

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 do you want to do for Halloween?
- ▶ Who have you been hanging out with lately?
- ▶ What's your favorite season? Why?
- ▶ Do your teachers or your counselor ever talk about bullying?



FOCUS ON BULLYING

October is National Bullying Month, which means it's a good time to review what bullying is—and to check in with your child about how he/she is getting along at school.

Talk to your child about bullying and remind him/her to tell you or an adult at school if he/she sees any of the following:

- ▶ **Physical bullying** – hurting someone physically (kicking, hitting, shoving, etc.) or damaging their property
- ▶ **Verbal bullying** – teasing, name calling, or making embarrassing comments
- ▶ **Social bullying** – spreading rumors or purposely excluding someone
- ▶ **Cyberbullying** – using technology (e.g., text messages, social media) to harass, intimidate, or embarrass someone

If your child ever tells you he/she is being bullied, take it seriously. Find out exactly what's happened, who was involved, and when it happened. Consider discussing this with your child's teacher or principal.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Ask your child if he/she has ever witnessed bullying at school. If so, ask your child to tell you about it. How did it make your child feel? Did anyone intervene? Has anything like that ever happened to him/her?

IMPROVING MATH TEST SCORES

Here are some tips to help your student perform his/her best on math tests.

- ▶ Before you start a problem, try to estimate what the answer will be.
- ▶ If you're having difficulty with a problem, try drawing a picture or diagram.
- ▶ Don't spend too much time on one problem. If you get stumped, move on and come back to it later.
- ▶ Show all of your work. Even if you get the wrong answer, you may get points if you were on the right track.
- ▶ If you have time, double check your work.

If you or your child need help with a math problem or skill, visit [khanacademy.org](https://www.khanacademy.org). This website has many excellent free online math videos.

Know that your attitude about math is contagious. If you say that you don't like math or aren't good at it, your child is more likely to do the same. Make sure your child knows that math is a skill that's learned, not a skill someone is born with.

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 play a fun Halloween-themed game.

Here is an easy word game for the whole family to play. Have a competition to see who can find the most words in the phrase "Happy Halloween" (e.g., hall, new, owl).

Check online for more fun family Halloween game ideas.

SMART TEST TAKING

When taking a test, encourage your child to check all his/her answers, even the ones your child knows are correct. He/she may have made a careless mistake. Remind your child to always use all the time provided.

PREPARING FOR TEST DAY

Taking tests can be scary, especially if your child feels pressure to do well in school. Here's how you can help your child feel prepared.

Encourage your child to start studying early. As soon as your child finds out about a test or quiz, he/she should start studying.

Offer to help. Ask your child if there is anything he/she needs help understanding, or if it would be helpful for you to quiz him/her on anything.

Help your child relax. If your child gets nervous before a test, encourage him/her to take deep breaths (breathe in, count to four, breathe out) until he/she feels calmer.



TALKING ABOUT BULLYING

Remind your child that while we don't have control over another's actions, we do have a choice as to how we respond.

Hopefully your child will never have to deal with a bully, but it's good for you to have a discussion about what he/she should do—just in case.

Tell your child to do the following if another student is ever harassing him/her:

- ▶ Ignore the bully or just walk away.
- ▶ Speak up. In a clear voice, tell the bully to stop what he/she is doing.
- ▶ Tell someone – you, a teacher, the principal, or a counselor. It's not tattling. It's standing up for what's right.
- ▶ Know that if you're being bullied, it's not your fault and you're not to blame.

If your child tells you he/she is being harassed, have your child explain what has happened, who was involved, how often it occurred, when, and where. Make printouts of anything sent or posted online.

Listen, be supportive, and together discuss how to best handle the situation.



WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS A BULLY

Finding out your child is bullying others can be upsetting and stressful—and your first reaction might be to get angry or defensive. Just remember that good kids sometimes make mistakes.

Here are some tips for navigating this tough situation.

- ▶ Take it seriously and don't make excuses.
- ▶ Listen to your child's explanations, but emphasize that there are always other options, no matter what the provocation.
- ▶ Avoid criticizing, blaming, and yelling. Be loving and firm, and focus on solutions.
- ▶ Discuss the consequences of bullying, and hold your child accountable. Allow your child to experience the consequences.

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Limit Your Phone Time

This month, try to limit the amount of time you're on your phone in front of your child. Whenever you're with your child, make an effort to be fully present, and as much as possible, keep your phone use limited to times when your child isn't around.

“Parenting is providing the conditions in which a child can realize his or her full potential.”

Gordon Neufield

CAREER CORNER

Look for ways your child's personality and interests might translate to a career. For instance, if your child enjoys math, find opportunities to talk about how people in different careers use math (e.g., carpenter, doctor, banker).

BONDING WITH YOUR CHILD: FUN THINGS TO SHARE AND DO

A strong parental bond is key to student success!

Stories to share

- ▶ Remind your child of some of the Halloween costumes he/she wore when he/she was little.
- ▶ Talk about what Halloween was like when you were a kid. Talk about your favorite costumes, traditions, and what trick-or-treating was like where you grew up.

CHARACTER MATTERS: EMPATHY

You've probably heard The Golden Rule—treat others how you'd like to be treated. It can, however, be helpful to take it a step further and teach your child to not just treat others in a way *he/she* would want, but to be aware of how *others* want to be treated.

For example, something that might not bother your teen could be very upsetting to someone else. Encourage your child to pay attention to how others react to his/her actions, even if he/she thinks these actions are okay or harmless.

THINK ABOUT IT: TALKING ABOUT BULLYING

Think about the following questions as they relate to you and your child.

- ▶ Have you talked to your child about the different types of bullying?
- ▶ Have you asked your child if he/she has ever witnessed bullying or has been bullied him/herself?
- ▶ Have you talked to your child about what to do if another student is harassing or bothering him/her?

If you answered "no" to any of the above questions, take time to have a conversation with your child about bullying. Make it clear that bullying is wrong, and that it is never justified.

Let your child know that he/she can talk to you about any problem—whether it's about bullying or something else. You are there to help.

