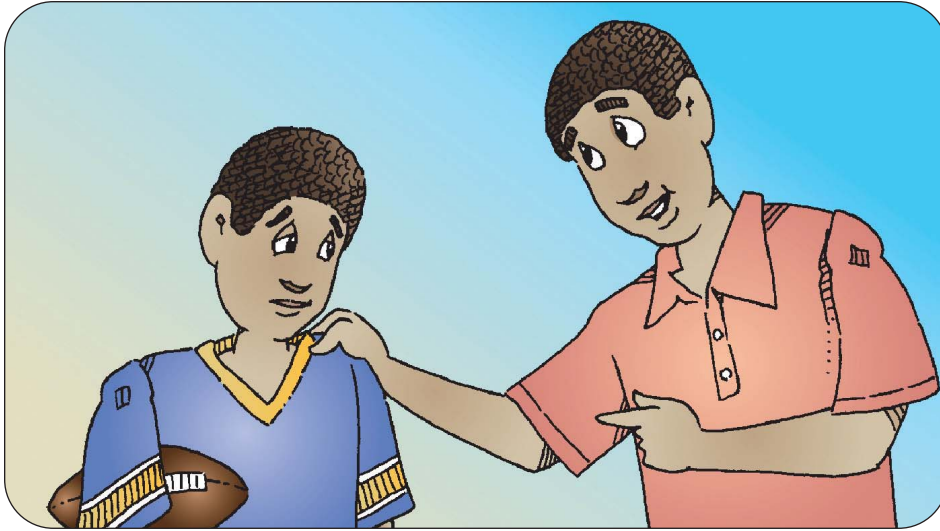


Middle School Parents[®]

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Central Alberta Regional Consortium
c/o River Glen School, Red Deer, AB

still make the difference!



Place the spotlight on respect— not on your middle schooler

You make a point of respecting your preteen, but do you insist that he show you respect, too? If not, now is the time to start.

To develop your preteen's sense of respect for you, himself and others:

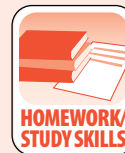
- **Don't let him run the show.** Does your home life revolve around your preteen's activities, achievements and desires? It shouldn't. If his needs always come first, he may not learn to respect the notion that other people have needs, too.
- **Hold your applause.** It's fine to congratulate your preteen when he does well, but don't gush over every accomplishment, big or small. Instead, save your highest praise for when your preteen works hard. Studies show that kids

who are praised for their *effort* rather than their *achievement* tend to try harder and perform better than kids applauded merely for "being smart."

- **Allow him to experience** disappointment. You can't spare your preteen from all of life's troubles, nor should you. Whether it's being cut from the football team or failing to earn an A in math, he needs to learn to take his lumps. Besides, they're his—not yours. So give him a squeeze and let him move past it. He'll likely respect himself for bouncing back and respect you for showing him he could.

Source: Patricia Dalton, "A Lost Art: Instilling Respect," Washingtonpost.com, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/10/AR2007091001174.html.

Help your child retain material, sharpen memory



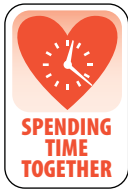
Your middle schooler logs hours of study time. Still, it doesn't do much good because she forgets the material the

minute she shuts her textbook. To help her keep her memory sharp and retain what she's learned:

- **Encourage her to be flexible.** Have your child think about which study methods are best for her. Does she work with a friend but tend to forget the material? She may be better off studying alone. On the other hand, if working solo makes her brain go fuzzy, a study partner might be the solution.
- **Ask her to rephrase** what she's learned. See if your child can explain a lesson in her own words. This is a great way to gauge how much she's retaining, because she won't be able to do it if she hasn't absorbed the information.
- **Have her prioritize.** When studying, does your child get so caught up in the tiny details that she misses the big picture? Remind her to memorize major points first.

Source: "Nine Ways to Aid Your Memory," Dartmouth College Academic Skills Center, www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/docs/increase_memory.doc.

Use quality time with your middle schooler to stay active and get fit



Make the time you spend with your child good for her mind and her body.

According to research, the average child in America:

- **Spends less than 15 minutes** exercising vigorously each day.
- **Spends 20 percent** of her “awake time” watching TV.
- **Drinks 20 or more ounces** of soda every day.
- **Believes that fit kids do better** in school than unfit kids. (In one study, 36 percent of middle schoolers felt this way.)

- **Exercises less and less** as she gets older.

So commit to keeping your child—and yourself—physically fit and active. During downtime together:

- **Go for a walk** or jog around your neighborhood.
- **Explore a sport** that neither of you has tried before.
- **Play a few games** of one-on-one basketball or kick around a soccer ball.
- **Take a long bike ride** through your neighborhood or a park.

Source: “Facts on Kid’s Health,” Fitness for Youth, www.fitnessforyouth.umich.edu/frames/frameset_parents.html.

Act immediately if you suspect your preteen is skipping school



Spring weather may beckon your child outside. But he still belongs in school until the final bell rings. Research

shows that too many students are not complying with this. One study last year from Indiana University showed that about half the students surveyed had skipped school.

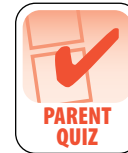
Give your child the best chance for school success by making sure he has a good attendance record. You should:

- **Let your child know** that you are monitoring his school attendance. Do not voice this as a threat. Simply tell your child you are paying attention because attendance is so important.
- **Speak with your child’s teachers** or counselor if you feel that he is not engaged with school. Ask if you can work together on a strategy to help your child increase his interest and school engagement.

- **Ask your child** how he is feeling about school. Research shows that children who are bored or who do not feel engaged with school are more likely to skip.
- **Make clear to your child** that you do not condone skipping school. Not even once.

Source: Ethan Yazzie-Mintz, “Students are bored, many skip school, lack adult support,” Indiana University News Room, <http://newsinfo.iu.edu/news/page/normal/4948.html>.

Are you keeping your child on track with homework?



Many students have less than two months of school left, but there’s still plenty of work to be done. Take this quiz to

see if you are encouraging your child to keep up with homework and assignments. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage your child** to maintain a nightly routine of homework and studying?
- ___ **2. Do you expect your child** to have homework finished before she watches TV or goes out with friends?
- ___ **3. Do you encourage your child** to be organized? Does she keep a list of assignments to keep track of end-of-year projects?
- ___ **4. Do you monitor** your child’s completion of homework, since missed assignments have a negative effect on grades?
- ___ **5. Do you stay on top** of your child’s progress in her classes?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are helping your child maintain focus on work as she nears the end of the year. Mostly *no*? Check the quiz for suggestions on ways to encourage your child to stay on track with work and have a strong finish to the year.

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Inspire your middle schooler to work hard, succeed in school



A motivated student is a dedicated student! To inspire your middle schooler to do well in school:

- **Stay involved** in his education. Prove you care about the things your preteen is learning in class. Pitch in at school when you can. Your involvement shows that his education matters to you.
- **Nurture his curiosity.** Learning happens everywhere, not just in class. So encourage your preteen to explore outside interests. If he likes art, check out a funky exhibit together.
- **Help him get organized.** It's tough to stay motivated when your notes and assignments are scattered all

over the place. So help your preteen develop smart ways to stay organized.

- **Offer feedback.** When you see your preteen working hard, let him know it! If he does well on a project or a test, remind him of how much his effort has paid off.
- **Be patient with him.** Chances are you're not always motivated at work. So don't expect your preteen to be forever gung-ho about school. Instead, assume he'll have periods when he's less than enthusiastic. But with your support, he'll likely get back on track soon.

Source: "How Parents Motivate Their Children Academically," University of Michigan Department of Psychology, http://sitemaker.umich.edu/356.benjamin/helpful_hints_for_motivating_your_child.

Combat peer pressure, talk with your child about trusting others



Trust is key when it comes to peer pressure. If your child knows which friends she can really trust, she will be less

likely to give in to a demand from a possibly untrustworthy source.

Encourage your child to trust:

- **Herself.** Teach your child to listen to her instincts and "inner voice" when a peer is trying to compel her to do something. What is her first reaction—does she feel good about the request or does it immediately raise doubts?
- **A true friend.** Having a few real friends—who have never asked her to do something that would harm her—is a great defense against negative peer pressure.
- **A caring adult.** Does your child have a teacher or other adult she respects? What would this adult

think of what peers are asking her to do?

- **You!** Ideally, your child will come to you when faced with a request that makes her uncomfortable. But she won't if your first reaction is always to explode. Staying calm, and reasoning with your child will increase the chances that she will consult you before making a possibly harmful mistake.

Source: Ron Herron and Val J. Peter, *What's Right for Me? Making Good Choices in Relationships*, ISBN: 1-889322-21-0 (Boys Town Press, 1-800-282-6657, www.boystownpress.com).

"If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders."

—Abigail Van Buren

Q: The calendar says April, but my sixth grader is acting like it's already the summer. How can I keep him focused on learning and out of "summer-vacation mode" during these last two months of school?

Questions & Answers

A: Warmer weather and longer days don't make focusing on schoolwork any easier, do they? Still, it's critical for your child to continue buckling down for the remainder of the year. To help him do that:

- **Stay committed to the cause.** Have you gotten lax when it comes to checking assignments or reading papers he brings home? Then do some focusing of your own. Make a point of chatting with your child about school every night. Also, ask to take a look at some things he's working on in school.
- **Maintain school-year routines.** Longer days and balmy evenings aside, it's still vital to stick with appropriate routines. This means you should continue enforcing a sensible bedtime and homework time, at least on week nights. And if you do ease up on weekends, don't scrap your routines altogether. It'll only create headaches when Sunday night rolls around.
- **Develop a schedule.** Write down what you expect of your child and post it on the fridge. If he can look at a sheet of paper and see that "study time starts at 4 o'clock every day," it'll be hard for him to claim he "had no idea" you wanted him to hit the books after school.

—Holly Smith,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Reading Skills

Books aren't the only options for preteen reading



Is your child a reader? Some kids don't read many novels, but that doesn't mean they are not readers. Be careful

not to label your middle schooler a *nonreader*—if you say it, your child is likely to believe it.

Nearly every kind of reading has value that you may not have considered. Recognize it. Encourage it. Praise your child for reading.

If your child reads:

- **Magazines**—he has learned the value of reading for pleasure and interest. As long as the material is age-appropriate, this is a constructive activity for your child.
- **Sports scores**—he has learned to read for information. And he has learned that the newspaper is a valuable resource.
- **Nonfiction books**—he is practicing fluency, comprehension and vocabulary skills. Many boys prefer nonfiction to fiction. Consider giving him a biography of a person he admires.
- **Instruction manuals**—he has learned that reading can teach him a practical skill. Look for longer books about skills he wants to learn.
- **Instant messages**—he has learned to use reading and writing to communicate. But if that's *all* he reads—and it is affecting grades and other activities—consider limiting computer time.

Source: David Booth, *Reading Doesn't Matter Anymore*, ISBN: 1-55138-202-4 (Stenhouse Publishers, 1-800-988-9812, www.stenhouse.com/html/home.htm).

Make small changes to increase your middle schooler's reading

Better readers read more often. If you can't seem to motivate your child to increase her reading time, take heart. Reading just a few extra minutes a day really adds up.

Your child can make progress if you:

- **Enforce** teacher-suggested reading time. Many teachers assign 20 minutes a night. That isn't much. But a child who does it faithfully, six nights a week, logs more than 100 hours of reading a year. That's about six long novels!
- **Turn off the TV.** Your child probably won't sit down to read if the TV is on. Research shows most children can watch about 10 hours of television a week (fewer than two hours a day, far less



than the amount of time the TV is on in most households). After 10 hours, reading ability drops.

Source: Jim Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, ISBN: 0-14-046971-0 (Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1-800-788-6262, www.penguinputnam.com).

Encourage your child to think about material *before* reading



Many students just "dive in" to unfamiliar or difficult reading material because they want to "get it over with." As a result, they don't emerge with a good understanding of it.

Taking a few minutes to think *before* reading can help your child improve his comprehension. Then he may be able to avoid having to read the same text again and again.

Before your middle schooler reads anything—especially school material—encourage him to:

- **Think about the subject.** What does he already know about it?

What should he know after reading?

- **Think about the point.** Why is he reading this? What will he need to be able to do after reading?
- **Consider his motivation level.** What can he do to get himself ready to read? Is it a good time of day? Does he need to change location?
- **Skim for titles and words in bold.** This will give him a preview of the main ideas in the text.

Source: Jean Ciborowski, *Textbooks and the Students Who Can't Read Them, A Guide to Teaching Content*, ISBN: 0-914797-57-3 (Brookline Books, 1-800-666-2665, www.brooklinebooks.com).