or two.

Finally, ask him if he made a promise. Does the club need him for an upcoming event? It's probably important for him to keep his word.

Source: Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese, *The Roller Coaster Years*, 1997, Broadway Books.



“The first duty of love is to listen.”

— Paul Tillich

## PARENT QUIZ

### Are You Encouraging Decision Making?

Middle schoolers want independence, so they need good decision-making skills. Here's a quiz to see if you're helping with this. Give yourself five points for something you do often, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

- |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>1. I allow my child</b> to make personal choices, such as how to spend her allowance.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>4. I let my child</b> choose a regular study time.          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>2. I talk with my child</b> about difficult decisions she might have to make.           | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>5. I give my child a say</b> in how she uses her free time. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>3. I teach my child</b> to consider all of her options and their possible consequences. |                                                                                         |

**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 decision-making abilities.

## WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

### Worried About Your Child? Ask for a Conference Now

Is your middle schooler mum about school activities? Do you want to know more about her academic progress? Consider contacting teachers. When families and staff work together, they make an unbeatable team.

Source: Vicki Poretta and Marian Edelman Borden, *Mom's Guide to Raising a Good Student*, 1997, Alpha Books.

## ENCOURAGING WRITING

### Writing Helps in Every Class

Kids should know that writing plays an important role in math and science, too.

For example, in math your child may need to write out a word problem. He'll have to use clear, understandable language.

In science, writing is part of nearly every experiment. Each one starts with a hypothesis (an educated guess) and ends with a conclusion (the result of the experiment).

Source: David K. Pugalee, Warren J. DiBiase and Karen D. Wood, "Writing and the Development of Problem Solving in Mathematics and Science," *Middle School Journal*, May 1999, National Middle School Association.

## ENCOURAGING READING

### Motivate Your Child to Read

Instead of just suggesting that your child read more, plan activities that get her excited about it. Make a deal with her. For example, you'll take her to the skating rink if she researches the history of ice skating as an Olympic sport.

Source: Marguerite C. Radencich and Jeanne Shay Schumm, *How to Help Your Child with Homework*, 1997, Free Spirit Publishing Inc.



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