

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

ELMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



May 2020

Energize your student's efforts through the end of the year

With only a few weeks left in the school year, your middle schooler may be tempted to coast toward summer vacation. But these weeks are just as important to her education as the rest of the year, and she needs to stay focused.

To motivate your child to keep working hard through the last day of school:

- **Make expectations clear.** Tell your child that you expect her to continue to do her best. If she stops completing assignments, or if her grades start slipping, you will enforce the consequences.
- **Show that you care** about the things she is learning. You may be pretty familiar by now with what goes on in your child's classes, but don't stop asking about what she's reading, discussing and doing at school. Remind her to concentrate on learning, not just on passing her classes.
- **Maintain school year routines.** School starts at the same time as always, so don't let more daylight turn into later bedtimes.
- **Emphasize time management.** As the number of school days dwindles, it's vital for students to make each one count. Have your child put all her deadlines on a calendar, and block out the times she'll spend doing the work to meet them.



Art helps students cope with emotions

Adolescence is filled with changes. This can overwhelm middle schoolers, making them moody and affecting their ability to learn. Art is an effective tool for helping them process their feelings and regain balance.

Art can help kids understand and name their emotions—often the first step in regulating them. If moodiness strikes your child, here are some projects to suggest:

- **Create a mandala.** Mandalas are geometric designs that can start as a series of circles. Your child can use one circle for each day of the month. Then he can use color and design to reflect his feelings on each day.

- **Design a display box.** He can collect items that make him happy, such as a pebble from a favorite place, and arrange them in a box in a visually pleasing way.

If your child doesn't want to share his art, just tell him you are available to talk. And if he seems anxious or sad all the time, consult his doctor.

Source: J. Fraga, "How Making Art Helps Teens Better Understand Their Mental Health," KQED News, nswc.com/mid_mental.

Give a purpose to writing

Writing isn't something teachers assign to torture their students. It has a purpose. This summer, help your child discover that writing for a purpose about a great topic can be fun! Encourage her to write:

- **A letter** to the editor of a news outlet to explain her views on an issue. Or a letter of praise or complaint to a company about a product.
- **Fan fiction** to share creative stories about media characters with other fans.
- **A journal** to record what it's like to be a person her age in 2020.

Share a news reading habit

To encourage a lifelong habit of reading for information, tap into your middle schooler's developing ability to understand current events. Read a newspaper in print or online every day, and share at least one article of interest with your child. Challenge him to share an article each day with you as well.



Nurture family connections

Take advantage of your child's additional time at home this summer to strengthen your family ties. Here are some easy ways to add quality to your time together:

- **Celebrate weekends.** Have your child make a list of low-cost activities she'd like to do with you. Schedule time to do them.
- **Plant a garden.** Involve your child in the planning, planting, watering and harvesting.
- **Share more meals as a family.** Your child's looser schedule should make her more available—not only to eat, but also to help you prepare food and clean up.





How can I make the move up to high school less scary?

Q: My child will be going to high school in the fall. He has loved middle school, but he seems overwhelmed by the idea of starting again at a new school. Is there anything I can do this summer to make this move easier for him?

A: Yes! It's true that the transition to high school is a big one. Several things you can do this summer will help your rising ninth grader be ready for it:



- **Identify his concerns.** When your child mentions high school, encourage him to discuss his feelings about it. You may discover that rather than being worried about making friends, as you thought, he's actually afraid of getting lost in the halls or having more homework.
- **Practice organization skills.** Your child will probably take more classes in high school. His workload may indeed be bigger. To help him prepare, give him a small calendar (or let him download a calendar app) and encourage him to use it to keep track of his appointments, family responsibilities and activities.
- **Arrange a visit.** Ask the high school if your child can take a tour. Familiarity with the layout will make him more relaxed on the first day.
- **Encourage him to contact** a current freshman. Hearing first-hand how someone else made the transition can boost his confidence.



Are you making safety a priority?

It's appropriate to grant your middle schooler more freedom as she shows more responsibility. But ensuring her safety continues to be *your* responsibility. Are you preparing for a safe summer? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you take** your child's maturity into account before assigning chores like mowing the lawn with a riding mower?
- ___ **2. Do you insist** that your child tell you where she is going, what she's doing and with whom?
- ___ **3. Do you discourage** your child from hanging out with friends after dark?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your child to drink plenty of water when working, playing or exercising in the heat?
- ___ **5. Do you require** your child to use sunscreen and appropriate safety equipment, such as a helmet when riding a bike?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are focusing on summer safety. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

"Safety isn't expensive ... it's priceless."
—Jerry Smith

'Invest' in financial literacy

Most middle schoolers are interested in money. Use that interest to build math skills and financial literacy. Have your child play this stock market game:

- 1. Explain that stocks** are small pieces, or *shares*, of a company. Their value depends on how many people want to buy them.
- 2. Give your child** an imaginary amount of money to invest.
- 3. Show him the stock listings** online or in the newspaper. Let him decide which stocks, and how much of each, to "buy."
- 4. Have him track** the value of his stocks for a month. Based on what he learns, what would he do differently next time?

Support success by listening

Research shows that listening respectfully when your child voices ideas and opinions at home can make her happier and more confident—and more motivated in school.

When your child has something to say, really listen to her. Consider her points. You may not agree, but by hearing her out, you are giving her the confidence to speak up and contribute in class and elsewhere in life.

Source: "Study: Whether in U.S. or Ghana, teens thrive most when parents listen to their perspectives," Clark University, niswc.com/self-expression.

Encourage summer service

If your child can find just one hour a week this summer, he can do something significant to help others and himself. He could:

- **Collect** canned food for a food bank.
- **Tutor** a younger child.
- **Organize** friends to write letters thanking active-duty servicepeople, and send them to an organization such as Operation Gratitude (www.operationgratitude.com).



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