

MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT NEWSLETTER

TIPS, IDEAS, AND ADVICE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Here are some questions to ask your child this month.

- ▶ What is the best part of your school day?
- ▶ What are you learning in math now?
- ▶ What new friends have you made?
- ▶ Is there anything you'd like some extra help with?



STAYING SAFE TO AND FROM SCHOOL

You and your child are probably so used to the routine of traveling to and from school that neither of you give it much thought anymore. But whether your child walks, bikes, or rides to school, make sure that your child is taking basic safety precautions.

- ▶ If your child walks to school, encourage him/her to walk with other students rather than alone. Remind your child to always be alert and not to wear earbuds or headphones.
- ▶ If your child rides a bike to school, make sure he/she has a properly fitting helmet and easy to see clothing.
- ▶ If your child rides the bus, remind him/her to always obey the bus driver, and to be especially mindful of other drivers when getting on and off the bus.
- ▶ If your child rides to school in a car, insist that he/she always wears a seat belt.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Never assume your child already knows basic safety procedures, especially when it comes to being near roads and moving vehicles. Regularly check in with your child and remind him/her to stay safe.

HELP YOUR CHILD CREATE A STUDY PLAN

Your child most likely has regular homework. Having a plan for getting homework done can go a long way in keeping your child organized and less stressed.

Help your child decide when is the best time to do homework. Some students want to get their homework done right after school. Others want to take a break and do their homework later. Help your child determine the best time to do homework, and create a schedule that makes homework a part of your child's daily routine.

Think about anything that might interrupt your child's study plan. For instance, if your child is easily distracted, turn off the TV and make homework time a quiet time in your household. If your child has a tendency to procrastinate, make a "no TV or screen time" rule until homework is done.

EVERYDAY ACTIVE LEARNING

Active learning is learning that engages a child in the learning process (e.g., exploring personal interests, problem solving, asking and answering questions).

This month's active learning tip is to watch something educational and discuss it with your child. Whether it's a nature documentary on TV or a science YouTube video, learning something together is a great way to spend quality time with your child.

- ▶ For ideas on educational programming, check out commonsensemedia.org.
- ▶ Discuss what you've learned, and if it's a subject your child is interested in, go online to learn more.

SMART STUDYING

When doing homework, encourage your child to alternate between subjects and types of assignments. For example, your child might start with reading a language arts assignment, switch to math, and then read a social studies assignment.

TIPS FOR READING A TEXTBOOK

Reading a textbook is much different than reading a short story or novel. Here are some tips for helping your child get the most out of textbook reading assignments.

- ▶ Make sure your child pays extra attention to words in **bold** and *italic* print. These are usually important terms.
- ▶ Reading a textbook requires more focus and concentration. Remind your child to read textbooks more slowly.
- ▶ After completing a reading assignment, encourage your child to take a few minutes to review what he/she has learned. *Review is the key to learning!*



SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT: FACEBOOK

Young people generally use social media for fun, entertainment, and as a way to connect with their friends. Social media, however, presents opportunities that parents should be aware of, and look out for.

What You Need to Know

While less popular with young people nowadays, Facebook remains the most popular social media platform worldwide.

- ▶ **Features:** Facebook users can post, share, and comment on videos, pictures, articles, and links. They can also chat privately using Facebook Messenger.
- ▶ **What to look out for:** Inappropriate photos and posts can be shared and seen by anyone. Young people can engage with strangers in comment sections and Messenger, and join private or even secret Facebook groups.
- ▶ **What you can do:** Know what apps your child is using, and ask your child to show you how he/she is using them. Insist on transparency.



ADJUSTING TO NEW SOCIAL SITUATIONS

The start of a new year can be stressful. In addition to new teachers and classes, students also have new classmates and social situations to deal with. Even the most outgoing children sometimes have a hard time adjusting. Here's how you can help.

Talk about ways to break the ice. Many children are naturally talkative, but if your child has a hard time jumping into conversations or play, offer your child suggestions for befriending other kids, such as complimenting their shirt or bookbag—or by asking a question. You can even practice at home if it will help your child be more comfortable. And remind your child that sometimes it takes a while to make new friends.

Be supportive. Like adults, children often suffer from insecurity (“*they won’t like me*”). Help build your child’s confidence by complimenting his/her actions and skills, and by helping your child develop his/her interests and talents.

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Model calm behavior

Children can sometimes be challenging on the best of days, but if you’re able to model behavior that defuses a frustrating situation, you will be teaching your child by example.

When your child is being especially challenging, walk away, take a deep breath, or calmly explain why you’re frustrated. Show your child positive ways to deal with anger/frustration.

*“Nothing you do
for children is ever
wasted.”*

Garrison Keillor

CAREER CORNER

Your child likely understands the progression of education from elementary school through middle and high school, but he/she might not know what happens after that.

Talk about four-year colleges, two-year colleges, and career and trade schools—and about how each can prepare students for a career.

BONDING WITH YOUR CHILD: FUN THINGS TO SHARE AND DO

A strong parental bond is key to student success!

Spend time together

- ▶ Cook something together. Make homemade pizzas, brownies, cookies, or bake a cake.
- ▶ Get in the car, turn on some music, and drive someplace new. Have lunch in a place you've never been before, or visit a store you've never been to.

CHARACTER MATTERS: ADAPTABILITY

Young students sometimes have trouble being adaptable—being able to deal with uncertainty or change.

Remind your child that things don't always go the way we expect them to, and explain how this can be a good thing because it can help us grow. Talk about times that you've had to adapt to new circumstances or deal with change.

Also, don't hesitate to share with your child times when you've found it difficult to deal with new situations.

Q&A: QUALITY TIME

- Q:** During the school year, weekdays at our house are really hectic. Between work, homework, and activities, I feel like it's hard to spend quality time together as a family. How can I make the most of the time we spend together?
- A:** When life is hectic and everyone is busy, focus on making the time you spend together meaningful. The best way to do this is to turn things you're already doing into quality time that you spend together. Here are some ideas.
- ▶ Have your child help you prepare dinner. He/she can help with washing, chopping, stirring, and more.
 - ▶ Have conversations while driving to and from places. Talk about your day while driving your child home from school or to after school activities.
 - ▶ Build quality time into your routine, such as reading a book together at the same time every night, or always playing a board game after dinner.

