

MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT NEWSLETTER

TIPS, IDEAS, AND ADVICE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Here are some questions to ask your student this month.

- ▶ What are you looking forward to in the new year ahead?
- ▶ What's something you would like to do with your friends or family during winter break?
- ▶ What is your favorite family holiday tradition?
- ▶ Can you think of something kind you can do for another person?



GLOBAL CELEBRATIONS

Depending on the demographics of your area and school, your student probably shares classes with students who celebrate holidays other than Christmas, or you may observe a different holiday in your own home. Here are some facts and information about some of the most common cultural celebrations:

- ▶ **Hanukkah:** Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday that lasts a total of eight nights during November and/or December. Each night, people exchange gifts, food, and prayer, and light a symbolic set of candles called a menorah.
- ▶ **Kwanzaa:** Kwanzaa begins on December 26th each year and lasts for a total of seven days. It was first celebrated in 1966 and was established as a way for African-Americans to acknowledge and celebrate heritage, family, and culture.
- ▶ **Diwali:** Known as the “festival of lights,” Diwali is a major Hindu holiday. Diwali occurs in October or November and lasts for five days. During this time, celebrants pray, watch fireworks, eat lavish meals, exchange gifts, and visit with family.
- ▶ **Ramadan:** Ramadan is the most sacred month of the Islamic calendar, and is usually celebrated in April and/or May. During the month of Ramadan, people fast, gather, pray, and abstain from activities that bring pleasure. The month ends with the celebration of Eid Mubarak, the breaking of the fast.

TOLERANCE & DIVERSITY

Building a world that values tolerance and diversity starts with education, especially at a time of year when many students celebrate their religion or heritage in different ways. Take the time to discuss the following important concepts with your child.

- ▶ **Stereotyping:** Stereotyping is a generalized belief about a category of people. Stereotyping is harmful because it contributes to the belief that all the people in a certain group are “all the same.” This failure to see people as individuals can lead to prejudice and discrimination.
- ▶ **Prejudice and discrimination:** Prejudice is a negative attitude about a group of people. Discrimination is acting on that belief, such as not hiring someone for a job solely because they are a member of a particular group.
- ▶ **Privilege:** Privilege does not mean your life has been easy, or that you haven’t worked hard. It simply means that your life has not been made more difficult by something you cannot control, such as the color of your skin.

CHARACTER MATTERS: GENEROSITY

People often consider the time around the holidays to be a “season of giving,” but encouraging your student to develop a generous spirit year-round is one of the best gifts you can give them.

Generosity is not just about giving gifts. It is also about giving time, showing love and acceptance towards others, and even sharing one’s natural gifts and talents.

Fostering generosity in your student can be as simple as encouraging them to rake leaves for a neighbor, devoting time to a charity as a family, or simply spending an afternoon with an elderly friend, neighbor, or family member.

CAREER CORNER

Being fluent in another language is a marketable skill that is highly sought-after in many careers. Encourage your student to take more than the required number of foreign language courses in high school, and to consider adding a foreign language as a minor in college.

FAMILY FUN: LEARN ABOUT HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Active learning is learning that engages students in the learning process, such as through exploring personal interests, problem-solving, and asking and answering questions.

This month, you can engage your student in active learning about the origin of a holiday tradition that you practice in your home, such as putting up and decorating a tree, going caroling, giving gifts, sharing a specific meal, or anything else your family traditionally does over the holidays. Being able to find the answers to questions is a skill that your child will use throughout their life.

