

Helping Students Learn™

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Lawton Middle School

March

SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

Attitude Counts When Taking Tests

Even a student who is prepared for a test can do worse than expected if she has a poor attitude. One expert says a respectful, confident outlook is a key characteristic of students who are "testwise." Here are some tips for your child to remember:

- **Read instructions carefully.** Then read them again. Missing one word can make a difference. "Which of these statements is not true?" is quite different than, "Which of these statements is true?"
- **Be a good listener.** Sometimes directions are given orally. Your child wouldn't want to miss, "You have fifteen minutes, and then I need your papers."
- **Ask questions.** If your child doesn't understand something, she should speak up. Sometimes students find mistakes that teachers have made.
- **Relax.** Talk with a teacher or school counselor if your child's fear of tests affects grades. Using calming strategies can help.

Source: Sara Dulaney Gilbert, *How to Do Your Best on Tests*, 1998, BT Bound.



REINFORCING LEARNING

Strategies Aid Reading Comprehension

Reading is one thing. Understanding what you read is another. When middle schoolers can't grasp what they read, offer these suggestions:

- **Re-read** the material or read more slowly.
- **Discuss** confusing sections with someone.
- **Think** of questions to answer while reading.
- **Re-write** things in your own words.
- **Predict** what might happen in the text. Then see if you're right.
- **Connect** what is being read to what you already know. Ask questions like, "How does this relate to what I learned at school?" "What does this remind me of in my life?" "What has happened like this in history?"

Source: *Checkpoints for Progress in Reading and Writing for Families and Communities*, 1998, U.S. Department of Education.

DISCIPLINE

Be Consistent About Rules

Middle schoolers need more than rules. They need consistent rules. If you give in when your child pleads, "Just this once!" you're setting the stage for future begging.

Source: Gail A. Caissy, *Early Adolescence, Understanding the 10 to 15 Year Old*, 1994, Insight Books.

BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS



Put Out the Welcome Mat For Your Child's Friends

Love me, love my friends. That could be a middle schooler's motto. If you welcome your child's friends, you'll gain respect and learn more about him. Try to make your home "kid friendly" with snacks and fun games to encourage social gatherings.

Source: Wade F. Horn, Ph.D. and Carol Keough, *Better Homes and Gardens New Teen Book*, 1999, Meredith Books.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Well-Organized Students Keep 'To-Do' Lists Weekly

Taking on new responsibilities requires being organized. That's a lot to ask of a middle schooler. To-do lists can help.

Each Sunday night, have your child list goals for the week. Then make to-do lists on index cards. Your child can add to them at school as she receives assignments. Checking off tasks will give her a well-deserved sense of accomplishment.



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MIDDLE SCHOOL

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Do Some Research Before Getting A Professional Counselor

Q: My child is struggling in school. I think we should get professional help, but I don't know where to begin. What should I do?

A: Parents who have made the difficult decision to seek professional counseling for a child often feel alone. Ask a school guidance counselor you trust for names of respected therapists. And before you hire someone, pose questions like these:

- Are you licensed in your field?
- What is your professional background, including college and post-graduate work?
- Do you prefer a certain kind of therapy? (If yes, request an explanation of it.)
- What is the cost and payment arrangement?
- Do you accept my insurance plan?
- How much time will you need to spend with my child?
- How will I be involved?
- What is your experience with my child's particular problem?



After speaking with the therapist, you may feel more comfortable about getting help for your child. If that isn't the case, perhaps you haven't found the right professional. Unless it's an emergency, continue your search until you're fairly sure of a good match.

Source: Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D. and Ann Levine, *You and Your Adolescent, A Parent's Guide for Ages 10-20*, 1997, HarperCollins, Inc.

"The first duty of love is to listen."

— Paul Tillich

PARENT QUIZ

Are You Getting to Know Your Child by Spending Time Together?

Parents and kids need to learn about each other's lives. Here's a quiz to see if you and your child are doing this. Give yourself five points for something you always do, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

- ___ **1. I ask my child** about school regularly.
- ___ **2. I get to know** my child's friends.
- ___ **3. I talk with my child** about my life.
- ___ **4. I do my child's** favorite activities with her.
- ___ **5. I spend time** one-on-one with my child every day.

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 parent-child relationship.

TALKING AND LISTENING

Making Predictions Builds Adolescent Thinking Skills

A fun way to build thinking skills is to make predictions. Start by asking your child a question. "Based on what you've been hearing, who might win your class election?" Listen to her answer with interest. Ask follow-up questions, such as "Why?"

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

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Never Stop Expressing Love

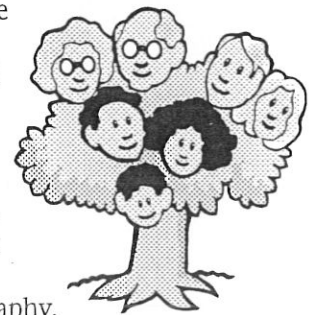
Does your child know you love him? Even if the answer is an enthusiastic "yes," you still need to tell him in a variety of ways. Spend time together. Give him compliments. Do special things for him. You can even get creative and write a note, poem or song about your feelings. And of course say "I love you" every day.

AFTER SCHOOL

Make History Come Alive For Your Middle Schooler

History is a fascinating subject. Here are some ways to help your child realize this:

- Talk about the year he was born.
- Explore your family tree.
- Read a biography.
- Research children's hobbies from the past.



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

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