The Central Valley Chronicle

March 2026

CENTRAL VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

INSTILLING PRIDE, INSPIRING OTHERS

MS. VLACH'S

COUGAR CONNECTION

FROM WINTER WINS TO SPRING GOALS

As we wrap up a busy winter season, I would like to congratulate our students who have participated in winter extracurricular activities. Whether competing, performing, or representing Central Valley in any capacity, your hard work, commitment, and accomplishments throughout the season have made us proud.

As we transition into the testing season, we ask families to be on the lookout for information regarding upcoming assessment dates and times. These assessments provide important data to guide instruction and support student growth. We appreciate your help in ensuring students are present, well-rested, and ready to do their best.

It is also hard to believe that we are preparing to enter the fourth quarter of the school year. Just this week, students have begun exploring class options, reviewing their four-year plans, and considering opportunities such as dual-credit courses to earn college credit while still in high school. In addition, our wide range of class options, including Career and Technical Education pathways, honors courses, and many other offerings at Central Valley, reflects the depth of expertise and dedication of our teachers. We are proud of the opportunities available to our students and look forward to helping each of them chart a path that aligns with their goals and interests.

And finally, as always, thank you for your continued support of Central Valley students. Your presence at activities, participation in parent-teacher conferences, and ongoing words of encouragement demonstrate your investment not only in your child's success, but in the strength of our entire CV community.

Go Cougars!

Central Valley Elementary

March Newsletter

From the Principal's Desk: Mr. Nick Carlson

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Cougar Community Recognition

January Star Student Winners (RESILIENT)



January Cougar Community Recognition





Marching Into Spring Together

As we turn the calendar to March, we can finally begin to see signs of spring on the horizon! This time of year brings renewed energy, longer days, and a fresh sense of motivation for our students.

March is an important stretch in the school year. Our classrooms are busy with meaningful learning, goal-setting, and continued growth across all subject areas. Students have come so far since August, and it's great to watch their confidence, independence, and skills continue to blossom.

As we move toward spring, we encourage families to keep routines strong and continue supporting learning at home. Reading together, practicing skills, and making sure students are at school each day ready to learn all make a tremendous difference.

We also have many fun and big events coming up this spring! From special activities to school-wide celebrations, there is a lot to look forward to. Please do your best to stay connected to the school through newsletters, classroom communication, and announcements so you don't miss out on important information and opportunities to be involved.

Here's to a strong and successful spring season!

Star Student Winners: Alysa Skinner, Cora Riddle, Amelia Kriewald, Krestyn Cargill, Andrea Wood, Brysen Berney, Chet Dugan, Brady Jensen, Lieah Quijada, Briar Freeman, Dax Nekoliczak N/P - Sophia Killinger

Cougar Community Recognition: Mrs. Whitney Wurst, Mrs. Michelle Wood

Central Valley Elementary

March Newsletter

CVE Core Values: Respectful, Kind, Responsible, Positive, Honest, Hard Working



Upcoming Events

March 4th
1:30 Dismissal

March 6th
NO SCHOOL Girls State Basketball

March 8th
Daylight Savings

March 12th
End of 3rd Qtr.

March 13th
NO SCHOOL Boys State Basketball

March 17th
St. Patrick's Day

March 18th
Movie Munch-a-Thon

March 20th
8:30 AR Bowling Party 3rd - 6th Grade

March 27th
8:30 AR Bowling Party K - 2nd Grade
3:00 Cougar Community Recognition

January Golden Spoon Winner: Ms. Smyth's 2nd Grade Class



Central Valley Elementary

March Newsletter

CVE Core Values: Respectful, Kind, Responsible, Positive, Honest, Hard Working



2nd Semester Cougar Point Goal:



100,000 Points



Semester Two Total: 46,500



One Book, One School

Featuring: *The One and Only Ivan*











Central Valley Elementary

March Newsletter

CVE Core Values: Respectful, Kind, Responsible, Positive, Honest, Hard Working



WAY TO GO, STAR STUDENTS!





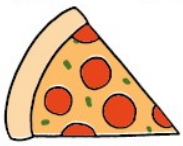




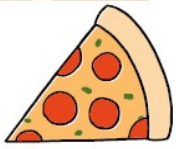


January Pizza with the Principal





Sponsored by the Central Valley PTO!





Central Valley Elementary

March Newsletter

CVE Core Values: Respectful, Kind, Responsible, Positive, Honest, Hard Working





Decorating with Dad









Scholarship Blood Drive

The third FCCLA Scholarship blood drive for this school term was held on February 24, 2026. We missed our goal due to the illness bug and collected 41 units.



Milestone Donors

- First pint - Jon Bernt
- 1 Gallon - Jordan Beck
- 2 Gallons - Krista Sipes
- 3 Gallons - Dan Christensen
- 4 Gallons - Laurie Alexander

Thank you to everyone who shared their time and donation. Until a substitution is discovered - only you can provide this precious commodity for patients.



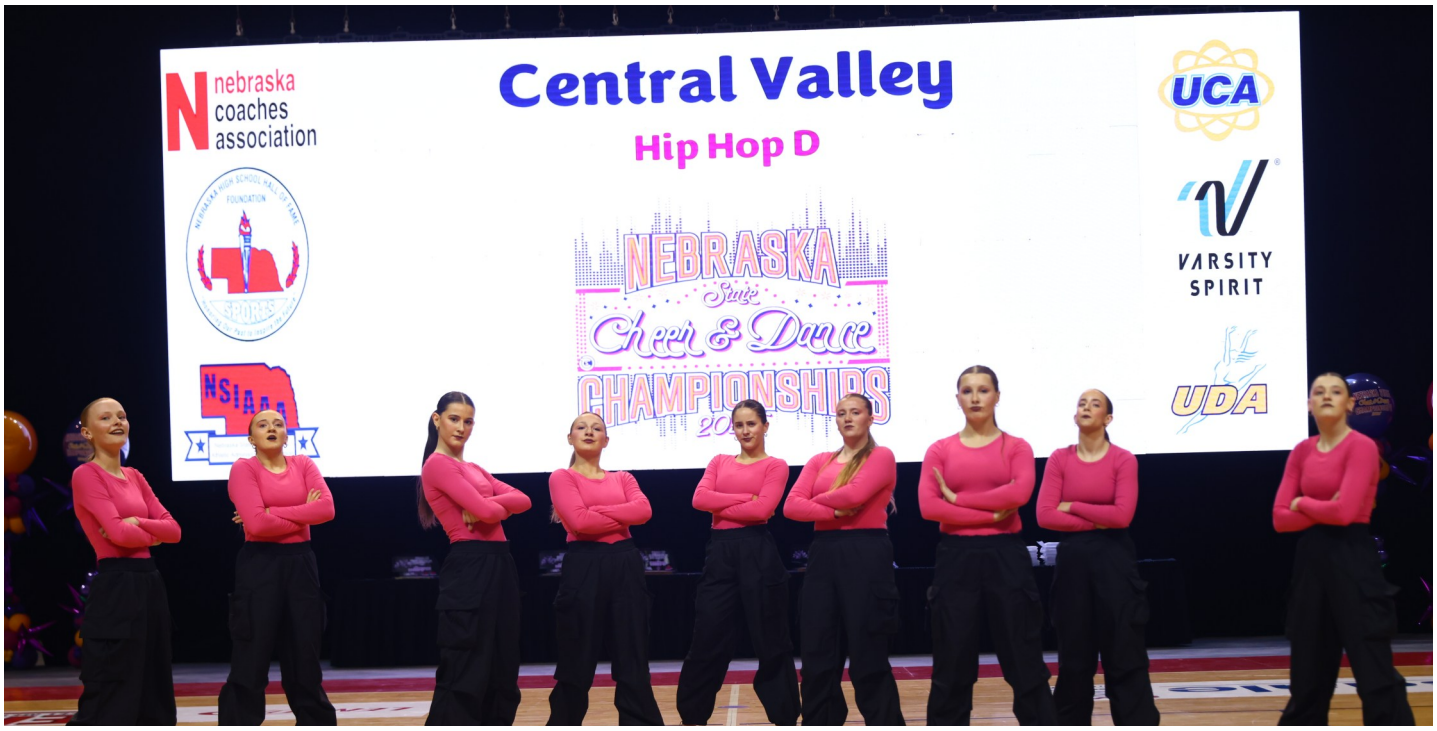
On February 20, the Central Valley Dance Team made their appearance at State Dance for the very first time in school history!

It was a long but incredibly successful day. The girls have grown and improved so much throughout the season, and they truly gave a performance they can be proud of.

As their coach, I am beyond proud of each and every one of them and the commitment they have shown all season long. Watching their confidence grow and seeing them believe in themselves as performers has been such a joy. Moments like this remind us that success isn't just about placements — it's about growth, teamwork, and the courage to perform.

This team should be beyond proud of themselves and how they represented Central Valley!

Allyson Dugan



L-r: Katelyn Usasz, Tenley Perrott, Bentleigh Dugan, Laretta Davis, Addy Ryan, Brooklyn Perrott, Taylor Rosander, Zoey Jensen, Annaka Wood



Central Valley Public School hosted the Greeley County Spelling Bee on January 28 at the CV High School Library. Spalding Academy and Central Valley each had two students from 5th, 6th, 7th & 8th grades participate.

The spelling began at 1:00pm with students writing out 100 words. The six students with the highest score then went on to the oral round of the spelling bee. Central Valley had three students advance to the oral rounds: 8th graders Kinley Gates-Boydstun & Karter Brown, and 6th grader Chase Jensen.

After nine rounds of oral spelling, Audrey Miller from Spalding Academy became the 2026 Greeley County Spelling Bee Champion. Faith Heinz, also from Spalding Academy was this year's runner-up. Audrey will now advance to the Regional Spelling Bee on March 14 at the Strauss Performing Arts Center on the University of Nebraska Omaha campus.

Central Valley Students participating in this year's Spelling Bee were:

Fifth Grade
Benelli Patrick
Sadie Goldfish

Sixth Grade
Owen Anderson
Chase Jensen

Seventh Grade
Zach Jensen
Kashlyn Samway

8th Grade
Kinley Gates-Boydstun
Karter Brown



Back row, l-r :Chase Jensen, Kashlyn Samway, Kinley Gates-Boydstun, Karter Brown, Zach Jensen
Front row: Benelli Patrick & Owen Anderson

Spalding Academy Participants included **5th Grade**~Raegan Carraher and Bryant Carraher, **6th Grade**~Camryn Carraher and Gregory Glaser, **7th Grade**~Myah Mahoney and Faith Heinz, **8th Grade**~Audrey Miller and Alexa Hall

Library News

Mrs. Angela Boyce, Librarian

Central Valley Elementary will be celebrating Read Across America the week of March 2 through March 5. Monday is Hats off to Reading! Tuesday is Silly Sock Day! Wednesday is Pajama Day. Thursday is Read My Shirt Day! Take time to read with your child. Set aside some time in the evenings for everyone to read.

In the elementary school, there is an optional March Madness competition. Students will be voting on certain books throughout March and April. These are chapter books and will be for third grade through sixth grade.

Central Valley students read information about gorillas on PebbleGo. They did a nice job writing down three facts about gorillas. They enjoyed learning more about gorillas after listening to The One and Only Ivan. Some students even listened to the audiobook Gorillas on PebbleGo.

Some students have been reading books on the Golden Sower list. There are ten books on the Honeybee chapter book list. Voting will be at the beginning of April. Students need to read four books on the list to vote.

There are new books at both libraries! Students will find new books at all levels in many different genres. Please remember to take care of the library books. Keep our books looking nice for everyone to use. Please look for any lost books and return them to the library.

"A library book, I imagine, is a happy book."- Cornelia Funke





Taylor McIntyre, a senior at Central Valley, was recognized as one of the state winners of the Currency Believers and Achievers award.

She received her award at the CHI Health Center during the state wrestling tournament.

Congratulations Taylor!!! We are proud of you!!





Central Valley Speech SEASON ROLLS ON

Central Valley Speech
CNFL #2 January 31st, 2026

Varsity Team Placing: 10th

Entertainment Speaking: Laretta Davis –5th

POI: Laretta Davis–5th

POI: Ethan Lobner–15th

One Team One Voice



Central Valley Speech
David City Invite February 14th 2026

Varsity Team Placing: 14th

Laretta Davis

Serious Prose: 3rd Next–In (9th)

Entertainment: 1st Merit (13th)

Humorous Prose: 1st Merit (13th)

POI: 1st Merit (13th)

Laretta has earned her 1st of 2 bids in Serious, POI and Humorous to the 2026 NIETOC Tournament

One Team One Voice

Central Valley Speech
Aurora Invite February 7th, 2026

Varsity Team Placing: 9th

Entertainment: Laretta Davis–2nd

POI: Laretta Davis–3rd

Humorous Prose: Laretta Davis–3rd Next–In (9th)

Poetry: Emalee Leth 6th Next–In (12th)

One Team One Voice



Central Valley Speech
GI Central Catholic February 13th 2026

POI: Laretta Davis–4th Next–In (10th)

One Team One Voice

Central Valley Speech
Osceola Invite February 6th,2026

Varsity Team Placing: 7th

Entertainment Speaking: Laretta Davis–2nd

Humorous Prose: Laretta Davis–3rd

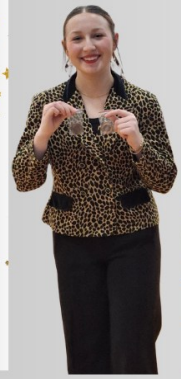
POI: Laretta Davis–3rd

Serious Prose: Laretta Davis–3rd Next–In (9th)

Poetry: Emalee Leth–1st Merit Finals (13th)

Serious Prose: Ethan Lobner—4th Merit Finals(16th)

One Team One Voice



Central Valley Speech
Northwest Viking Voice February 21, 2026

Team Placing 11th

Laretta Davis

Humorous Prose: 4th Champs

Serious Prose: 5th Champs

POI: 2nd Merit (14th)

Laretta has earned the bids needed in Serious, POI and Humorous to compete at the 2026 NIETOC Tournament

One Team One Voice



Central Valley Speech
Goldenrod Conference Speech
February 25, 2026

Team Placing 3rd

EMALEE LETH
2ND POETRY
6TH PERSUASIVE SPEAKING

ETHAN LOBNER
3RD SERIOUS PROSE

LARETTA DAVIS
3RD HUMOROUS PROSE
3RD PROGRAM ORAL INTERP
3RD ENTERTAINMENT

One Team One Voice



Congratulations to our very own Mr. Jess Rother on being named a recipient of the NSAA Champions for Coaches Award.

Central Valley is lucky to have Coach Rother as a coach and a passionate, caring and committed teacher. As his nominator wrote: "He gives the best motivational speeches. He is known for his intensity and high expectations, but those expectations are always grounded in love, respect, and genuine care. He challenges students and athletes because he believes in them. His humor, his unforgettable football phrases, and his ability to connect with kids make him someone students and athletes respect, trust, and want to make proud."

Congrats again, Mr. Rother!! We are proud of you!

The full list of recipients and more information about the award can be found here: bit.ly/3MJxPqt

2026 State Wrestling



Dalton Dugan ~ 5th Place



Lincoln Nekoliczak ~ 5th Place



William Pokorny ~ State Champion

Non-medaling state qualifiers: Dallas Wadsworth-120, Landon Shoemaker-150 and Ky Cargill-157. Congratulations to **ALL** wrestlers on an outstanding season!!! We are proud of you!!





Driver Education

The Driver's Ed. class will be held at the CV High School Library in Greeley every Monday beginning March 2 from 4-8:00pm and the CV Elementary Library in Scotia every Tuesday in March beginning March 3 from 4;30-8:30pm. (**You must attend all classroom times.**) Nebraska rules state that each student must attend 20 hours of class time and 5 hours of driving time to complete the program

The students will be asked to sign up for a drive time. Each student will have to drive for at least 5 hours and will be driving in groups of 3-4. Most of the driving time will be done Monday through Friday 1:00p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Your child must be 14 years or older **AND** have a school/learners permit to drive. The cost of the class will be $150 for Central Valley students and $200 for students not in the Central Valley district. **Your payment and a school/learners permit is required before taking the class.**

If you have any questions or would like to register your child, please call the Central Valley High School, (308-428-3145).

Early Development Network
Babies Can't Wait

The Early Development Network provides early intervention services for families with children birth to age three with developmental delays and/or health care needs. Our program connects families with needed services and provides ongoing support. EDN has caring and professional Services Coordinators to serve families with an individualized and strengths based focus. These services are free to families and we welcome anyone who may have questions or concerns.

If you are concerned about a child's development or know someone who is please call EDN (308)237-2280 at ESU 10 for services in Region 10 or 1(888)806-6287 for referrals throughout Nebraska. If you are unsure which EDN office serves your area please call (308)237-2280 and we are happy to assist you in finding your best contact person.

To learn more about our program, please visit esu10.org and choose the EDN tab in English or Spanish or visit edn.ne.gov.

Four steps to help students stop procrastinating!

Don't let your child get into the habit of putting off homework until the last minute. This four-step process can give him a jump start. Have your child:

1. **Choose just one assignment** to focus on.
2. **Set a timer** for 20 minutes, and use the time to work on that assignment
3. **Avoid breaks** while the timer ticks.
4. **Reward himself** with a quick break when the timer rings.

Encourage him to repeat the process until the homework is complete.



Are you encouraging responsibility?

One of the most critical things successful students do is take responsibility for their own learning. Are you fostering a sense of personal responsibility in your middle schooler? Answer yes or no to the question below:

___1. **Do you expect your child** to take care of her bedroom and belongings?

___2. **Do you suggest** that your child use planners and calendars to track her assignments and schedule?

___3. **Do you encourage** your child to get started on long-term assignments right away?

___4. **Have you taught** your child how to be responsible with money?

___5. **Do you require** your child to help the family by doing a few weekly chores? Middle schoolers are capable of cooking and doing laundry.

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are doing a lot to raise a responsible child. For each no, try that idea.


Let the Central Valley
Class of 2029
EGG YOUR YARD!!
25 Eggs....$25
50 Eggs....$40
75 Eggs....$50
100 Eggs....$60
RSVP your order by March 27, 2026
Contact a member of the Freshmen Class to place your order!
Candy-filled eggs! | Hidden or delivered! | Save time!
For more information or to order, call the high school at (308) 428-3145
or email Mrs. Hansen at sarah.hansen@centralvps.org --- or ---
Mrs. Underwood at nicki.underwood@centralvps.org

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School March 2026

Title I-Educational Service Unit 10

Make a difference to your child by getting involved with school



Students are the winners when families and schools work together. Family engagement in education leads to increased academic achievement, improved attendance and better student attitudes and behavior.

If you haven't been involved much this year, it's not too late to become an active partner in your child's education. Engaging doesn't have to be complicated or time consuming.

There is plenty of time left in the year to:

- **Stay informed of issues, events and important dates** by regularly checking school communications sent home and posted online.
- **Take part in school events for families,** particularly those that involve your child. Make an effort to connect with staff and other families.
- **Reach out to your child's teachers.** Ask questions, such as "What school skills should I work with my child on before the end of the year? What strategies can we try?" Ask about opportunities to help the class.
- **Talk with your child every day** about school. Ask about classes and what your student is learning. Make it clear that education matters to you.
- **Join the parent-teacher group.** Learn about ways families are making a positive impact at school, and how you can help.

Add to your child's math vocabulary

Did you know that learning vocabulary is a key math skill? If students have to stop to think about the meaning of words like *product* or *quotient*, they can lose their focus on what they are doing and get confused.

To help with math vocabulary-building, encourage your child to:

- **Connect words and symbols.** Have your child make flash cards with a symbol on one side and the word it represents on the other.
- **Make a drawing** that shows the term doing the thing it represents. A *circumference,* for example, is the distance around the edge of a circle. Your child could draw a circle with the word circumference written around the rim.
- **Think about word parts.** Many math words share a common root. Noticing this can help your child connect new terms to familiar ones. If the new word is *centimeter,* for example, talk about how there are 100 *cent*s in a dollar, 100 years in a *cent*ury, and 100 *cent*imeters in a meter.

Set expectations that fit

Keep two things in mind when setting expectations for your elementary schooler:

1. **Children generally live up** to family expectations for them, high or low. So set the bar high for your child.
2. **Effective expectations** are realistic and achievable—and geared to *your* child.

Praise your child's effort and progress, and encourage your child to take pride in both.

This writing is fast and fun

Quick Writes are an enjoyable way to help your child practice getting ideas down on paper. Set a timer for three minutes and present a writing prompt, such as:



- **When I woke up** I was a different person. I was … .
- **Something that's** important to know about me is … .
- **Something difficult** I have done and how I did it.
- **Something I'd like** to learn and why.

Then, each of you write everything you can about the prompt until the timer rings. Afterward, share and discuss what you wrote.

Siblings open reading doors

When kids see an older sibling reading for fun, they are more likely to want to read themselves. Siblings are also handy resources for suggesting, sharing and discussing books.



Get the ball rolling by planning a weekly family time for pleasure reading. To prepare, take your children to the library together. Let your younger child watch the big kids browsing and reading.

Source: M. Knoester and M. Plikuhn, "Influence of siblings on out-of-school reading practices," *Journal of Research in Reading,* John Wiley & Sons.

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Helping Children Learn®
Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School March 2026

Q&A My child is feeling excluded. What should I do?

Q: My nine-year-old doesn't have many friends. One child who used to spend time with mine has moved on to another friend group. That group is teasing my child—who now doesn't want to go to school. Should I talk to the ex-friend's family? How else can I help?



A: Fourth grade social drama can have a big effect on a child's outlook on school. Since the teasing is affecting your child's willingness to go to school, you are right to get involved. But calling the other family is unlikely to help—and it could result in more heartache for your child. Instead:

- **Contact the teacher.** Explain the problem and ask for help making your child feel welcome and a part of classroom activities. Teasing and exclusion are forms of bullying, and the teacher will want to prevent it.
- **Find out about school-based activities** and organizations that might interest your child. Spending time with other students who also enjoy singing or chess can help your child find a friend group at school.
- **Look for organized after-school programs.** Sometimes, a structured setting makes it easier for kids to get along.

If the teasing or reluctance to go to school continue, make an appointment with the school counselor to learn more ways to support your child.

Parent Quiz Are you setting a behavior example?

When it comes to learning behavior, children pay more attention to what adults do than what they say. Are you modeling the behavior you want your child to show at home and at school? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___**1. Do you show** respect for your child and others by treating them kindly and honestly?

___**2. Do you admit** mistakes, apologize and try to make amends—and expect your child to do the same?

___**3. Do you make** eye contact and listen attentively when your child speaks to you?

___**4. Do you vent** strong feelings in healthy ways?

___**5. Do you enforce** household rules and consequences fairly and consistently?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are demonstrating how to behave civilly toward others. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"Civility costs nothing, and buys everything."
—Mary Wortley Montagu

Build test-taking confidence

When students doubt their ability to do well on tests, anxiety can affect their performance. To erase your child's self-doubt:

- **Encourage effective preparation.** Your child should begin studying several days in advance and focus on material not yet mastered.
- **Ease the pressure.** Tell your child tests just show what students have learned and what they may need help with.
- **Suggest self-talk** to address nervousness. Your child can repeat, "I know this material and I am prepared to do well."

Give science a fun spin

Here's an egg-cellent experiment you can do with your child right in your own kitchen:

1. **Get two eggs** in their shells—one raw and one hard-boiled.
2. **Place the eggs** on the table. Can your child identify which one is which without cracking them?



3. **Have your child** place each egg on its side and spin it. The raw egg will wobble, while the hard-boiled egg will spin smoothly. Why? The yolk and white of the raw egg are liquid, so they shift when spun. This affects the egg's center of gravity and makes it wobbly.

Playtime has a purpose

Playing and having fun can reduce children's stress and boost their mental and physical well-being. For the most benefit:

- **Encourage active play** that gets your child's heart pumping.
- **Make playtime screen-free.**
- **Play with your child.** Family play is great for strengthening supportive bonds.

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MIDDLE SCHOOL

Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School *March 2026*

Title I-Educational Service Unit 10

Talk with your child about why attending every class matters

It's common for middle schoolers to think that skipping a class—or even several—isn't a big deal. But the fact is, the consequences of missing classes can be tough on your middle schooler, especially during the second half of the school year.



Here's why:

- **The amount of time left** in the year for instruction is limited, and every class is packed with essential material to help students stay on track.
- **Absent students miss the opportunity** to ask questions and get needed support from teachers.
- **Teachers often pick up the pace** of instruction to allow time for review before end-of-year tests. Since review and new instruction will likely go on at the same time, your child's workload may increase—making it harder to catch up after missing a class.

Emphasize to your child that attendance in every class is important. Then:

- **Accept no excuses** for missing school—except true illness or emergency. Avoid making appointments for your child that result in missing classes.
- **Contact the school** if you need help addressing attendance obstacles.

Set expectations that fit your child

Families' expectations for children's performance in school can motivate students. Effective expectations are both high *and* reasonable. To determine whether you are setting the bar at the right level, consider:

- **Are my expectations flexible?** If they are based on parenting advice that talks about what your child "should" be doing or feeling at this age, remember that most of that information is based on *averages*. It doesn't necessarily relate to what your individual child should be doing or achieving. Choose goals that are geared to your child, not because "all the other seventh graders are doing it."
- **Am I being realistic?** Think about who your middle schooler really is. For example, has your child has always been a reluctant reader? Expecting your student to sign up for a class with a heavy reading load may be asking for more than your child can give without negative consequences. Work together with the teachers to develop expectations that set your child up for learning success.

Share tips for better notes

Teachers may supply handouts or outlines in class, but students who want to do well should still take notes. Taking notes by hand reinforces material in students' brains, and reviewing notes daily helps them be prepared for the next class. Encourage your child to take notes on:

- **Lists.** "The cycle's eight stages are… ."
- **Things the teacher repeats** or writes on the board or displays on a screen.
- **Details and diagrams** that relate to items on teacher handouts.
- **"Extreme" things.** If the teacher says a concept is the *best*, *weakest* or *last*, your child should take note of it.

Consider your child's side

Everyone wants their point of view to be considered in a discussion. When your middle schooler has something to say, listen and acknowledge valid points. Listening attentively—even if you disagree—helps build your child's confidence to speak up and contribute in class and other areas of life.



Plant seeds of resilience

When facing challenges, *resilience* allows your child to adapt and move ahead. To nurture resilience, help your child:



- **Enjoy routines,** such as family reading time or Taco Tuesday. Consistency makes kids feel secure.
- **Help others.** Volunteering in the community or reading to a younger child can give your child something to feel proud of when times are tough.

Source: "Resilience for teens: 10 tips to build skills on bouncing back from rough times," American Psychological Association.

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MIDDLE SCHOOL
Helping Students Learn®
Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School March 2026

Q&A My child won't start work unless I help. What can I do?

Q: My middle schooler expects me to provide reminders about assignments, gather supplies and announce when it's time to study. How can I help my child take more responsibility for schoolwork?



A: Middle school is as much about learning to be a responsible student as it is about academics. You are right to want to help your child work more independently and rely less on you.

To instill responsibility for learning:

- **Talk to your child.** Say, "I'm happy to support your efforts on schoolwork, but you are leaning on me too much. We are going to shift the responsibility to you. You are ready to handle this."
- **Create a study time routine.** For example, you might say, "Instead of waiting for me to remind you, start your homework one hour after you get home from school every day. It's up to you to get started."
- **Make sure your child has** the necessary tools to work independently, such as school supplies and a planner to record and track assignments.
- **Teach problem-solving.** Discuss steps your child can take to find resources and get help.
- **Stand back.** Your middle schooler may forget an assignment or two while getting used to this new role. Resist the urge to take over again. Instead, let your child experience the consequences of not doing work.

Parent Quiz Are you supporting math success?

Some students seem to be defeated by math before they ever learn it. Others thrive on the challenge. Are you doing everything you can to help your middle schooler master math? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you talk** with your child about ways you use math every day—on the job and in running a household?
2. **Do you point out** ways math can be useful for doing things that interest your child?
3. **Do you play** games with your child that use math skills?
4. **Do you assure** your child that anyone can learn math—all it takes is regular practice?
5. **Do you avoid** saying things like, "I don't blame you for hating math. I did, too," and say instead, "It does look challenging, but I know you can figure this out"?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are helping your child feel positive about math. For each* no, *try that idea.*

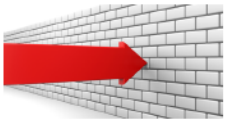
"Math is like going to the gym for your brain. It sharpens your mind."
—Danica McKellar

Turn mistakes into learning

Graded work offers an important way to learn—from mistakes. Encourage your middle schooler to take these steps:

1. **Think about what went right.**
2. **Figure out what went wrong.** Did your child not follow directions? Get confused about a concept?
3. **Fix the errors.** If your child doesn't understand the material, this might involve asking the teacher for help.
4. **Confirm learning** by applying knowledge to a new situation. Your child could try solving a problem that is similar to the one that was wrong, for example.

Construct effective limits



Middle schoolers need limits, but they love to test them. To set rules that will hold:

- **Be specific** about expected behaviors.
- **Give the reasons** for your rules.
- **Get your child's input.** You may not follow the suggestions, but listen to them.
- **Set and enforce** reasonable consequences for misbehavior.

Check in on well-being

Stress is an obstacle to learning, so it's important to keep an eye on your middle schooler's stress levels. Here's how:

- **Ask regularly** about school, friends and activities. "What was the best thing that happened today? The worst?"
- **Be aware of influences** in your child's life. Get to know your child's friends. Monitor online activity.
- **Pay attention to changes** in your child's interests, energy levels and habits.

If you are concerned or uncertain about your child's well-being, consult your pediatrician.

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HIGH SCHOOL
Helping Students Learn®
Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School March 2026
Title I-Educational Service Unit 10

Let your teen take the lead in fulfilling school responsibilities



Sometimes, wanting the best outcome for your teen makes it hard to let go of control. But in the high school years, it's essential to let your teen take responsibility for academics.

Studies show that when families assume the majority of responsibility for their students' performance in school, academics can suffer and the teens are more likely to become anxious or depressed.

To encourage responsibility for learning, put your teen in charge of:

- **Assignments.** Make it clear you expect your teen to turn all schoolwork in on time. Share time management strategies, then let your teen put them into action. Review progress once every day or two, rather than every hour.
- **Solving school problems.** Questions about a grade? Your teen should talk to the teacher. Failed a test? Your student should work with the teacher to create a plan for raising the grade.

It is still important for you to be aware of what your teen is learning in school and to get involved when problems arise that your teen can't solve independently. But if you hear yourself talking about "our science project," it's time to take a step back.

Source: K. Reed and others, "Helicopter Parenting and Emerging Adult Self-Efficacy: Implications for Mental and Physical Health," *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, Springer US.

Pleasure reading is worth the time

Even if your teen does a lot of reading for classes, reading for pleasure is beneficial. Students who enjoy what they are reading typically read faster and understand more of what they read. Their vocabularies and background knowledge grow. And these benefits carry over into school-related reading.

To encourage pleasure reading:

- **Set an example.** Then, share reading you enjoy with your teen.
- **Read together.** Get two copies of a book and discuss how it relates to your lives.
- **Suggest audiobooks.** Books that are challenging to read alone can come to life when they are read aloud. Your teen will be exposed to new vocabulary and hear fluent reading. Encourage listening while exercising, riding in the car or just relaxing.
- **Emphasize the ability** to choose. If a book is boring or too hard, your teen can just try another title. The point is to enjoy the time spent reading.

Limit social media's sting

Social media has become an important way teens maintain friendships. But it can also have negative effects on their mental health. To strike a healthy balance, help your teen:

- **Control content.** Suggest following inspiring people, like a favorite author, and unfollowing people who make your teen feel sad or anxious.
- **Remember that** no one's life is ideal. People usually post more about their good times than their bad ones.
- **Take breaks** from social media for an evening, a day or a weekend.



Source: A. Zsila and M. Reyes, "Pros & cons: impacts of social media on mental health," *BMC Psychology*, Springer.

Help your teen bounce back

Student life comes with disappointments, from poor grades to cancelled plans. When your teen is facing a letdown, ask, "How are you feeling about it?" Offer sympathy, but don't try to fix things. Instead, say, "I know you are sad the event was called off. What else do you think you could do?"



Be alert for substance abuse

Recognizing the signs of substance abuse is vital for addressing this life-or-death problem. If you notice several of the following signs, your teen may be at risk of abuse:

- **Social issues**—feeling friendless, hanging out with kids who behave rashly, etc.
- **Sudden academic problems.**
- **Visible evidence**—vapes, beer cans, etc.
- **Lack of caring** about things that once were important to your teen.
- **Unusual money-related events**—disappearing money at home, or your teen having more money than usual.

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HIGH SCHOOL
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Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School March 2026

Q&A College rejection is affecting my teen. What should I do?

Q: My senior dreamed of going to a certain college, but didn't get in. A friend was accepted, however, and my teen is crushed. How can I help my student move on and focus on the schools that said yes?



A: It's a painful truth that many students won't be admitted to their top-choice schools. But it is also true there is no such thing as the "only perfect school" for any student. To help your teen refocus:

- **Acknowledge** your teen's feelings.
- **Share some facts.** The number of college applicants is on the rise, which means there is more competition for admittance to selective schools. Also, schools consider many factors when selecting students. Your teen's friend may have an unusual talent that fills a need.
- **Offer reassurance.** Your teen will have a chance to grow personally and academically at any college.
- **Help your teen explore** the other schools. Visit, if possible. Most colleges have programs for admitted students (some may also be online). Encourage your teen to attend with an open mind.

In a year, your teen may be able to transfer to that dream school. But by then, it's likely the school your teen chooses now will feel like home.

Parent Quiz Are you fostering open communication?

Teens don't always share personal information with their families. But knowing what's going on in your student's life is important for supporting school success. Are you encouraging communication? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you spend** some time each day doing things with your teen—even if it's preparing dinner or driving somewhere? This is when communication happens most naturally.
2. **Do you make** time to talk when your teen comes to you with a problem? If you can't do it in the moment, set a time when you can.
3. **Do you require** your teen to inform you of social plans and update you if plans change?
4. **Do you tell** stories about positive and memorable things your teen did as a little kid?
5. **Do you pause** often when talking together to give your teen time to respond?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are creating opportunities for communication between you and your teen. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"To listen well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well."
—John Marshall

Enhance study power

Students who don't know how to study effectively may spend more time doing it than they need to, or get so frustrated they stop completely. Encourage your teen to:

1. **Eliminate distractions,** like unneeded digital devices, hunger and thirst, before sitting down to study.
2. **Review class notes** each evening.
3. **Study in several** short sessions, spaced out over time, rather than one long one.
4. **Alternate content types.** After studying a math formulas, switch to English before going on to science formulas.
5. **Stay on task.** Your teen can jot worries or random thoughts on paper to deal with later and then get back to studying.

Enforce rules consistently

When adults are inconsistent, teens think rules are merely suggestions. To teach your teen to take rules seriously:

- **Agree** with your teen's other parent(s) on rules and consequences. Make it clear they apply wherever your teen is staying.
- **Uphold school rules** and expectations for students.

Discuss ways to be kind

Research shows that people who are kind to others are happier, and that happy students tend to earn better grades. Talk with your high schooler about ways to be:

- **Considerate.** Your teen can take classmates' needs into account and participate fairly.
- **Caring.** Your teen can smile and reach out to a student who seems upset.
- **Forgiving.** Kind people focus on solutions rather than blame.



Source: O. Curry and others, "Happy to Help?" *Open Science Framework,* Center for Open Science.

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