

7th Grade Student & Family Guide

*Everything You Need to Know
For Success in 7th Grade*

WELCOME TO SEVENTH GRADE

Seventh grade is filled with changes. The class work is more challenging. In seventh grade your child will have more homework, more challenging projects, and tests. The seventh grade required courses are language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Seventh grade is setting the stage for future success in high school, college, or advanced education or training, etc. You can help make this year a success by supporting your child's education. Stay in touch and work with the principal, counselor, and school staff. Attend open house, conferences, and school meetings. Help your child to balance academics, social life, and activities. Review the student handbook with your child and contact the school for answers to questions you may have. Be sure you both understand the school policies, rules and consequences.

Your Seventh grader is entering a period of physical and emotional change. He/She is on his/her way to becoming a teenager. Your child will become more critical of his/her own appearance and display seemingly exaggerated emotions. At this age your child is learning how to be independent. He/she is also trying to determine who he/she is and what he/she can do on his/her own. She/he will look to you for information, guidance, and understanding. You can help your child cope with the changes by supporting your child through the transition to adolescence. Talk to your child about the physical and the emotional changes that will occur and be reassuring. Your child may worry if he/she develops faster or slower than his/her peers. Help your child feel good about his/her unique timetable and reassure him/her that it is normal for preteens to develop at different times. Reinforce behavior that provides a greater sense of responsibility for his/her behavior and decisions. Help your child to identify and develop his/her personal interests, abilities, develop interpersonal skills, handle peer pressure, establish a feeling of belonging within a group, appreciate his own individuality, and avoid risk-taking behaviors. Talk and listen to your child concerns and highlight the positives about the changes that are occurring. Such as becoming more of an adult and enjoying some of the freedoms that come with emerging adulthood.

Friends and popularity become major issues. The preteen years are as well a time when your child is exposed to negative activities, bullying, smoking, etc. Talk with your child about dangerous behaviors. Let them know behaviors that are unacceptable. Keep teaching values such as fairness, self-respect, and a sense of right and wrong. Get to know your child's friends and parents and their values. You can help your child stay on a positive course by providing support, guidance and by continuing to be involved in your child's education.

REDEFINING THE PRETEEN RELATIONSHIP

During the preteen years your child becomes more independent and his or her social life becomes more important, with more of a focus on activities at school and new interests. This is when they start to confide more in peers and request space and privacy- expect the bedroom door to be shut. Your child may act as if your guidance is not welcome or needed, and even seem embarrassed by you at times. Try not to take the changes personally. They are signs of your child's growing independence. Staying connected may seem like more of a challenge, but it is as important as ever. You are still a powerful influence and your child needs love, guidance, and support. The connection to you will provide a sense of security and provide resilience for your child in dealing with life's ups and downs. He/she may be more responsive to the example you set rather than the instructions you give. Model the qualities that you want your child to learn and practice: respect, communication, kindness, healthy eating, and fulfilling everyday responsibilities.

Ways to reinforce family bonds

- **Family Meals:** If it is impossible to eat together every night, schedule a regular weekly family dinner night. Turn off the TV and tune out the ringing phone. Attempt to get everyone involved in the preparation and cleanup. This will build closeness, a sense of responsibility, and teamwork.
- **Share Ordinary Time and Stay Involved:** Invite your preteen to come with you to take a walk, run, wash the car, bake, rent movies, or watch a favorite TV show. Riding in the car is an opportunity to connect. When you are driving, your child may be more inclined to mention a troubling issue. Since you are focused on the road, he/she does not have to make eye contact, which can ease discomfort about opening up. Go to your child's games, practices, school performances when you can. Ask how things went at school each day and listen attentively.
- **Create Special Time:** Celebrate family birthdays, holidays, and occasions like a good report card or winning a basketball game.
- **Show Affection:** Reserve affection for times when friends are not around. Your child may start to feel self-conscious about displays of affection from you, especially in public. He/she may pull away from your hug and kiss, but it is not about you. A smile or a wave can convey a warm send-off while respecting boundaries. Acknowledge your child's qualities and developing skills when you see him/her.
- **Stay Interested:** Listen to your preteen's ideas, feelings, and experiences and respond in a nonjudgmental way. Listening to your child will give a better sense of your child's perspective, guidance and support needed.

MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS

This is a great time to talk to your child about how to make and keep true friends. True friends are those who stick with them through good times and bad, who care about their best interests, and who like and respect them for the unique individual they are. Remind them to be themselves, not someone who they think will impress people. A real friend wouldn't pressure them to do something they think is wrong, or make them feel bad if they don't do something. Also remind them that making new friends doesn't mean abandoning old friends.

Meeting Someone New:

- Find a person or group that shares your interests.
- Wait for a good time to initiate personal contact; make eye contact and smile.
- Make verbal contact. Try saying "hi", introducing yourself, or asking for help.
- Greet people in a cheerful way. Stand tall and hold your head up.
- Try these conversation starters: "What are you doing?"; "How's your day been?" Open-ended questions invite the other person to share information.
- If a conversation feels awkward at first, don't worry. Your cheerful greetings have planted "friendship seeds" and may open the door for future contact.
- Join in group activities and discussions. Offer your opinions while respecting the opinions of others.

Keeping Friends:

To keep a friend, it is important to be able to share your ideas and thoughts, but you must also listen to what they have to say. To be sure you are listening well:

- Make eye contact with your friend.
- Let your friend do most of the talking. Avoid interruptions; wait your turn.
- Let your friend know that you heard the words and feelings expressed. For example, "I'll bet you're really sad about your grandmother's death."
- Keep private conversations private. If your friend asks you not to tell anyone something, don't. **The only time this rule should be broken is when someone's safety is at risk.**

Complimenting is a way to show your interest in and engage others. Recognize the value of a compliment. Everyone wants to be appreciated.

- Be sincere when giving a compliment. If you don't mean it, don't say it.
- Compliment others about behavior, skills, personality or appearance.
- Express your appreciation of others in many ways.

LANGUAGE ARTS

READING

- Increases and monitors reading comprehension:
- Asks questions when unsure of information,
- Draws inferences about information,
- Generates further questions, and
- Uses knowledge of context and vocabulary to understand text.
- Organizes information that is read:
- Summarizes the information,
- Explains the importance of the information, and describes connections between related topics/information.
- Demonstrates strategies (e.g., knowledge of word origins and derivations, analogies, idioms, prefixes, and suffixes) to define and extend understanding of word meaning.
- Identifies the purpose and audience for a variety of texts.
- Analyzes:
 - The effect of literary devices on the meaning in a variety of texts
 - The use of poetic devices
- Understands what specific characteristics of literary works have on the meaning of the text
- Understands what impact literary elements have on the meaning of the text
- Understands themes and central ideas in literature and media in relation to personal issues and experiences.

WRITING

- Demonstrates increasing proficiency in using the writing process to create a final product:
- Uses a graphic organizer to structure information appropriate to purpose, audience, and content
- Revises written work to make it clearer
- Places modifiers and uses the active voice
- Proof reads and monitors written work to correct errors.
- Demonstrates increasing proficiency with writing conventions (i.e., grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation):
- Identifies all parts of speech and types and structures of sentences,
- Identifies and uses infinitives and participles,
- Punctuates correctly using hyphens, dashes, brackets, and semicolons,
- Spells derivatives of words correctly by using the spellings of the bases and affixes, uses a variety of sentences correctly by punctuating them properly; avoids fragments and run-on, clarifies language usage by identifying the parts of speech, uses figurative language and varying speech patterns to convey meaning, makes clear references between pronouns and antecedents, and explains shades of meaning and multiple meanings of words and uses them correctly.

- Demonstrates increasing proficiency in applying appropriate types of writing (i.e., descriptive, narrative, expressive, expository, persuasive, and analytical) for the intended purpose and audience: structures a written account (e.g., news story, historical episode),
- Uses language that is precise, engaging, and well-suited to the topic and audience,
- Analyzes the effect on the viewer of images, text, and sound in electronic journalism, develops understanding and skill during the process of doing background research for essays and presentations,
- Constructs essays that respond to a given problem by proposing a solution that includes relevant details, expresses individual perspective on personal, social, cultural, and historical issues, composes a variety of written work that develops sentence fluency using a variety of multimedia technologies, and produces research reports and technical writing that communicate information effectively.

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE: SPEAKING

- Demonstrates increasing proficiency with appropriate types of speaking (i.e., descriptive, narrative, expressive, expository, persuasive, and analytical) for a variety of purposes and audiences:
- Develops speeches that describe, inform, and/or persuade,
- Expresses individual perspective in response to personal, social, cultural, and historical issues, provides constructive feedback to speakers concerning a speech's content, delivery, and overall impact, and interacts in group activities and/or discussions by:
 - giving valid reasons that support opinions,
 - offering personal opinions confidently without dominating, and
 - soliciting and considering others' opinions.

RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE: LISTENING AND VIEWING

- Organizes information that is heard or viewed:
 - determines the importance of the information,
 - generates further questions,
 - makes connections to related topics/information,
 - summarizes the information, and takes useful notes.

MATH

NUMBER AND OPERATIONS

Use properties of the real-number system to explain reasoning and to formulate and solve real-world problems.

- Add, subtract, multiply, and divide rational numbers (e.g., integers, fractions, terminating decimals) and take positive rational numbers to whole-number powers.

- Use estimation to check reasonableness of results, and use this information to make predictions in situations involving rational numbers, pi, and simple algebraic equations.
- Convert fractions to decimals and percents and use these representations in estimations, computations, and applications

ALGEBRA

- Represent a variety of relationships using tables, graphs, verbal rules, and possible symbolic notation, and recognize the same general pattern presented in different representations.
- Write verbal expressions and sentences as algebraic expressions and equations
- Evaluate algebraic expressions
- Solve simple linear equations
- Graph and interpret results
- Use variables and appropriate operations to write an expression, an equation, and/or an inequality that represents a verbal description involving change.

GEOMETRY

- Construct and use coordinate graphs to plot simple figures, determine lengths and areas related to them, and determine the image under translations and reflections.
- Identify and describe the properties of two-dimensional figures
- Identify angles as vertical, adjacent, complementary, or supplementary and provide descriptions of these terms.
- Use the properties of complementary and supplementary angles and the sum of the angles of a triangle to solve problems involving an unknown angle
- Draw quadrilaterals and triangles from given information.

MEASUREMENT

- Use measures expressed as rates and measures expressed as products to solve problems, check the units of the solutions, and analyze the reasonableness of the answer.
- Select and use formulas to determine the circumference of circles and the area of triangles, parallelograms, trapezoids, and circles.
- Solve problems involving scale factors, ratios, and proportions

DATA ANALYSIS AND PROBABILITY

- Analyze problems by identifying relationships, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, identifying missing information, and selecting, collecting, and displaying appropriate data to address the problem.
- Analyze data to make accurate inferences, predictions, and to develop convincing arguments from data displayed in a variety of forms.
- Determine the probability of a simple event or a compound event composed of simple, independent events.

SOCIAL STUDIES

HISTORY

- Compare and contrast the contributions of the civilizations of the Western Hemisphere and their impact upon societies, to include:
- Effect on world economics and trade
- Roles of people, class structures, language
- Religious traditions and forms of government
- Cultural and scientific contributions (e.g., advances in astronomy, mathematics, agriculture, architecture, artistic and oral traditions, development of writing systems and calendars).
- Analyze United States policies on expansion of the United States into the Southwest.
- Compare and contrast the influence of Spain on the Western Hemisphere from colonization to the present.
- Analyze and evaluate information by developing and applying criteria for selecting appropriate information and use it to answer critical questions.

GEOGRAPHY

- Describe factors affecting location of human activities, including land use patterns in urban, suburban, and rural areas.
- Interpret and analyze geographic information obtained from a variety of sources (e.g., maps, directly witnessed and surveillance photographic and digital data, symbolic representations [e.g., graphs, charts, diagrams, tables], personal documents, and interviews).

CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

- Describe ways in which different groups maintain their cultural heritage.
- Explain the obligations and responsibilities of citizenship (e.g., the obligations of upholding the Constitution, obeying the law, paying taxes, jury duty).

ECONOMICS

- Explain how economic and intrinsic incentives influence how individuals, households, businesses, governments, and societies allocate and use their scarce resources.

SCIENCE

SCIENTIFIC THINKING AND PRACTICE

- Use a variety of print and web resources to collect information, inform investigations, and answer a scientific question or hypothesis.
- Analyze and evaluate scientific explanations.
- Select and use an appropriate model to examine a phenomenon.

PHYSICAL SCIENCE

- Explain how matter is transferred from one organism to another and between organisms and their environment (e.g., consumption, the water cycle, the carbon cycle, the nitrogen cycle).
- Know how various forms of energy are transformed through organisms and ecosystems, including:
 - Sunlight and photosynthesis
 - Energy transformation in living systems(e.g., cellular processes changing chemical energy to heat and motion)
 - Effect of mankind’s use of energy and other activities on living systems (e.g., global warming, water quality.)

LIFESCIENCE

- Identify the living and nonliving parts of an ecosystem and describe the relationship among these components
- Know that reproduction is a characteristic of all living things and is essential to the continuation of a species.
- Explain that diversity within a species is developed by gradual changes over many generations.
- Understand that organisms are composed of cells and identify unicellular and multicellular organisms.

EARTH AND SPACE SCIENCE

- Explain why Earth is unique in our solar system in its ability to support life.
- Know that changes to ecosystems sometimes decrease the capacity of the environment to support some lifeforms and are difficult and/or costly to remediate.

General Test Taking Tips To Keep In Mind During Standardized Testing:

- **Before the test:**
 - Get plenty of rest.
 - Eat a good breakfast.
 - Relax and do the best you can.
- **During the test:**
 - Keep a positive attitude, if you start to feel nervous, take a few deep breaths.
 - Make sure you put your first and last name on the test.
 - When you receive your test, do a quick survey of the subtest so you know how to budget your time.
 - Follow directions and ask questions if you don’t understand the directions.
 - Pace yourself and read the entire question.
 - Try to answer the easier questions first.
 - If you don’t know the answer, skip it and go on with the rest of the test and come back to it later.

- When looking at a difficult question, try to eliminate some of the choices that appear less likely to be the answer and then choose the best answer.
- Try to answer every question.
- When answering a question, be sure the number on the answer sheet matches the number of the question you are working on.
- Don't worry if others finish before you; focus on the test in front of you.
- **At the end of the test:**
 - Check your answers for mistakes.
 - Go back and recheck your answers if you finish before your classmates.
 - Make sure you have completed all of the sections.
 - Bring a favorite book to read when you are finished with the test.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement matters a lot. Research shows that if you are involved, your child is more likely to earn higher grades, test scores, enroll in higher level programs, be promoted, earn credits, attend school regularly, have better social skills, graduate and go to college.

You can be involved in many ways.

- By establishing a learning environment at home for the whole family, attending school meetings, and parent-teacher conferences.
- Extend your child's learning by going to libraries, businesses and museums.
- Be sure your child is prepared for school daily.
- Encourage your child and talk about role models in your community. Point out to your child people who have a college degree or a professional career and how they contribute to your local community. Talk to her/him about career choices and how doing well in school is connected to having choices in life. Reinforce the importance of valuing your culture, heritage, and language.
- By volunteering at school, taking part in school activities that promote education, joining the school parent's email group, and/or the parent-teacher organization.
- By being an advocate for your child and others by urging state and local leaders to establish stronger programs and higher achievement standards.
- By being a decision-maker through taking part in decisions about programs, staffing and policies.

It is important to be a strong advocate for your child and equal partners in the decision making process. Know what to expect from your child's school.

1. You should be informed on a regular basis how your child and your child's school are doing.
2. You should be treated with respect and as an equal partner in your child's education. Educators are hired to work for you and your children.

3. You should be told clearly what the learning standards are in each grade, what is being taught in each core subject and how learning will be assessed so you can understand how to help your child.
4. You should be told about the school's safety standards, how discipline problems are handled, and what the school is doing to ensure safety standards are upheld. Students need to feel safe in order to learn.
5. You should be able to get answers to your important questions. What is my child expected to know and be able to do in core subjects? How is learning measured? What will the school do to help if my child is behind and what can I do to help?
6. In middle school, you should be told what courses your child should be taking to go to college and steps that should be taken for your child to apply for college.

School Attendance Matters

- School attendance is essential to educational success. Missing school and/or a class decreases the benefit of regular classroom instruction, responsibility, self-discipline & effective work skills that are taught in the classroom. If your child is absent from class they miss instruction on homework assignments and upcoming events. Falling behind in class work and struggling to catch up, makes it difficult to pass tests, a course, and moving on to the next grade level. The farther behind a student gets, the more he/she wants to give up, putting him/her at risk of dropping out.
- School attendance is your responsibility as a parent and your child's. Make sure that your child understands that you do not approve of them being late or absent from school or any class period. Do not allow your child to persuade you into making excuses for him/her being tardy or skipping a class. Review and make sure that your child understands our district's policies and absences outlined in the Parent Student Information Guide.
- Help your child get to school daily by having a back-up plan for cars not starting. If possible, drop your child off at school and pick them up afterwards. Keep a calendar on the refrigerator at home so that you know when your child does not have school. Schedule your child's appointments and family vacations outside of school hours.
- Reinforce and display the importance of education. Stay interested in what your child is doing in school and maintain contact with your child's teachers. Meet and know your child's friends and interests.
- If your child does have attendance problems, contact your child's assistant principal, counselor, or teacher to obtain help, get suggestions, and to schedule a parent-teacher conference. Talk to your child about the issue and make a contract with your child to improve his/her attendance. Do not give up. Remember to reward good behavior.
- If your child is out due to medical reasons, contact the school each day that he/she is absent, as this needs to be documented. You should also contact the teacher, principal, counselor, if your child will be out for a few days or more, to pick-up make-up work and/or to discuss availability of assistance.

HOMEWORK AND STUDY SKILLS

Homework is assigned to expand your child's knowledge in a subject and to reinforce what was taught daily in the classroom. At this age, your child should have good computer skills to use with some homework writing assignments.

Helpful Ways to Tackle Homework:

- **Create a study routine.**
Complete your homework at the same time each day. Schedule other activities around study time. Choose a time of day when you have lots of energy.
- **Create a “Study Zone” in your home.**
Study in this “zone” each day. Make sure your study zone is free of distractions like TV, phone, music, your siblings, or a window view. Keep the top of your work area free of clutter, and be sure that your zone has good lighting.
- **Be sure there are good study tools in your study zone.**
These include your textbooks, pens and pencils, paper, your assignment folder or agenda, and a dictionary.
- **Think of school attendance and homework as a job.**
Successful adults treat their jobs as one of their top priorities; you must do the same.
- **Get comfortable, but not too comfortable!**
Avoid studying in your bed. It's time to study, not sleep!
- **Work steadily on major assignments, like term papers, over several weeks.**
Divide large assignments into small parts and attack them one at a time. Set goals for completion of these small sections and work steadily toward them. It is also easier to do the next assignment as soon as possible after a class while the subject and your interest are still fresh.
- **Take breaks during your study period.**
A good time to take a break is between subjects. Be sure to acknowledge your efforts and progression. During your break, you could eat a snack, call a friend, listen to music, or do something physical, like shooting hoops or taking a walk.
- **Maximize in-class learning.**
Attend class regularly and be on time. Sit near the front of the class so you can hear and see. Participate in classroom discussions and listen carefully. Take good notes and review them as soon after class as possible, adding any missing information and writing down any questions you may have. Don't try to write down every word (unless it's a quote, rule or law) – listen for **keywords**. If your teacher **emphasizes** a point, such as by writing it on the board, put it in your notes. If your class discusses a topic, note any major **conclusions**.
- **When you study, experience the information in as many ways as possible.**
Read the information aloud, write it down, explain it to a friend or family member. Consider creating and using index cards as an extra way to review the material.

- **Organize the information.**
People process information in different ways. Some people like to draw pictures or charts to digest information; others like to read aloud, make detailed outlines or create index cards. Do whatever works for you.
- **Take advantage of any free time.**
If you have a study period or a long bus ride, use the time to review notes, prepare for an upcoming class, or start your homework.
- **Study with a friend.**
Unless it's too distracting, get together with friends and classmates to quiz yourselves, compare notes, and predict test questions.
- **Eat healthy.**
Good nutrition can lead to good grades. Making smart food choices will give you sustained energy and boost your brain power. Low energy and poor concentration can mean it's been too long since your last meal. Be sure to eat three meals a day (don't skip breakfast!) and try limiting sugar, sodas, junk food and fast foods. Eat lean protein and fiber, drink plenty of water, and choose "power foods" (blueberries, walnuts, salmon) whenever possible to keep your brain and body happy and functioning at their peak!
- **Exercise regularly**
Try to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. As well as keeping your body healthy, it will boost your mood, energy and focus.
- **Get plenty of sleep!**
"Middle and High Schoolers whose parents don't require them to be in bed before midnight on school nights are 42% more likely to be depressed than teens whose parents require a 10:00 p.m. or earlier bedtime. And teens who are allowed to stay up late are 30% more likely to have had suicidal thoughts in the past year..."~USA Today, June 9, 2009. Adolescents (11-22 years old) need 9 hours and 15 minutes of sleep. Due to normal hormonal changes during adolescence, teenagers naturally want to stay up late. Unfortunately, they have to be up early for school. In addition to contributing to depression and suicidal thoughts, lack of sleep can make their mind dull and keep them from functioning effectively. Creating bed-time rituals can be helpful for teens to get enough sleep.

Analyzing an Assignment with Your Child

Analyze a specific assignment with your child and make sure that he/she can answer some of the following questions?

- ***Do I understand why I have to read this material?*** *What do I already know about this subject? What predictions can I make about this material even before I read? Where can I get additional information help if I needed?*
- ***How much help is allowed?*** Can I do the work alone, or with another person? Encourage him/her to enlist the support he needs by keeping handy the phone numbers or e-mail addresses of reliable classmates, grandparent, etc.

- ***How much help am I allowed?*** What parts of the assignment must I do myself, and what specific parts am I permitted to get help with? If he/she doesn't know or suddenly forgets, call or e-mail their teacher and get clarification.
- ***Strategies and tactics I can use to learn this?*** Allow ten minutes for strategizing and developing tactics. Write only the most important point of each paragraph and look for main ideas in the first or second line of each paragraph. Make up quiz questions for each chapter and then quiz someone. Make rhymes to link important names and dates.
- ***When is the work due?*** How many thirty-minute homework sessions do I think I can fit into my schedule before the project is due?
- ***How much time will I need to learn this?*** Set time limits and short-term goals to stay focused and on task. Set the kitchen timer in fifteen-minute intervals. How many math problems were completed in that time? For long-term reports, teach him/her to use the “new task” and calendar features in the office program standard on most computers.

LEARNING STYLES AND TEST PREPARATION

Identifying your child’s learning style will help him/her in becoming a better learner and in doing homework assignments. People tend to favor a one learning style over the other. They do not necessarily choose which learning style suits them best; it is something they are born with.

Three Learning Styles

Visual Learners: Seeing

Visual learners do best by sitting at the front of the classroom, taking detailed notes, seeing the teacher’s body language and facial expressions during lectures to understand a lesson. They may think in pictures and learn best from diagrams, illustrated textbooks, videos, hand-outs, and other visual displays.

Auditory Learners: Listening

Auditory learners learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, and by reading text books aloud. They like to talk things through, listen, interpret the underlying meanings of speech by listening to a speaker’s tone of voice, speed, pitch, etc.

Kinesthetic/Tactile Learner: Moving, Touching, and Doing

Tactile persons learn best through a hands-on approach, activities, and by actively exploring the physical world that surrounds them.

Testing Preparation and Advice

Make sure that your child is sufficiently prepared to take the standardized tests and teacher prepared tests. Talk to your child's teacher often to monitor his/her progress and to find out what activities you can do at home that may help your child's test performance. Know as much about the standard test as possible. Contact your child's teacher, to find out about the content of the standard test. Ask if there are practice tests, or exercises that are available in preparing your child. *Find out from the school if your child qualifies for special test-taking accommodations.* If your child has been identified for special services or has a learning disability, he/she may be exempt from the test or may need to take it under special conditions.

Tips to Help Improve your Child's Test-Taking Skills (teacher-made or standardized):

- Tell your child that the best way to prepare for tests is to study and know the work. Remind your child that tests are part of the educational routine. To develop skills used in a testing situation, incorporate "test taking" behavior into homework activities. When appropriate, time certain activities (math problems, etc. Have your child write a story as a writing activity, and skip items while doing homework that he/she does not know and come back to the topic.
- Be sensitive and think of ways to diffuse your child's anxiety. Talking about the test may cause her/him stress. Build in physical activity and downtime throughout the test-taking period. Don't be overly anxious about test scores, but encourage your child to take tests seriously.
- Make sure that your child is in school during the testing sessions.
- Make sure that you are aware of your child's performance and that you can help interpret the results when they become available.
- Remember to keep well-informed about your child's tests. Know how test results are used, and how they will affect your child's placement in school.
- Encourage your child to study over a period of time rather than "cram" the night before.
- Make sure that your child eats breakfast, get the regular amount of sleep and is well-rested.
- Encourage your child to do his/her best.

TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Learning to schedule enough time to complete an assignment may be difficult for your child. Learning to organize time into productive blocks takes practice and experience. The following suggestions can help your child get organized and meet the demands of school and balancing social and extracurricular activities.

Tips to help your child manage time:

- Have your child track assignments on a monthly calendar, working backward from the due date of larger assignments and break them into nightly tasks.

- Help your child record how much time she/he spends on homework each week so she/he can figure out how to divide this time into manageable chunks.
- Together designate a time for homework and help your child stick to this schedule.
- If the allocated time is not enough, help your child find other times for schoolwork, such as early mornings and/or weekends.

Tips to help your child prioritize:

- Ask your child to write down all the things he/she needs to do, including non-school-related activities.
- Ask him/her to label each task from 1 to 3, with 1 being most important.
- Ask about each task so that you understand your child's priorities. If he/she labels all his social activities as 1, then you know where his/her attention is focused.
- Help your child change some of the labels to better prioritize for academic success. Then suggest he/she rewrite the list so all the one's are at the top.
- Check in frequently to see how the list is evolving and how your child is prioritizing new tasks.

Tips to help your child concentrate:

- Turn off access to email and games when your child works on the computer.
- Declare the phone and TV off-limits and separate him/her from siblings during homework time.
- Find space that fits the assignment. If your child is working on a science project, she/he may need lots of space.

BALANCING EDUCATION AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Balancing the demands of schoolwork and activities is one of your child's greatest challenges. Parents must allow kids to pursue their hopes and dreams while stressing that education comes first. Make sure your child understands that schoolwork is also ahead of sports on the priority list. Communication with the school principal, coach, and teachers is essential for striking a balance between sports, activities, and studies. Let them know your expectations and limits.

Help Your Kids Strike a Balance

- Help your child set priorities. Make a list of your child's after-school activities and athletic activities in order of importance. Determine how much time will be required for each activity, homework, practice, games, and driving to and from all of the activities. Then, help your child work out a daily, weekly, and season-long schedule that makes time for family, school, activities and everything else.

- Set aside a certain fixed period every day for quiet study. Encourage your child to get the most difficult homework assignments done early in the day, before late-afternoon practices, and use remaining time to read or work on future assignments. Attend meetings and work with coaches and school officials to minimize the interference of sports and activities with academics. Encourage them to help by making sure meetings, practices, and games do not interfere with the school day. Find out what the expectations and the consequences are for students who fall behind in their school work. Let them know about your child's other commitments.
- Be a good role model: set priorities for yourself and stick to them. A parent who promises to spend only three hours at the office on the weekend should keep his word. Point out athletes who maintain good grades.
- Watch for signs of burnout, i.e., falling grades, diminished interest in other activities, and fatigue.

MOTIVATION

Motivating An Underachieving Preteen

Unmotivated preteens want to succeed. Often they are being held back by an obstacle, fear of failure, or a memory of a time they failed. To help your child you need to recognize, identify, and understand the causes behind his/her underachievement. Once you have an idea of the source of the problem, you can develop a strategy to remove any psychological or environmental obstacles to your child's academic success. Tapping into your child's passions and interests is a great way to get him/her motivated. When our interests are validated, we eagerly spend time and money to learn whatever new skills may be necessary. This is true for all of us, and it especially true for preteens.

Some Causes for Lack of Motivation:

- Low self-esteem
- Perceived or real lack of support at home
- Perceived or real low expectations in the classroom
- Perceived or real pressure and tension

What to Do:

- Celebrate your child's successes, no matter how small.
- Let your child know that failure is often part of the learning process.
- Show respect for your child's individuality, unique abilities, and learning style.
- Set small, attainable goals at first.
- Give positive feedback for performance.
- Link school lessons to your child's life.
- Find creative and spontaneous ways to stimulate learning opportunities
- Have siblings cooperate in supporting each other in studying and doing homework.

- Find out and link your child's interests to academics. If your child is interested in music, give him/her books about musicians. Allow him to investigate and discover his interests.
- With guidance, give your child control and choices, like determining his/her school project topics.
- Make a clear list of unacceptable behaviors and resulting consequences. For instance, a failing grade in a class might result in the loss of a favorite privilege until the grade is raised. Resist the temptation to ground your child indefinitely or to take away all prized possessions.
- Use rewards carefully. External rewards are likely to result in limited progress that vanishes when the reward disappears. Your child will do activities because of the feelings of enjoyment and accomplishment they evoke.

What Not To Do

- Put your child down, threaten, and try to shame her/him into achievement.
- Set rigid, arbitrary rules and high, lofty goals that are overwhelming and create an authoritarian atmosphere to force your child to comply.
- Act unresponsive and uncaring when they perform well and are back on track.
- Allow gifted child to remain in classes that do not stimulate them academically.
- Set siblings against each other in competition to be better than one another.
- Push your child to be interested in what you think he/she should be interested in.
- Insist they do well at specific subjects to "get anywhere" or compete with others.
- Avoid power struggles. Choose your battles wisely.

TUTORING

If your child is struggling in school or trying to get ahead, get information from your school about tutoring opportunities at your child's school, community or about a tutor that may meet your child's needs.

Your child may benefit from a tutor if:

- They seem to be trying, but his grades do not show it
- Homework is incomplete or not done well
- There is an increasing lack of confidence and motivation about school
- They are very anxious about tests
- The teacher says your child is misbehaving

Tutoring Options:

- **Online Tutoring:** The internet provides instant access to information and kids find learning online fun and engaging.
- **Private Tutors:** Tutors are usually highly skilled experienced teachers with an individualized approach. There may be lack of constituency in curriculum

materials and methods.

- **Tutoring Centers:** Usually students get a lot of individual attention in small groups. The curriculum materials and instruction methods are standardized.
- **Peer Tutoring:** Is good for students who intend on “keeping up and who enjoy the social interaction with other students. This is not a good remedy for students with academic problems.
- **In School Tutoring:** Is usually held before, during or after school. This type of tutoring often relies on volunteers, so skills and training may vary. Contact your child’s teacher or counselor to determine if volunteers are available to meet your child’s needs.

Suggestions if You Plan to Hire a Tutor:

- Ask the tutor for their credentials, academic background, teaching experience, references (names and phone numbers of parents who have gone to him/her)
- Ask to review curriculum materials, texts, or workbooks that will be used and if they are up-to-date.
- Ask the tutor is if his/she is willing to call your child’s teacher periodically and perhaps meet in person to report progress, discuss long-range assignments, and continue to assess how to best meet your child’s needs in the classroom.

THINGS TO BE AWARE OF

The pre-teen and teen years bring many wonderful growth milestones, but sometimes it can also bring up troubling issues. While not every child may be faced with these issues it is important for parents to be informed and prepared to take action if necessary.

“Home is the place where boys and girls first learn how to limit their wishes, abide by rules, and consider the rights and needs of others.”

— *Sidonie Gruenberg, author*

ISSUES THAT MIGHT ARISE DURING 7TH GRADE

Negative Peer Pressure

Family is important to teens:

Develop a close, open, and honest relationship with your child. He/she is likely to come to you when she/he is in trouble or are having problems. Listen and talk about the strong need to belong and fit in. Let him/her know it is normal to want to fit in and that peer pressure is something all children and adults experience at sometime. Plan regular and frequent activities the whole family can participate in such as picnics, sports, etc. Children are less likely to give into peer pressure or gangs if parents spend quality time with them.

Stay Involved in Your Child's Life

- Encourage your preteen to pursue a wide variety of friendships with positive role models, and to join groups or do activities, which involve interacting with positive role models (i.e. sports, church groups).
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents to determine if they are a positive influence and have similar values. Don't criticize friends who might be a negative influence. Your child is likely to become defensive and continue to be with them. Do discuss specific behaviors and actions, "It seems like every time you are with Tom you get into trouble".
- Know where your child is at all times and who he/she is with. Supervise them at home.

Help Your Child Develop a Positive Self-Image

- Encourage responsibility, individuality, independence, and assertiveness: model, role play, and demonstrate these behaviors. Stress the importance of being one's own person and doing what one feels is right.
- Praise assertiveness and good decisions
- Provide appropriate discipline when he/she gives into peer pressure, such as restricting privileges, or not letting your child spend time with the friend(s) with whom he/she got into trouble.

If you are suspicious that your child may have given into peer pressure, try to figure out the reason and address it. **Seek help** if she/he is consistently giving into peer pressure.

Signs of Peer Pressure

- Excessive demands for material things his/her friends have
- Disregarding your rules in order to do things with friends
- Stealing with friends
- Any hint of alcohol or drugs
- Seriously misleading you about friends or whereabouts
- Doing things to avoid rejection like going along with friends who use poor judgment

Show You Care

- Always take time to really listen and be accepting of your child
- Give children privacy; preteens need space
- Don't rush the teen years or raise false expectations
- Develop a strong sense of family unity by spending time together
- Talk about sex, drugs and alcohol

BULLYING

What is bullying?

Bullying is abusive behavior by one or more students against a victim or victims. It can be a direct attack--teasing, taunting, threatening, stalking, name-calling, hitting, making threats, coercion, and stealing—or more subtle through malicious gossiping, spreading rumors, and intentional exclusion. Both result in victims becoming socially

rejected and isolated.

Bullying is a common experience for many children and teens. Direct bullying seems to increase through the elementary school years, peak in the middle school/junior high school years, and decline during the high school years. Although direct physical assault seems to decrease with age, verbal abuse appears to remain constant.

Whether the bullying is direct or indirect, the key component to bullying is **physical or psychological intimidation that occurs repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse.**

The Coffee County School System takes bullying problems seriously. Being bullied or bullying is not just part of growing up! Bullying is a learned behavior that can be prevented. Bullying occurs in several forms such as hitting, treats, and insults, spreading rumors, or leaving a person out of an activity or group.

Cyberbullying occurs when the bully uses the internet or a cell phone to threaten, harass or embarrass people.

Being bullied can cause academic problems, social isolation, and mental health problems. Bullies are at higher risk for academic problems, violence, and crime. If your child is a by stander encourage him/her to report the bullying to school staff. Many of our schools offer bully prevention programs. Inquire at your child's school about the bullying programs that are offered at school.

The difference between bullying and normal conflict:

Normal Conflict	Bullying
Happens occasionally	Happens repeatedly
Accidental	Done on purpose
Not serious	Serious threat of physical or emotional harm
Equal emotional reaction	Strong emotional reaction on part of the victim
Not seeking power or attention	Seeking power or control
Not trying to get something	Trying to gain material things or power
Shows remorse takes responsibility	No remorse blames victim
Effort to solve the problem	No effort to solve the problem

What if I think my child is a bully?

If you suspect your child is bullying others, it's important to seek help for him or her as soon as possible. Without intervention, bullying can lead to serious academic, social, emotional and legal difficulties. You may wish to talk to your child's pediatrician, teacher, principal, school counselor, or family physician.

What if I think my child is being bullied?

Victims of bullies often fear school and consider it to be an unsafe and unhappy place. Victims will often stay home 'sick' rather than go to school or travel on the school bus. Victims experience real suffering that can interfere with their social and emotional development, as well as their school performance.

If you suspect your child may be the victim of bullying ask him or her to tell you what's going on. It's important to respond in a positive and accepting manner. Ask your child what he or she thinks should be done. What's already been tried? What worked and what didn't? Help your child practice what to say to the bully so he or she will be prepared the next time.

Other specific suggestions include the following:

- Know the school policies that protect students from harassment, bullying, and physical violence. All students have the right to a safe and secure learning environment. Get copies of these policies and procedures.
- Seek help from your child's teacher, the school counselor, and school administrators.
- Notify the police if your child is assaulted.

If your child becomes withdrawn, depressed, reluctant to go to school, or if you see a decline in school performance, additional consultation or intervention may be required.

Additional Information:

- <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/>
- <http://www.bullybust.org/>
- <http://www.bullying.org/>
- <http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/parents/resources/bullies.html>
- <http://www.education.com/topic/school-bullying-teasing/>
- <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/topics/bullying.asp>

DRUG, ALCOHOL, and TOBACCO USE & ABUSE

Preteens and teens use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco for many reasons. They may be curious, want to fit in to reduce stress, feel grown up, enhance socialization, or because it feels good. The number one reason children give for not taking drugs is that a caring adult will object! Children who have positive and strong connections with a caretaker (parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle or mentor) do not want to jeopardize that relationship. If your child does make a mistake, help her to get back on track. Do not condemn her/him personally; instead, condemn the behavior and continue to believe in your child.

Remember, you are your child's strongest ally against drugs!

Make a Difference

- Rehearse strategies for saying “no” or walking away from others who may be pressing him/her to experiment with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. Remind your child to leave any situation that feels uncomfortable. Make sure he/she has money for transportation or a phone call.
- Help your child resist friendships that are not in his or her best interest. If your child's friends use drugs, drink, or smoke, it is likely that your child will use too. Be aware of unsupervised situations.
Help your child to deal with frustration, rejection, and disappointments in a positive, rather than self-destructive manner. Pay attention to how your child is feeling by listening and recognizing when he/she is going through tough times. Provide unconditional support or seek additional care if it is needed. Talk with your child about sad and angry feelings that arise due to things that are not working out well.
- Support areas where he/she can build self-esteem on experience success. Help your child succeed at school by addressing learning problems or

- difficulties with your child's teacher. Work out a program of study that will assure he/she meets realistic goals. Find extracurricular activities that give your child a sense of accomplishment and acceptance in a group.
- Help your child develop healthy outlets to release pressure, such as music, art, sports, etc. Point out that these activities are ways to cope with stress and help him/her identify how to can feel good in a healthy way. Look at your own styles of coping and be willing to talk about these, too!
 - Be honest and have open discussions about drugs. Learn the facts about drugs through school programs your child is attending or other sources. Talk to your preteen about the ways that drugs and alcohol are promoted in the media. Use opportunities that arise, song lyrics, television shows or advertising that suggest drugs, alcohol, or smoking are glamorous. Point these subliminal messages out to your child and separate myth from reality.
 - Point out the legal issues- that it against the law for kids to buy cigarettes or drink or do drugs. Let your child know they can come to you for help and information.
 - Establish firm rules and consequences for using alcohol, tobacco, or drugs at all – even just a little sip or a quick drag.

Inform your Child about the Risks of Drug and Alcohol Experimentation and Usage

- Increase risk of serious use later in life
- School failure
- Impaired judgment
- Risk of accidents
- Unplanned and unsafe sex
- Vulnerability of Sexual Assault
- Suicide
- Deadly Overdose
- Drowning
- Violent Behavior

Unappealing Problems of Smoking Cigarettes

- Pale, wrinkly skin,
- Stained clothes, bad-smelling clothes
- Bad-smelling breath, yellow teeth
- Feeling tired and cranky
- Making it harder to be physically active and play sports
- A nagging, unattractive cough
- Trouble breathing
- Less spending money – smoking is expensive
-

The following are warning signs of alcohol and drug abuse that may include:

- Physical: Fatigue, repeated health complaints, red and glazed eyes, and/or a lasting cough.

- **Emotional:** Personality change, sudden mood changes, irritability, irresponsibility, low self-esteem, poor judgment, depression, and a general lack of interest.
- **Family:** Starting arguments, breaking rules, or withdrawing from the family.
- **School:** Decrease interest, negative attitude, drop in grades, absences, truancy, and discipline problems.
- **Social problems:** Selects new friends who are less interested in home, school, and activities, problems with the law, and changes to a less conventional style in dress and music.

Some of the warning signs listed above can also be signs of other problems, so physical causes should be ruled out.

Most commonly used illegal drugs:

- Marijuana (pot)
- Stimulants (Cocaine, LSD, PCP, opiates, heroin, designer drug Ecstasy)
- Methamphetamine (also known as speed, meth, chalk, tina, and ice).

Legal drugs that your child could abuse:

- Alcohol
- Cigarettes
- Some types of prescription drugs and over the counter medications

STUDENT SAFETY TIPS

General Safety Guidelines:

- Know and follow the school's safety policies.
- If you walk to school, walk with a friend.
- If you drive to school, always secure your vehicle.
- Carry your keys in hand. You'll be ready to move into your car quickly.
- Never carry large sums of money with you.
- Always tell your parents where you plan to be before and after school.
- Make sure that your emergency contact card at school is updated.
- Report all suspicious activity whether on or off campus.
- Immediately report any information about a student with weapons.
- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Investigate the campus during broad daylight. Be familiar with the general layout of the buildings and walkways.
- Walk in groups and stay in well lit areas.
- Carry a whistle with you. If in danger you can blow it to create attention and it cannot be used to harm you.
- Avoid high risk situations and seek help from an adult.
- Speak up about and refuse to participate in negative or criminal behavior.
- Follow instructions of school, law enforcement officials or other emergency response personnel.

- Refrain from teasing, bullying and/or harassing other students. While others may be different from you, be accepting and respectful of their differences. Remember, you also want to be accepted and respected for your uniqueness as well.

Cell Phone:

- Never leave your full name on your answering machine.
- Have 911 programmed on your phone.
- Report any threatening text messages.

INTERNET SAFETY TIPS

The first step in reducing risks online is talking. Talking to your children about what they should and should not do when they are online. Keep the computer in a common area. Find out the activities they are currently doing online and talk about them. Then, review these important tips with your child to help keep them and their personal information safe when using the computer.

General Tips:

- Do not go to private chat rooms without your parents being aware.
- Always tell you parents when you are going online.
- Never give out any personal information about yourself, particularly where you attend school, your name, address, or phone number.
- Report all electronic harassment and/or abuse to your parents.
- Never set up meetings with anyone. If someone tries to arrange a meeting with you immediately notify your parent or guardian, and notify local law enforcement.

Tempted to meet someone face-to-face that you know only from online chats?

Remember: anyone can pretend to be anyone online. A skilled predator will pretend to be exactly the type of person you are looking for; otherwise you wouldn't be interested in getting together, would you? If you think you can't come in contact with a predator, think again. Predators go anywhere you go on the Internet. MySpace found 30,000 sex offenders with profiles and they are just the ones who used their real names to register.

Sharing too much information about yourself?

Giving out personal information could lead a predator straight to your door. Set all online profiles of yourself to PRIVATE or FRIENDS ONLY. You, your friends, and your athletic teams are putting information about you onto the web. If the world can see that information, so can a predator or a stalker. Guard your personal information and ask others to be careful with it as well.

There is another potential problem that you might not consider: Identity Theft.

This is a crime in which someone establishes credit in your name. Unfortunately for you, the credit history that is established will not be a good one and it will take a lot of time and effort to clean up the mess. Giving out personal information should be **your** decision. Just because an interesting website asks for your personal information doesn't mean you should give it out. **Be careful posting photos of yourself on the web.** Photos placed on public sites can be manipulated and placed back on public sites. Such photos of you might prove to be embarrassing or worse – not the kind of photo you would want a college admissions committee or potential employer to see.

What do you know about intellectual properties?

Do you know that intellectual properties are protected by copyright law? Using another's intellectual properties without their permission is illegal. Many owners of intellectual properties view piracy and plagiarism as stealing. Illegal downloading of movies and music can have serious legal and monetary consequences. The music industry has taken legal action against some offenders, typically costing the person thousands of dollars to resolve.

Here are some examples of intellectual property: music recordings; videos; photographs; drawings; magazine articles; computer games; computer software; books.

Plagiarizing can seriously damage your academic record, which could adversely affect college admission or getting a job.

HELPFUL LINKS

- www.cybercrime.gov/rules
- www.cybercitizenship.org
- www.copyrightkids.org
- www.bsacybersafety.com/index.cfm

PROTECTING YOUR COMPUTER

- **E-mails from unknown sources** may contain attachments that introduce viruses that permanently damage your computer. **Forwarding e-mails** from unknown sources can reveal your friend's email address to the sender and possibly infect your friend's computer with a virus.
- **File sharing** can lead to a virus or provide access to information contained on your hard drive.
- **Installing a firewall** can help protect your computer from the problems created by hackers.
- **Anti-Virus software** can help protect your files.
- **Disconnecting your Internet when not in use** is the best way to prevent anyone from using the Internet's "two way street" to get into your computer.
- **Posting you re-mail address on public sites** allows spammers to find it and send you junk mail.