

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Lawton Middle School

May

## ENCOURAGING READING

### Make Summer Reading Appealing By Offering a Variety of Selections

Summer is an important time for reading. Kids who read for information and pleasure have a better chance of being lifelong readers. But those who turn away from reading may not get back into the habit. Research shows that children are more likely to read if their favorite materials are available. Keep these on hand:

- Sports books and articles.
- Comic books or newspaper "funnies."
- Mysteries and detective stories.
- Biographies and autobiographies.
- Popular children's magazines.
- Historical fiction.
- How-to books.
- Books in a series.
- Novels about middle-school age kids.

Be sure to ask your child what she'd like to read. Then help her find it! Plan to spend regular afternoons at the library or bookstore.

Source: Louise Bates Ames, Frances L. Ilg and Sidney M. Baker, *Your Ten to Fourteen-Year-Old*, Dell Publishing.



## DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

### Include Your Child in Vacation Plans

Some middle schoolers don't think vacationing with parents is "cool." Many become miserable about it even before leaving the house! One solution is to let your child help with planning. Ask him to do something specific, such as:

- **Find driving directions** on the Internet.
- **Research places** to visit along the way.
- **Arrange for a friend** to watch pets or care for plants.

- **Make a grocery list** of snacks for the car.
- **Estimate** how much money to bring for food and gas.
- **Check out library books** (including some on audiotape) for the trip.
- **Brainstorm** about travel games and activities.

Be sure to thank your child for his efforts. Show your interest by asking questions. He'll enjoy being the family vacation "expert."

## DISCIPLINE

### Discipline With Age in Mind

Middle schoolers have new abilities when it comes to discipline. They can think more thoroughly about behaviors, for example. They may even be able to help choose appropriate consequences. Keep your child's skills in mind as you decide how to handle problems.

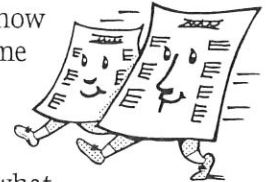
Source: "Smart Discipline for Every Age," Parents.com, [www.parents.com/articles/ages\\_and\\_stages/3277.jsp?page=7](http://www.parents.com/articles/ages_and_stages/3277.jsp?page=7).

## HEALTHY HABITS

### Walk Away Testing Stress

End-of-year tests can be stressful for kids, even those who are high achievers. So now might be a good time to start a family walking routine. Stroll along daily or weekly. Discuss whatever you like. This may reduce your child's stress . . . and improve your relationship!

Source: Henry J. Nicols and Susan Baum, "High Achievers: Actively Engaged but Secretly Stressed: Keys to Helping Youngsters with Stress Reduction," *Parenting for High Potential*, December 2000, National Association for Gifted Children.

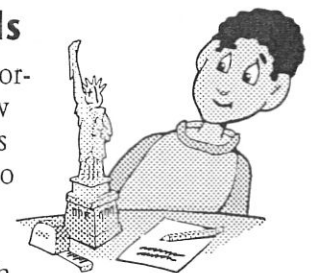


## AFTER SCHOOL

### Models Reinforce Math Skills

Ratios and proportions tell us how big something is in comparison to something else. Many students learn these math concepts in Middle School. You can help by encouraging your child to make and notice models of objects.

Source: Robin Cohen, "Math from the Toy Store," Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, [www.ency.org/topics/realworld/handson/document.shtm?input=FOC-000892-index](http://www.ency.org/topics/realworld/handson/document.shtm?input=FOC-000892-index).



# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

May

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Set Rules If Your Child Is Home Alone

**Q:** My middle schooler wants to stay at home with no supervision this summer. I'm not comfortable with that. How can we compromise?

**A:** It's fine to give a "thumbs down" to staying home unsupervised. But there are ways to build your child's independence and prepare him for later freedom. Discuss issues such as these:

- **What should your child do** if the doorbell rings?
- **How should your child respond** when a caller asks for you?
- **How long can he spend** tying up the phone line?
- **What foods can your child prepare** for himself?
- **Who can help your child** in an emergency? Together, make an "emergency contact" list.
- **What should your child do** if there is an emergency such as a fire or an accident?
- **How should your child stay safe** on the Internet? When is he permitted to use the computer?
- **What TV shows** may your child watch? What are the rules for TV viewing?
- **How is your child** handling current responsibilities? This is a sign of how he might handle new ones.



"The mark of a well educated person is not necessarily in knowing all the answers, but in knowing where to find them."  
— Douglas Everett

## PARENT QUIZ

### Are You Encouraging Summer Learning?

Education shouldn't end in the summer. Here's a quiz to see if you're helping your child combine learning and fun. Give yourself five points for something you do often, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

- \_\_\_ **1. I make reading** a priority in the summer.
- \_\_\_ **2. I suggest that my child** keep a summer journal.
- \_\_\_ **3. I give my child** new responsibilities during vacation.
- \_\_\_ **4. I ask my child** for activity ideas.
- \_\_\_ **5. I encourage my child** to try new things during the summer.

**How did you score?** Twenty or above is good. Fifteen to 19 is average. Below 15? Use the ideas in this quiz to improve summer learning.

## BUILDING CHARACTER

### Discourage Critical Remarks

Middle schoolers often take cues from peers. If friends talk negatively about other kids, it's tempting to do the same thing.

You want your child to think twice before saying something hurtful to you or anyone else. So make this rule: If she is critical of someone, she must also say two nice things about that person.

This rule can help you too. Keep in mind that parents should always compliment much more than they criticize.

Source: Rose Ingraldi, "Put-Ups," Works4Me Weekly Classroom Tips E-Mail, September 28, 2001, National Education Association.

## REINFORCING LEARNING

### Share Tips for Test Success

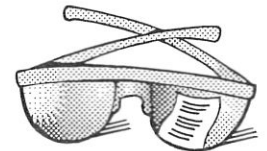
Share this test-taking strategy with your child: Go through and answer easy questions first. Mark hard questions and come back to them later. That way you won't run out of time before answering all the questions you know.

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

## COPING WITH MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

### Eliminate Summer Boredom

Does your middle schooler complain of boredom? It's fine to provide ideas. But it's also good to encourage his creativity. Give him some questions to start with. For example, what personal experience could he write about? What hobby could he read about? What scene could he draw or paint?



## Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.  
Executive Editor: Jeff Peters. Senior Editor: Betsie Ridnour.  
Editor: Patricia Hodgdon. Writer: Susan O'Brien.  
Head of Translations: Michelle Beal.  
Staff Editor: Rebecca Miyares. Editorial Assistant: Pat Carter.  
Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.  
Copyright © 2004, The Parent Institute<sup>®</sup>, a division of NIS, Inc.  
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474  
1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1526-9272