

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Jackson City School District

Help your middle schooler begin planning for a bright future

Life after high school is years away, but middle school is the right time for your child to begin thinking and planning for it. Over the next several years, your child will have choices to make that can affect options for higher education and careers.

To help your child consider the future, discuss:

- **Interests.** Ask your child, "What do you enjoy doing or learning about? Do you have a dream job?" Whether your student is interested in finance, fashion design or a skilled trade, it will likely involve education or training beyond high school. Help your child find out about available programs, their requirements and the application process.
- **Possibilities.** There are too many careers to count, and odds are your child hasn't heard of many of them. Go online together to learn about jobs in fields of interest. The [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) from the Department of Labor is a great place to start.
- **Goal setting.** What does your child hope to be in 10 years? A dental technician, a college graduate, a military pilot? Talk about what your middle schooler can do now to reach those goals, such as working harder in math or choosing higher level classes. It's OK if your child's dreams change over time—setting new goals can keep motivation flowing.



Reach out to reading allies at school

You have allies at school who can help you help your child become a more active and confident reader. Here are some ways to get help from your student's teachers, the school and your community in this important task:

- **Ask teachers** for suggestions. Your child's teachers may be able to tell you about books and series other middle schoolers enjoy. They can recommend authors and suggest titles your child can look for in the school library.
- **Visit book fairs.** If the school sponsors a book fair, encourage your child to go and spend some time looking through the books.

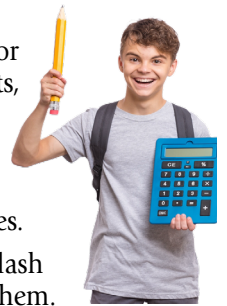
Have your child write down titles that look appealing. Then you can either buy one or borrow one from the library.

- **Enlist school friends.** Make a contract with your child and a couple of school friends: If they all read the same book and tell you about it, you'll have them over for a movie night, complete with snacks of their choice.

Offer math test success tips

Some middle schoolers aren't sure how to study for math tests. To boost results, suggest that your child:

- **Practice by redoing** problems from assignments and quizzes.
- **Write formulas** on flash cards, then memorize them.



On test day, remind your child to:

- **Write down memorized formulas** on the top of the test before starting.
- **Read directions carefully** and show all work.
- **Double-check work** for careless errors.

Pull the plug on back talk

Middle schoolers are at an age when they begin to question and challenge authority. They also hear rude and mocking language everywhere. To tame back talk from your child, model respectful communication.

Speak with the courtesy you expect your middle schooler to show others. If your child responds with back talk, say, "You are allowed to be upset with me, but you are not allowed to be rude to me." Then, restate your child's point to demonstrate how to express feelings appropriately.

Ease stress to aid learning

If managing academics and adolescence has your child feeling overwhelmed, suggest some stress-busters. Recommend that your middle schooler:

- **Breathe** deeply.
- **Relax** with a hobby.
- **Write** in a journal.
- **Stretch** for a few minutes.



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MIDDLE SCHOOL

November 2026



How can I help my child keep up when we are away?

Q: Our family will be traveling for the holidays next month, and my child will have to miss a week of school. What should we do so my child doesn't get behind?

A: Missing school creates challenges for students. If you can't change your plans to fit traveling into the winter break, take these steps to show that learning is still a priority and help your child stay on track:



- 1. Reach out to teachers** well in advance. Explain your situation, and ask if your child can get started now on readings or assignments planned for that time. Ask if there is a way your child can participate in classes remotely. While schools aren't able to accommodate all requests, the teachers will appreciate having advance notice.
- 2. Emphasize learning during your trip.** Explore museums or cultural attractions and discuss them as a family. Try to immerse your child in educational activities that are not available at home.
- 3. Plan time for reading, writing and studying.** Schedule daily time for your child to read for pleasure, write about your activities and solve some practice math problems.



Do you promote working with teachers?

Your child may prefer some teachers to others. But to do well in school, it's necessary to work productively with each of them. Are you helping your child have positive interactions with teachers? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- 1. Do you explain** that being polite to teachers is part of a student's responsibility?
- 2. Do you emphasize** that liking teachers isn't necessary to learn from them?
- 3. Do you help** your child figure out possible reasons for having issues in a class?
- 4. Do you encourage** your child to talk to teachers and try to work out issues that arise?
- 5. Do you contact** the teacher if your child is unable to work through an issue independently?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child work with teachers effectively. For each no, try that idea.

"Teaching is more than imparting knowledge; it is inspiring change. Learning is more than absorbing facts; it is acquiring understanding."
—William Arthur Ward

Foster essential tech skills

Being "tech-savvy" takes more than knowing how to code or use an app. Other factors—which help in all subjects—are necessary, too. Help your child develop:



- **Judgment.** Knowing how to tell if online information is accurate or relevant is vital. Help your child consider: *Does this present facts or opinions? Is this information up to date? Can I confirm it elsewhere?*
- **Planning.** How will your child use, display or present results?
- **Problem-solving.** Suggest things your child can try if something isn't working.

Engage and your child wins

When you get involved at school, three things happen that have a positive impact on your middle schooler's experience:

- 1. You gain** deeper knowledge of the school and how it operates.
- 2. You learn** whom to call with questions or concerns.
- 3. The school gains** an understanding of your family and your student's needs.

Inspire your child to persist

Persistence and determination help make completing large projects and overcoming challenges seem achievable. To encourage your child to apply them to schoolwork:

- **Praise progress.** "You're really coming along with that. You'll have it done soon!"
- **Suggest self-talk.** Saying things like "I know I can do a great job on this" can motivate your child to put in the effort.
- **Lead the way.** Pick a chore you've been putting off. Say, "Today I am going to get this finished." Then, follow through.

Source: M. Borba, *Parents Do Make a Difference*, Jossy-Bass.

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