

# 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 at school makes you happy?
- ▶ Do you ever work in groups at school?
- ▶ Did you do anything nice for someone today?
- ▶ What are you thankful for?



## HEALTHY SLEEP ROUTINES

Experts recommend that middle schoolers get 9 – 10 hours of sleep each night. Getting enough sleep has a direct impact on a child's mental and physical health.

Getting enough sleep improves cognitive ability. Students who get enough sleep have an easier time paying attention in school and at home. Sleep also helps with memory and motivation.

Sleep gives your child's body time to rest and recover. Not getting enough sleep is associated with long term health issues, including high blood pressure and diabetes. Here's how you can help your student have healthy sleep routines.

- ▶ Turn off electronics an hour before bedtime every night. This means no TV, phone, tablet, or computer. The bright lights from electronics make it hard for the brain to wind down and fall asleep.
- ▶ Have a firm bedtime. Going to bed at the same time every night helps the body get the most out of sleep. If it takes a while for your middle schooler to wind down, factor this into your child's nighttime routine.

## TALK ABOUT IT!

Talk to your child about the importance of getting enough sleep and what it does for the body: better memory and motivation improved mood, and more!

## BEING A GOOD GROUP MEMBER

Being able to work as part of a group is a skill that will help your child succeed in school, and in life. Your child can become an effective group member by developing the following skills and traits:

- ▶ **Listening skills** –listening when others are speaking, and paying attention to their ideas
- ▶ **Positive attitude** – having an upbeat and optimistic attitude, even when a project is difficult, frustrating, or boring
- ▶ **Reliability** –doing his/her own share of the work and not making excuses or procrastinating
- ▶ **Communication skills** – sharing his/her ideas with the group and offering constructive feedback to others

Many students don't like group work, and that's okay. But developing skills to be a good group member will help your child be successful for years to come.

## 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 have your child write thank you notes to those most important to him/her. Thank you notes are great ways for students to practice their writing skills, while expressing their gratitude to others.

Recipients could be teachers, relatives, or even your child's doctor or dentist.

## SMART STUDYING

To help your child study for a test, ask him/her to "teach" the material to you. Having children explain what they need to know in their own words is a great way to test a child's knowledge. It's also a great way for parents to be more involved.

## HELPING YOUR CHILD STAY MOTIVATED

We all get stuck sometimes, and for many students, getting "unstuck" can be difficult. The following are some motivational tools you can teach your child.

**Visualize success.** If your child is nervous about a test, encourage your child to imagine entering the classroom confidently, and answering the questions correctly.

**Turn failures into successes.** When something doesn't go well, help your child learn from the experience, and think about what he/she can do differently next time.

**Find a motivator.** Turn what competes with your child's motivation into a motivator. For example, video game or TV time could be a reward for getting all homework done.



## DEVELOPING SELF-CONTROL

Even though middle schoolers may understand the importance of following the rules, they often have trouble with self-control. They sometimes make choices that are disruptive, harmful, or disrespectful, even when they know they shouldn't.

Here's how you can help your child develop better self-control and make smarter choices.

**Have a conversation.** Talk about the "why" behind certain rules. *"Staying up too late is bad for your body, and it makes it harder for you to concentrate the next day."*

**Reward good self-control.** When your child exhibits good self-control, compliment him/her. Be specific. *"I can tell you wanted to yell at your brother when he messed up your room, but you didn't. I'm proud of you."*

**Model good behavior.** Adults sometimes do things they know they shouldn't. For example, if parents have taught their child to be patient and kind to others and they get angry while driving, or raise their voice in frustration, they lose credibility.

Use the same calming strategies you teach your child for yourself (e.g., breathing, walking away, and counting to ten).



## SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S TEMPERAMENT

Temperament refers to the aspects of your child's personality that are innate (traits he/she is born with). For example, some children are just naturally introverts, and some are extroverts.

**If your child is an introvert,** he/she might be seen as "shy," or "quiet." He/she may also be hesitant to speak up in class or while hanging out with peers.

You can support your child by helping him/her be more assertive while interacting with peers. (*"Let's practice what you can say the next time your friend teases you."*) Also, give your child space and time to be alone and decompress.

**If your child is an extrovert,** you may need to remind him/her periodically about the importance of taking turns in a conversation, and of listening to others. Help your child develop good listening skills by encouraging him/her to make eye contact, to try not to interrupt, and to ask others questions.

## MONTHLY CHALLENGE

### Spend time together

Do one fun family activity a week, such as take a trip to a museum, have a family game night, or make ice cream sundaes. Having something fun to look forward to can be comforting and exciting for children—and it can be a good opportunity for adults to relax and unwind.

*"Encourage and support your kids because children are apt to live up to what you believe of them."*

*Lady Bird Johnson*

## CAREER CORNER

Talk to your child about the concept of jobs and earnings, and about how these things connect to one another. For example, you might talk about how some jobs may pay differently than others, and how that's often related to the type of education someone has.

## 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

- ▶ Thanksgiving became a national holiday in 1863.
- ▶ Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be our national bird.

### Stories to share with your child

- ▶ Talk to your child about what you're thankful for, and encourage him/her to talk about the same. Also, tell your child about Thanksgiving traditions you had growing up.

## CHARACTER MATTERS: DEPENDABILITY

Being the type of person that others can depend on to get things done (and get them done well) is a trait that will help your child succeed in school, and throughout his/her life.

Provide opportunities for your child to demonstrate dependability by giving tasks and chores that are his/hers to do alone, (e.g., watering plants, setting the table, feeding a pet). Praise your child when he/she does a job well, especially when it's unprompted or without reminders from you.

## Q&A: PROCRASTINATION

**Q:** My son is a procrastinator. He never wants to start homework and projects until the last minute, and then he gets stressed out and frustrated. What can I do to help?

**A:** Students procrastinate for a variety of reasons, so it's important to find out if there is an underlying cause.

Students often underestimate how long their homework will take, and they think they'll have plenty of time to do it later. Work with your child to create a study plan that includes doing homework at a set time and place each day (e.g., right after school, before dinner, after dinner).

Students may also put homework off if an assignment is too difficult. If this is the case, calmly try to help your child work through whatever is causing him/her problems. If your child routinely finds homework too difficult, talk to your child's teacher.

With larger assignments or projects, students often become overwhelmed, and don't know how to start. Encourage your child to start early on large assignments, and help your child break them down into smaller more manageable tasks.

