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MIDDLE SCHOOL

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Your School Name Here  
Your Name and Title Here

Sample Issue

## BUILDING RESPECT

### Teach respect by example

Respect isn't something parents simply teach. They must also *show* it. When you demonstrate how respect looks, you are helping your preteen become respectful herself. (Remember: *Respect* and *obedience* are different. Your preteen may obey you out of fear. Showing respect for you is healthier and more meaningful.) To demonstrate respect, be:



- **Polite.** Say *please*, *thank you* and *excuse me* when talking to your preteen. Don't barge into her room, either. Knock.
- **Kind.** Don't insult or belittle your preteen. Making a mistake doesn't mean she's "worthless" or "no good."
- **Compassionate.** Never purposely embarrass your preteen or tell jokes at her expense. If a story about her makes him cringe, stop telling it.
- **Fair.** Don't judge or punish your preteen before learning the facts. Show respect by hearing her side of the story.
- **Dependable.** If you tell your preteen you'll do something, do it. Earn her respect by proving that you're reliable. Also admit what you can't do.
- **Honest.** "Little white lies" may chip away at your preteen's respect for you. She watches what you say and do, so always try to do the right thing.
- **A leader.** When you see poor behavior on TV, talk about it. Help your teen see how disrespect can lead to bigger problems.

Source: Steve McChesney, "Respect—How to teach it and how to show it," Teach-Nology.com.

## MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

### You are your child's greatest motivator

Studies show that positive adult influence is critical to a preteen's success. You can motivate your preteen just by being there with positive support. There are no secrets to being a solid role model for your preteen—just some commonsense ways to keep him motivated. For example:

- **Get to know your child.** Avoid snap judgments about his character. Your preteen is more than the clothes he likes to wear or the music he listens to.
- **Sing his praises.** Preteens are sometimes seen as troublemakers. Don't let that perception stand.
- **Listen to him.** Don't dismiss your preteen's opinions because he's "just a kid." Pay attention when he tells you something. This everyday respect may be the biggest motivator of all.

Source: Anthony W. Jackson, ed., *Making the Most of Middle School*, ISBN: 978-08077-44765 (Teachers College Press).

## ENCOURAGING READING

### Avid reading gets results

Children who are always reading books on their own (in addition to those assigned by teachers) are "different" from kids who rarely read. Avid readers:

- **Concentrate** better.
- **Are** stronger writers.
- **Learn** new things with less effort.
- **Score** higher on standardized tests.
- **Enjoy** learning more.

Encourage your child to read outside of school. Take frequent trips to the library or bookstore. Give books as gifts. And allow your child to choose appropriate books that reflect his interests.

Source: Mary Leonhardt, *Keeping Kids Reading*, ISBN: 0-5178-8849-1 (Three Rivers Press).

## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Put your adolescent in charge of responsibility

Your preteen can handle tasks that you recently had to do yourself. Consider increasing your expectations. To help your child meet responsibilities:

- **Stop nagging.** Your child knows she needs to do schoolwork and chores.
- **Use lists and calendars.** Put her in charge of checking and monitoring them.



Source: Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese, *The Roller-Coaster Years*, ISBN: 0-553-06684-6 (Broadway, a division of Random House).

## IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

### Every minute counts

Attendance at school is more than just showing up. It's showing up *on time* and being productive from the beginning of class until the end. The first few minutes of class can set the tone for being successful or unsuccessful that day.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### When is 'another chance' one too many for your child?

**Q:** When I use consequences with my child, sometimes he begs for another chance. I can tell he's sorry. Should I give in?

**A:** "It will never happen again." "Next time, I'll call. I really will!" Statements like these, coming from a child, sound familiar to nearly every parent. Many kids will talk and beg for hours rather than accept the results of their actions. But children respect parents who mean what they say and follow through. Remember to:

- **Keep it real.** Are you really going to ground him for a month? If you know in your heart that "a month" really means "the next two weekends," then just make it the next two weekends. Realistic consequences are better than harsh, empty threats.
- **Take the heat.** Your child may get angry with you. This is a last resort when parents won't back down. Stay calm, and give him a chance to calm down, too.
- **Skip the guilt.** Your child may describe you as the "bad guy." For example, "You're the worst parent ever!" But others try a tactic that can feel even worse to parents. They turn it on themselves. ("Oh, I'm a terrible person!") Reply that no, he isn't terrible, but his behavior was out of bounds. You are still going to enforce the consequence.

Source: Elaine M. Gibson, "Begging and Pleading for Mercy—Don't Fall for It," *The Challenge of Parenting*.



## PARENT QUIZ

### Do you stay involved with school?

Research shows that when parents help at school, children benefit in many ways. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see how involved you are:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you attend** parent-teacher conferences?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you go** to school events?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you keep** in touch with your child's teachers?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you volunteer** at school when you have time?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you read** all letters sent home by the school?

**How did you do?** Each *yes* answer means you're doing a great job of staying involved with your child's school. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

"All children behave as well as they are treated."  
—Anonymous

## SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

### Take bullying seriously

Bullying is a problem that has received a lot of attention lately. But it's especially common in middle school. Victims may avoid school and struggle with learning. They may even become depressed or violent themselves. If you suspect bullying, don't ignore it. Contact your child's school right away.

Source: "Caregivers' Guide to School Safety & Security," National Crime Prevention Council, [NCPC.org](http://NCPC.org).

## STUDY SKILLS

### Set a study schedule

A study routine can help middle schoolers avoid procrastination and finish their assignments more quickly. Have your child work in the same place at the same time each day. She can pick the spot—as long as it's reasonable and free of distractions.

Encourage her to make a schedule of how she plans to spend her study time. Remind her to include short (five- to 10-minute) breaks every hour.

## REINFORCING LEARNING

### Make time management a new priority

Middle schoolers need to be organized. They have many teachers and many assignments. Encourage your child to make daily and weekly "to do" lists.

To help, sit down with him on Sunday evenings and plan together.

Source: Nancy Firchow, "Organization and Time Management Strategies," Schwab Learning.org.



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