

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's the most fun thing you've done this year?
- ▶ What's something you'd like to do during the holiday break?
- ▶ If you could have one wish, what would it be?
- ▶ What are you most looking forward to about the holidays?



CHECKING IN ON YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS

December is approximately halfway through the school year, so now is a good time to check on your child's progress in school. Consider these questions.

- ▶ How many school days has your child missed this year so far? Keep in mind that frequent absences negatively impact a student's academic performance.
- ▶ Are there any subjects your child is struggling in?
- ▶ Is your child completing homework correctly and on time? Does it seem like your student has too much homework? Too little?
- ▶ How is your child getting along with his/her peers at school?
- ▶ Has your student adjusted well to his/her classes and teachers this year?

If any of these questions raise concerns, contact your child's teachers.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Check in with your child every few days to see how things are going in school. Ask questions that require more than one word answers. Instead of "How was school?" ask questions such as "What's something interesting you learned today?" or "What's that book about?"

IMPROVING MEMORIZATION SKILLS

Effective memory strategies can help improve your child's memorization skills. Use these tips to help your child memorize the information he/she needs to know and remember.

Use all the senses. For example, if your child needs to remember a vocabulary word, have your child close his/her eyes, visualize the word, say it out loud, and then write it down.

Create silly sentences. Show your child how to use the first letter of the words he/she needs to remember to make up a silly, ridiculous sentence. For example, to remember the names of the planets you could make up a silly sentence like, "My very elegant mother juggled seven ugly neckties." (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune).

Review often. If your child has something to memorize, encourage your child to work on it, take a break, and go back and review it. Remind your child to keep reviewing until he/she knows it. *Review is the key to remembering anything.*

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 help your child research the origin of a holiday tradition, such as Christmas trees, caroling, giving gifts, 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 his/her life.

READ TO LEARN

Encourage your child to get in the habit of reviewing what he/she has read. This means taking a few minutes after reading an assignment to go back and look over it again. Review is the key to learning!

GETTING HELP

Teach your child to recognize when he/she needs help, and to then reach out for assistance.

Encouraging middle schoolers to do things for themselves is important for their social-emotional development, but when it comes to schoolwork, it's also important for students to be honest about their abilities, and to ask for help when they need it.

For example, if your child comes to you with a question about homework, tell him/her that you're proud of him/her for knowing when to ask for help, and work together to figure out the problem. *You should, of course, never do your child's homework for him/her; instead, ask your child questions to guide him/her to the answer.*



SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT: INSTAGRAM

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

- ▶ **Features:** Instagram users can post, share, and comment on pictures and videos. They can also chat privately using the DM (direct message) function.
- ▶ **What to look out for:** Users can easily view inappropriate photos and videos. Young people can also engage with strangers in comment sections and with direct messages, including sending and receiving “disappearing” photos.

Also, seeing just the best and most fun, exciting snippets of other young people’s lives can have a negative impact on a teen’s mental health.
- ▶ **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.



HELPING YOUR CHILD COMMUNICATE WITH PEERS

Because middle schoolers’ emotions are often in flux, sometimes communication between peers can go less than smoothly. Here’s how you can help.

Teach your child to talk about his/her feelings in a calm manner. For example, “*I don’t agree with that*” is better than “*That was really a stupid thing to say.*” Encourage your child to practice responding to others respectfully, and expressing emotions and opinions in a calm, confident tone of voice.

Remind your child that even friends disagree sometimes, and that’s okay. Teach your child what it means to compromise and problem solve. Instead of reacting with negative emotion (e.g., yelling, saying something hurtful), encourage your child to think about what he/she wants from a situation—and about how he/she can best achieve it. (*Sonia wanted to hang out with other friends this weekend. That’s ok. I’ll call Olivia to see if we can do something together.*)

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Read together every day

Whether it’s reading the same book separately, taking turns reading pages of a book, or just reading a book or magazine while your child reads a book for school, reading together sends your child a message that reading is important to you and your family.

*“Children are living
messages we send to
a time we will not see.”*

Neil Postman

CAREER CORNER

Focus on Language Arts-related careers.

Discuss how people in language-arts related careers (e.g., librarians, lawyers, authors, reporters) use reading and writing every day. Throughout the month look for opportunities to point out how the people you see use language arts in their careers.

BONDING WITH YOUR CHILD: FUN THINGS TO SHARE AND DO

A strong parental bond is key to student success!

Fun facts to share with your child

- ▶ Tinsel was once made with real silver.
- ▶ Jingle Bells was the first song played in space.

Spend time together

- ▶ Do something charitable as a family this month. Serve meals at a homeless shelter, walk dogs for a pet adoption center, or help out an elderly neighbor.

CHARACTER MATTERS: PATIENCE

Many children (and adults) have a hard time being patient. Help your child be more patient by complimenting patient behaviors, such as quietly waiting his/her turn for something.

Be a good role model for your child by showing him/her how to be patient, even in frustrating situations. For instance, if you're waiting in a long line with your child at the grocery store, rather than letting your frustration show, relax and take the opportunity to have a conversation with him/her.

THINK ABOUT IT: ATTENDANCE HABITS

Think about the following questions:

- ▶ Does your child attend school every day unless he/she is ill?
- ▶ Is your child in school on time every day?
- ▶ Is getting your child to school each day a top priority in your home?

Middle school attendance is extremely important for academic success. If you answered "no" to any of these questions, take steps to improve your child's attendance.

Having good morning and nighttime routines will make it easier for your child to get to school each day. Help your child get everything he/she will need for the next day ready the night before, including clothes and backpack. Make sure your child gets to bed early, has a morning routine that includes eating a good breakfast and getting out the door on time. If you need help getting your child to school, talk to your child's counselor or principal.

