

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 was the best part of your day today?
- ▶ Who do you usually sit with at lunch?
- ▶ If you were the principal, is there anything you would change about your school?
- ▶ What are you hoping to do this summer?



END OF THE YEAR CONVERSATIONS

With the end of this school year in sight, do what you can to make sure your child finishes strong and feels good about the end of the school year—and excited about what's to come!

- ▶ Ask your child about his/her experiences this year. *What were the best parts of the year? What were the hardest parts? Is there anything you wish you would have done differently? What new friends did you make?*
- ▶ Talk about next year. If your child is transitioning to a new school, talk about what the school will be like, and what your child can expect. Check out the school's website and visit the school if possible.
- ▶ Ask your child to start thinking about what he/she would like to accomplish this summer, perhaps read a certain number of books or learn a new skill (e.g., rollerblade, draw on the computer, play tennis).

TALK ABOUT IT!

Talk to your child about how he/she feels about this year coming to a close. Some kids feel excited, nervous, and sad—sometimes all at once. Make sure your child knows that all these feelings are normal.

STAYING ENGAGED IN CLASS

Toward the end of the school year, student engagement in class (paying attention and participating) can diminish. This can make classes frustrating and unproductive. Here's how you can help.

- ▶ Talk to your child about the importance of finishing the year strong. If you see your child starting to slack off, monitor his/her homework and grades more closely.
- ▶ As a way to encourage your child to stay focused on learning, each night at dinner, challenge your child to share two things he/she learned in school that day.
- ▶ Remind your child to stay engaged and to ask and answer questions in class. Students are much more engaged when they raise their hands often and participate in class discussions. They also find that the time goes a lot faster.

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 create a thank you card for one or more of your child's teachers. This is a great opportunity for your child to be creative, practice writing skills, and remember the best parts of the past year.

If your child has a hard time knowing what to write, work with your child to create a form your child can fill in. Some sentences he/she can finish are "The favorite thing I learned this year was..." and "You're a great teacher because..."

USE FREE TIME WISELY

Encourage your child to use any "free time" during the school day to get started on homework. Students who use class time wisely have much less work to do at home.

CONSIDER YOUR CHILD'S BASIC SKILLS

In middle school, many skills, such as math and writing, build on each other each year, and students who are behind in these basic skills often struggle in school.

Consider your child's skills and grades in his/her classes. Is he/she working at grade level? Are there some things you should work on over the summer?

If you have any concerns about your child's ability and study skills, talk to your child's teacher about what you can work on over the summer. You want your child to start next year confident and on track.



BEING SMART WITH SCREEN TIME

As school days wind down and the amount of free time your child has sky rockets, many parents find that an increase in screen time (using a tablet, computer, phone, or TV) sky rockets as well. Here are some tips for making sure your child has a healthy relationship with technology over the summer.

Keep it about learning. Your child likely enjoys using technology for entertainment and learning, but without direction from teachers, the learning often falls by the wayside. Look for opportunities to keep it educational, such as restricting technology use to educational games and apps only, or allowing your child to practice writing skills by exchanging emails (with your supervision) with friends and family.

Encourage activity and creativity. Rather than passively sitting and watching videos for hours, encourage your child to make his/her own videos on a topic of his/her choice. Your child might narrate instructional videos about building LEGO sets, how to do a particular dance, or do a craft. Send the videos to family and friends, or watch them all together.



MAKING SUMMER PLANS

Middle school students are often too young for a job but too old for playdates or day camps, which means they are often adrift in the summer. Here's how you can help make sure your child gets the most out of the upcoming summer break.

Experts suggest helping your child divide his/her time into three equal categories:

- ▶ **Organized, productive time**, such as tween-friendly jobs (e.g., mowing lawns, dog walking, babysitting) or summer reading groups at the library.
- ▶ **Family time**, such as vacations, day trips, and other family activities.
- ▶ **Unstructured free time**, in which your child chooses how to spend his/her time. This measured freedom is important for helping your child develop independence.

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Have a sense of humor

Middle schoolers are often challenging, but things go a lot smoother if you can both laugh. Tell your child silly jokes, and encourage him/her to do the same. Have family movie nights and take turns choosing comedies to watch.

"Your children will become who you are, so be who you want them to be."

David Bly

CAREER CORNER

Help your child identify his/her interests and talents. Talk to your child about how a talent or personality trait can be a valuable asset in the right career field. For example, someone who enjoys meeting new people might enjoy working in sales, business, or human services.

BONDING WITH YOUR CHILD: FUN THINGS TO SHARE AND DO

A strong parental bond is key to student success!

Stories to share with your child

- ▶ Tell your child about the things you and your friends used to do in the summer.

Spend time together

- ▶ Have a family picnic – even if it's just in your backyard.
- ▶ Have a family spring cleaning project (e.g., clean the garage, wash the car, pick up and bag any litter you see). Then all go out for pizza.

CHARACTER MATTERS: LEADERSHIP

Teach your child that leadership doesn't mean bossing people around or just "being in charge." Leadership means listening to everyone's ideas, being a good communicator, and helping others perform at their best.

Help your child develop leadership skills by allowing him/her to plan game night, family outings, and meals. Scouting and sports teams also provide excellent opportunities for developing leadership skills.

Q&A: ONLINE SAFETY

Q: My daughter recently asked if she could have a social media account. She says many of her friends have one, but how do I know if she's ready?

A: Social media apps are great ways to keep in touch with friends and family—and they can be lots of fun, but as we all know, using social media can have a lot of downsides.

Popular social media apps include Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, TikTok, Twitter, Tumblr, WhatsApp, YouTube, and more. All of these apps—and the new apps that are created every day—provide the opportunity for children to interact with strangers.

If you consider allowing your child to have a social media account, Google that app to see what it is and does. You may want to consider sharing a joint login with your child—reminding your child that you can log in and check up on him/her at any time.

If your child is simply looking for opportunities to use a phone/computer, consider creating (and monitoring) an account on Goodreads, an app for keeping track of and reviewing the books your child reads.

