

# 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 learning in science now?
- ▶ Is there anything at school that's stressing you out?
- ▶ What's something you think you're good at?
- ▶ If you could do anything you wanted for a day, what would you do?



## SEE SOMETHING, TELL SOMEONE

Students are the ones most likely to first be aware of a possible problem in their school. Make sure your child knows that if he/she sees something strange, suspicious, or dangerous that it's important to tell someone.

If your child witnesses any of the following, remind him/her to tell you, a teacher, counselor, or principal.

- ▶ a student being bullied or harassed
- ▶ someone in school who isn't usually there, or who's acting in a way that makes your child feel uncomfortable
- ▶ rumors of someone bringing a weapon to school
- ▶ anyone talking about doing harm to themselves or someone else
- ▶ hate speech said out loud, posted online, or written on a wall

## TALK ABOUT IT!

Make sure your child knows that reporting scary or troubling things to an adult isn't "snitching" or "tattling." It's being brave enough to stand up and tell the truth. Ask your child if anything has ever happened at school that's upset him/her.

## SUPPORTING READING SKILLS

Although your child has been reading for years, your involvement is key to helping your child further develop his/her reading skills. Here's what you can do.

**Read a series together** such as *Harry Potter* or *Chronicles of Narnia*. Talk about the books as you work your way through them.

**Be a good role model.** Let your child see you reading newspapers, books, and magazines. At dinner, talk about the interesting things you've learned.

Another great way to be involved in your child's reading is to ask about the books he/she is reading or has read lately. Here are some questions you can ask your child.

- ▶ *What was that book about?*
- ▶ *Did you like it? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *Who was your favorite character? Why?*
- ▶ *What was your favorite part? Why?*
- ▶ *Would you recommend this book to a friend?*

## MAKE EDUCATION A PRIORITY

Your child is more likely to value education if he/she sees that it's important to you. Make sure your child knows that doing well in school and getting a good education is very important to you and your family.

## KEEPING TRACK OF PAPERS AND HANDOUTS

Your child likely has many papers and handouts to keep track of, which can lead to a messy backpack or locker. Here's how you can help.

- ▶ Make sure your child has a folder for each school subject.
- ▶ Remind your child to put all handouts, assignments, and returned tests in the appropriate folders.
- ▶ Remind your child that loose papers should not be stuck inside notebooks, books, or backpacks. They should always be put in the appropriate folder.

## 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 take a trip to the library. In addition to adding new and interesting books to your child's bookshelf, libraries themselves are great literacy-building tools.

- ▶ Talk about the different genres of books that can be found at the library (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, science fiction, biographies). Encourage your child to choose a book from a genre he/she has never tried before.
- ▶ Ask a librarian to show your child how to search for books on the library's computer.



## TECH SPOTLIGHT: VIDEO GAMES

Video games are a popular way to have fun, and they can even help improve problem-solving skills and dexterity. There are, however, things parents need to be aware of in order to ensure their children are gaming safe.

Use this information to have a conversation with your child about his/her video gameplay.

### What to look out for

**Content.** Many video games contain inappropriate content, including violence and sex scenes.

**Online gaming.** Many, if not most, games provide the opportunity to play and interact with strangers.

**In-app purchases and downloadable content (DLC).** Many games offer additional features that can be acquired by paying an additional fee to download the content.

### What you can do

**Place limits.** Know what games your child is playing, and who he/she is playing with. Know if your child is playing with friends, alone, or with strangers. For information and game advice, go to [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org).



## DEVELOPING YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

Parents are often quick to express disapproval but don't always get around to complimenting their child's behavior.

**Voice your approval.** Be on the lookout for situations in which your child is doing a good job or displaying a positive character trait. For example, if you like the way your child completes a chore, you might say something like, *"I really appreciate your help in the kitchen. You always remember to clean up any mess you make."* Always give specifics about positive behaviors.

There will be times when you need to correct your child's behavior. Be constructive, and avoid criticism that's harsh or unnecessary. If your child has done something wrong, focus on the behavior, not the child. For example, instead of *"What's wrong with you?"* address the behavior: *"Throwing a ball in the house is not allowed."*

## MONTHLY CHALLENGE

### Be positive

Say one positive thing to your child every day. Compliment the way your child completes a chore or finishes a task, or how well he/she is doing in school. Children remember positive statements, so give your child praise or encouragement every day.

*"The child supplies the power but the parents have to do the steering."*

*Benjamin Spock*

## CAREER CORNER

### Focus on science-related careers.

Discuss how nurses, pharmacists, and veterinarians use science in their careers. Throughout the month look for opportunities to point out how the people you see use science 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

- ▶ Paper money is actually made out of linen and cotton, not paper at all.
- ▶ Shakespeare invented over 1,700 words we use today.

### Stories to share with your child

- ▶ Talk to your child about what your favorite subject in school was and why. Tell your child about an assignment that was especially fun, challenging, or interesting that you remember.

## CHARACTER MATTERS: RESPECT

Respect can mean different things to different people. Talk to your child about how your family defines respect at home, and discuss how students are respectful (and disrespectful) at school.

Be a good role model, and require that your child treat everyone with respect, including peers, adults at school, and adults he/she meets outside of school.

## Q&A: MAKING FRIENDS

**Q:** My son seems to have trouble making and keeping friends. He reports meeting new kids all the time, but it never seems to translate to a full blown friendship—or hanging out outside of school. How can I help?

**A:** Friends are very important to all students, but at this age, students are very aware of personality differences in their peers—and they are generally more selective with their friend groups.

This can, however, be very hurtful to the kids who seem to be left out. Be sure to validate your son's feelings by acknowledging that what he is experiencing is indeed hurtful.

Emphasize the importance of focusing on what he has in common with other kids, and to try to build on those common interests. And if you've witnessed any behavior that you think could be hindering your son's relationships with his peers, gently give him a suggestion on what he might do differently.

You may also try getting your son involved in an extracurricular activity. This is a great way to meet others with similar interests.

