

# MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT NEWSLETTER

TIPS, IDEAS, AND ADVICE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

## CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Here are some questions to ask your child this month.

- ▶ How much do you use computers at school?
- ▶ What's your favorite subject?
- ▶ Do you think students should be allowed to have cell phones in school? Why or why not?
- ▶ Why do you think teachers give homework?



## PROMOTING SMART TECHNOLOGY USE

Young people are spending more and more time using technology, and it's changing the way they grow up. From cyberbullying and inappropriate posts to internet overuse, parents and educators are rightly concerned about how to maximize the benefits of technology while minimizing the risks. Here's what you can do.

- ▶ Discuss what information is appropriate (and inappropriate) to share on social media. Emphasize that cyberbullying and sexually suggestive posts and messages are never acceptable.
- ▶ Have your child show you a favorite app. Ask your child why he/she likes that app. This is a good way to keep the lines of communication open, and to see where your child is going online.
- ▶ Monitor your child's game playing. Some of the games on the internet contain explicit violence, mature language, and sexual content, as well as exposure to strangers.

## TALK ABOUT IT!

Discuss the benefits and dangers of the internet, and make sure your child knows that people online may not be who they say they are. Remind your child never to give out personal information, such as name, address, phone number, or school.

## MONITORING HOMEWORK

Parents need to monitor homework; however, students must learn to keep track of their own assignments and be responsible for completing their own homework.

- ▶ Be available to help your child organize his/her homework. Also be available to help your child study for quizzes and tests.
- ▶ If your child gets stuck or needs help, go over the assignment and try to explain anything that seems confusing.
- ▶ If your child has a tendency to rush through homework in order to get it done, insist that you look over all completed homework.
- ▶ If homework seems excessive, or if your child seems to struggle with homework, contact the teacher and express your concerns.

## 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 turn grocery shopping into a fun learning experience. Grocery shopping, which is an everyday chore for adults, can provide valuable learning opportunities for middle schoolers.

- ▶ Involve your child in the shopping list planning. You may assign particular household items as your child's responsibility to monitor and put on the grocery list when they run out.
- ▶ Have your child help you determine which item is the better value – the larger, more expensive box or the smaller, less expensive one.

## ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Your child needs to be in school on time every day, unless he/she is ill. Attendance is the number one school success factor!

## CREATING A HOMEWORK SCHEDULE

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. For instance, decide if the best time for homework is after school, before dinner, or early evening—then encourage your child to stick to the schedule.

If your child struggles with homework, have your own project to work on while your child is doing homework. If you're doing the dishes or reading nearby, you will be available if your child needs help.



## TALKING TO YOUR CHILD: COMMUNICATION TIPS

Communicating with middle schoolers can be challenging at times. But because it's so important, parents need to make the extra effort.

**Timing is important.** Be available to listen when your child wants to talk, and find times when your child is most likely to be open to conversation (e.g., after getting home from school or before going to bed). A particularly good time to talk is when you're driving in the car. It's quiet, no one can leave, and you're already spending time together.

**Tell your child what you want done, instead of what you don't want done.** For example, instead of saying, "Don't leave your backpack on the floor," say, "Please put your backpack in your room."

**Ask open-ended questions that require more than one word answers.** Instead of asking, "How was school?" say, "Tell me about your day," or ask, "What are you learning in math?"



## HELPING YOUR CHILD DEVELOP CONFIDENCE

Confident children are more independent and less afraid of challenges and new situations. Here's how you can help your child build confidence.

- ▶ Give your child a small job to do each day, such as setting the table or putting clothes away-- and make sure the task is completed. It's important for children to learn to finish what they start.
- ▶ Let your child make choices. Allow him/her to have control over his/her appearance (within reason).
- ▶ Consider your child's interests and look for groups and activities he/she might enjoy. Also look for social opportunities with family and friends.

## MONTHLY CHALLENGE

### Be interested

At least a couple of times a week, ask your child how things are going in school, what he/she is feeling proud of, and what he/she is having a tough time with.

*"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said." Pete Drucker*

## CAREER CORNER

Talk to your child about what you wanted to do for a career when you were his/her age. Talk about how your goals have changed over the years.

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

A strong parental bond is key to student success!

### Spend time together

- ▶ Go to your local nursery or lawn and garden store and get some seeds, flowers, or vegetable plants to grow this coming spring.

### Activities to try

- ▶ Valentines Day presents a great opportunity for a fun, creative craft project—and there's a wealth of ideas online. Together with your child, search "Valentine Day craft ideas." Let your child pick one for you to do together.

## CHARACTER MATTERS: HONESTY

Find opportunities to talk to your child about the importance of honesty. Ask your child why he/she thinks being honest is important.

Discuss how sometimes it's difficult to be honest, and talk about a time when it was difficult for you to be honest. Ask your child to do the same. Also talk about how it feels when someone isn't honest with you.

## THINK ABOUT IT: TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR HOME

Think about the following as they relate to your child.

- ▶ If given the choice, does your child always choose activities involving technology – watching TV, playing video games, or watching videos online?
- ▶ Does your child get upset if he/she does not have access to technology?
- ▶ Are you concerned about the amount of time your child spends using technology?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, set limits and provide guidelines to make sure your child is using technology in a healthy, responsible way.

Set times to "unplug" during which no one uses phones, watches TV, or uses the Internet. Also try eating meals, playing board games, or doing outdoor activities completely tech-free.

