

# 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 are you looking forward to this year?
- ▶ What's your favorite thing about winter?
- ▶ What do you want to get better at this year?
- ▶ What kinds of things would you like us to do together more?



## TOLERANCE & DIVERSITY

Building a world that values tolerance and diversity starts with education. 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, like the color of your skin.

## TALK ABOUT IT!

Talking about these concepts can be uncomfortable, and may even make some feel a bit defensive. And that's okay. This process is about helping your child learn and grow, and about using new understandings to be more tolerant and accepting of differences.

## SETTING GOALS

Setting goals will help your child understand your expectations, and give your child something positive to work toward.

Encourage your child to set goals that are specific, measurable, and realistic.

- ▶ **Not Specific:** I will do better in math.
- ▶ **Specific:** I will get a B in math this semester.
  
- ▶ **Not Measurable:** I won't be so shy in class.
- ▶ **Measurable:** I will raise my hand 3 times today.
  
- ▶ **Not Realistic:** I usually get all Cs on my report card, but this semester I will get straight As.
- ▶ **Realistic:** I usually get all Cs on my report card, but this semester I'm going to get two Bs.

Help your child set one academic goal and one personal goal for this term. For example, the academic goal could be about getting a certain grade in a class, or always having all homework done by 7:00.

## 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 involve your child in preparing meals. Cooking gives your child the opportunity to practice the kinds of math he/she has been learning since elementary school. It's also a great bonding opportunity.

- ▶ Let your child measure ingredients, set timers, and help you figure out how to double or half a recipe.
- ▶ Consider letting your child take the lead on a few simple recipes.

## SHORT AND LONG TERM GOALS

Encourage your child to make both short-term goals (goals that can be achieved in a few hours or days) and long-term goals (goals that will take weeks or months to achieve). Talk about how short-term goals can help you achieve your long-term goals.

## BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Whether your child likes to write or would rather do almost anything else, he/she will have to write lots of papers in the future. Here's how you can help your child build his/her writing skills.

- ▶ Make sure your child understands the assignment. Have him/her explain to you exactly what the assignment requires.
- ▶ Remind your child that writing is a process—and to start early so that he/she has time to revise and rewrite.
- ▶ Encourage your child to re-read his/her writing out loud. This is a great way to catch mistakes.



## SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT: TWITTER & SNAPCHAT

### Twitter

Twitter is known as a “microblogging” site, as posts are limited to 280 characters.

- ▶ **Features:** Twitter users can view, share, and comment on Tweets (short 280-character messages). Tweets can include photos, videos, or links as well.
- ▶ **What to look out for:** Twitter allows a wider range of content to be shared on its platform than either Facebook or Instagram. For example, Tweets may include violence or pornography.

### Snapchat

Most popular for fun photo filters, Snapchat is a favorite platform of young people.

- ▶ **Features:** Snapchat users can post photo “stories,” or pictures and videos that disappear after 24 hours. Private chat messages (and photos shared in them) also disappear after an allotted time. If users screenshot conversations, the other user is notified.
- ▶ **What to look out for:** Because of the disappearing photo aspect, Snapchat is also known for “sexting” (sharing sexually explicit photos). Users’ locations can also be shared as well.



## BUILDING DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

Young people can be so used to having all their decisions made and their needs dealt with that they aren’t as equipped for adulthood as they could be. Here’s how you can help.

**Give your child some control.** Allowing young people to make their own decisions helps them develop confidence in themselves, which makes them less likely to succumb to peer pressure. Just make sure your middle schooler knows that you’ll always be there for support—just in case he/she makes the wrong decision.

**Let your child earn freedom.** Your middle schooler may want to have more social freedom, and you may be unsure as to how much freedom is appropriate for him/her to have. Let your child earn the freedoms he/she wants by granting them little by little based on responsible behavior.

## MONTHLY CHALLENGE

### Teach responsibility

Involve your child in household chores. Whether it’s helping set the table, carrying in the groceries, or watering the plants, helping with household responsibilities (no matter how small) can empower children to be more confident and responsible.

*“There are two great things that you can give your children: one is roots, the other is wings.”*

*Hodding Carter*

## CAREER CORNER

Have your child talk to a friend or family member about his/her career. Help your child come up with a couple of questions ahead of time. *What do you do? What skills does one need for this career? What do you like about your career? What do you dislike about it?*

## BONDING WITH YOUR CHILD: FUN THINGS TO SHARE AND DO

A strong parental bond is key to student success!

### Spend time together

- ▶ On the weekend, have a family movie marathon where each family member chooses one movie for everyone to watch.

### Fun facts to share with your child

- ▶ Giraffes use their long tongues to clean their ears.
- ▶ It takes eight minutes for the sun's light to reach earth.

## CHARACTER MATTERS: RESPONSIBILITY

Help your child understand that responsibility is doing what you say you're going to do—even when it's difficult. Ask your child if he/she knows why it's important to be responsible.

Give your child opportunities to act responsibly. Give him/her chores to do, rules to follow, and tasks to complete. Discuss the importance of being responsible and whenever possible, let your child know how much you appreciate being able to count on him/her.

## Q&A: SAFETY DRILLS

**Q:** My daughter has mentioned having lockdowns at school. I've tried asking her about them, but she doesn't really like talking about them. What exactly are lockdowns, and how should I talk to my daughter about them?

**A:** Lockdown drills help students practice what to do in case there is a dangerous situation at school. Whenever your school has a safety drill, ask your child to tell you about the procedures, and to describe what happened. This will give you an opportunity to help him/her put the drill in perspective.

Safety drills are designed to help keep students safe, but unfortunately, they can cause anxiety in some students. Ask your child if she finds safety drills upsetting in any way. If these drills seem to be affecting your daughter, reassure her that they are completely precautionary.

If your child seems to be overly anxious or concerned about his/her safety, listen, be supportive, and talk to your child's teacher, counselor, principal, or physician.

