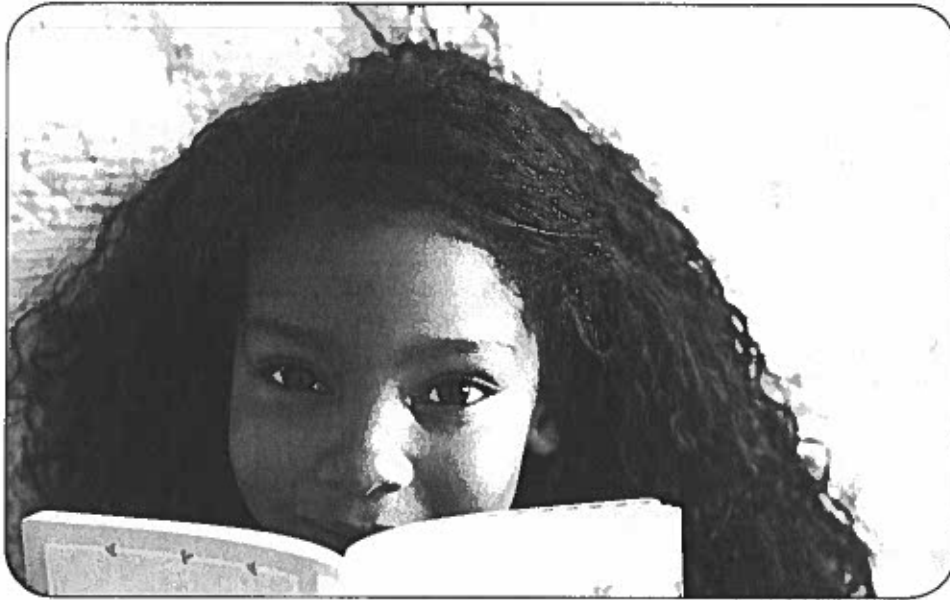


December 2018
Vol. 22, No. 4

Middle School Parents

Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School

still make the difference!



Five reasons middle schoolers should make time for reading

Middle schoolers typically spend more time on homework than they did when they were in elementary school. With the increased workload, reading for pleasure may be pretty far down on their list of priorities.

Your child may think that she reads a lot for school and that should be enough. She's wrong! Here are five reasons your middle schooler should make time for pleasure reading:

1. **Reading can make her an expert.** Reading is the best way for your child to learn as much as possible about her areas of interest.
2. **Reading can take her places.** Few people can afford to travel every place they'd like to go. But your child can always travel through a

book. And she can gain knowledge to help her set goals to get there in person someday.

3. **Reading can make her laugh.** Appreciating the humor in books helps your child develop thinking skills. It also improves her own sense of humor.
4. **Reading can turn her into a detective.** A winter day on break is a perfect time for your child to grab a cup of hot chocolate and dive into a great mystery.
5. **Reading can introduce her to people like herself.** In books that feature characters her age, your child is likely to encounter people that think the way she does and have the same issues she is facing.

Writing letters helps your child build vital skills



Middle schoolers are more likely to send a text than to sit down and write a good old-fashioned

letter. Yet letter writing is still a very useful skill. Writing letters helps middle schoolers:

- Practice sentence structure, grammar and punctuation.
- Strengthen memory and storytelling skills. Most people share their experiences when they write letters.
- Boost social skills, especially if the letter is a thank-you note.

Here are three strategies to get your child writing:

1. **Keep a writing basket** in a visible spot. Fill it with everything someone would need to write a letter—paper, pens, envelopes, stamps and an address book.
2. **Challenge your child** to write one letter every week. And if he says he has no one to write to, remind him that any relative would love to get mail from him.
3. **Collect postcards** when your family visits new places. Ask your child to write about his experiences and send the cards to relatives and friends.

Help your middle schooler start thinking about the future



College is years away, but that doesn't mean your child shouldn't start thinking about it and making plans for it now.

Studies show that college graduates are more likely than non-graduates to:

- Live healthier, longer lives.
- Stay employed.
- Enjoy their jobs.
- Change jobs more easily.
- Earn significantly higher salaries.

To help your child begin focusing on higher education:

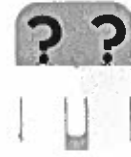
- **Talk about his interests.** What does your child like to do? What are his passions? Whether it's graphic design or physical fitness, there's surely a college program geared toward it. He won't be enrolling anytime soon, but it's OK to "plant the seed" and get him thinking about how he can continue doing what he loves at the university level someday.

- **Encourage him to set goals.** How does your child see himself in 10 years? As a college graduate? A successful executive? Ask him what he envisions and how he plans to get there. Specifically, talk about what he can do now (such as studying harder or taking tougher classes) to help him reach his goals.
- **Widen his horizons.** There are too many careers to count, and odds are your child hasn't heard of many of them. So go online and research various professions. Get him excited about the different options available to him!

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Do you know how to talk about the tough issues?



Middle schoolers often face some pretty tough situations—from being offered alcohol to feeling pressured by a friend

to skip a class. Are you helping your child face difficult issues head on?

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you talk about the difficult situations your child may face *before* they occur?**
- ___ **2. Do you role-play different ways to say *no*?** "My mom would kill me!" is a favorite standby.
- ___ **3. Have you told your child you expect honesty—especially about serious issues?**
- ___ **4. Do you communicate your values to your child?** Remember: Values are *caught*, not *taught*.
- ___ **5. Do you create everyday opportunities to talk with your child?** Casual conversations often pave the way for more serious talks.

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are having positive talks with your child about tough issues. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

Don't fall into the trap of being your middle schooler's friend



Your child is growing up before your eyes and may look more like a young adult than a young child. But remember: She is

still your child and not your peer. She needs you to be the parent—and you need her to respect you and your rules.

To avoid falling into the friend trap:

- **Require your child** to be respectful to you and other adults. Don't continue a conversation with her if she is being rude. Walk away and agree to talk to her when she is ready to speak respectfully.
- **Insist that your child** continue to follow your rules. Middle schoolers

don't need a long list of rules—just a few important ones that *must* be followed.

- **Don't try to be the "cool parent"** in the neighborhood. You should be kind and caring to your child and her friends, but you are not "one of the girls." Children lose respect for parents who act like children.
- **Do not make decisions** based on what would please your child and her friends. They might like it if you paid for them all to see an R-rated movie, but is it a wise parenting choice? Trust yourself as the adult and make decisions accordingly.

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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1071-5118

For subscription information call or write:
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Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit: www.parent-institute.com.

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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

Sitting still during homework time can be challenging for kids



If your child can't seem to sit still during homework time, it's probably because he can't! And if he can't seem to stop snacking, it's probably because he needs that food.

Your middle schooler is entering adolescence. And this marks the biggest period of physical change he has experienced since infancy.

Middle schoolers often:

- **Get up out of their chairs.** As adolescents grow, their bones (including their tailbones) begin to harden. Sitting too long can cause nerve pain. Getting up is a natural defense against that discomfort. Your child may want to try doing some of his homework standing up. Or he could study vocabulary words as he walks around the house.

- **Fidget.** Even if they manage to stay seated, middle schoolers spend lots of time fidgeting. In adolescence, bone growth outpaces muscle growth, meaning kids' muscles are constantly being tugged and pulled. This causes so-called "growing pains." Stretching can help relieve them, so encourage regular stretch breaks during homework time.
- **Raid the refrigerator.** It's not just kids' bones and muscles that are growing. Their stomachs are, too—and it takes more food to fill them. Not only that, but all that physical growth requires serious amounts of fuel. Stock up on healthy snacks and let your child munch while he's studying.

Source: P. Lorain, "Squirming Comes Naturally to Middle School Students," National Education Association, niscw.com/mid_squirm.

A five-step process can help your child make better decisions



Want your middle schooler to make more responsible decisions? Encourage her to rely on this five-step process

whenever she's faced with a dilemma:

1. **Assess the situation.** Your child can't make a wise decision if the issue at hand seems murky. So remind her to clearly define it by asking herself, "What's the main thing I'm concerned about?"
2. **Explore her options.** What are some ways your child could handle the problem? Have her make a mental list, then narrow it down to the three most sensible choices. This list-making step is critical because it illustrates that there are usually several options for solving a problem.
3. **Consider the disadvantages.** Have your child think about the cons of each of her top three ideas. If a certain option has a particularly serious consequence, this is a good time to rule out that option.
4. **Consider the advantages.** Now ask your child to figure out the pros of her top choices. Does one option have major advantages over others? Then that may be the winner.
5. **Decide on a solution.** Now that she's weighed the pros and cons of each possible option, your child can make her decision with confidence.

Source: R. Burke, Ph.D. and others, *Common Sense Parenting: Using Your Head as Well as Your Heart to Raise School-Aged Children*, Boys Town Press.

Q: I know that attendance is important, but we're traveling over the holidays, and my seventh grader will miss a week of school. How can I keep him from falling behind?

Questions & Answers

A: First, take a look at your itinerary. Is it possible to alter your plans so your trip falls within the school's break? That's the only way to ensure your child won't miss out on important learning.

If your travel dates are written in stone, though, here are three things you can do to help your middle schooler stay on top of things:

1. **Talk to his teachers.** Well in advance, explain the situation to each of them. If they're planning to assign readings or worksheets right after break, see if your child can get started now. Find out which teachers maintain updated classroom websites, and see if your child can follow each day's lesson from afar. But keep in mind: Teachers are under no obligation to adjust to your vacation schedule.
2. **Focus on learning while you are away.** Look at your trip as a learning opportunity. Explore museums and cultural or historical attractions and discuss them as a family. Try to immerse your child in educational activities he might not get at home.
3. **Set aside time for reading and writing.** Even if your child has no official work to complete while he's away, insist he read for pleasure and write about his trip in a notebook. A vacation from school should not be a vacation from learning!

It Matters: Building Character

Recognizing bullying isn't always easy



You may think it is easy for children to recognize bullying. But in the social structure of middle school,

it is not so simple. That's because middle school students tend to be much more forgiving if the bully is one of the popular students.

As you talk with your child about bullying, encourage her to:

- **Focus less on *who*** is bullying and more on what is actually happening. Are the actions hurtful? Are the words mean or meant to cause a person sadness, fear or embarrassment? If so, it's bullying—even if the person who is doing it is someone everybody likes, and the victim is someone who doesn't have many friends.
- **Think about how she would feel** if she were in the victim's place. Would it make a difference to her if the person bullying her were a popular student? Or would she be hurt no matter who the bully was? Encouraging your child to "walk in another's shoes" is an important step toward building empathy.
- **React appropriately.** Your child should *never* be a bystander. Standing by and watching—or worse, laughing along with the bully—is almost as harmful as the actual bullying itself. Your child should ask the bully to stop or slip away and tell an adult immediately.

Source: Bullying—Engaging Parents, Students and Staff in Your Anti-Bullying Program, The Parent Institute.

Talk to your child about the value of being dependable

Dependability is vital to your child's success in life. It matters little how talented or smart someone is if that person cannot be counted on. It is the person who shows up on time and puts forth effort who will be considered for advancement.

Encourage your child to:

- **Do what he says he will do.** At school, he should turn his work in on time. If he is part of a group, whether in a class or in an extra-curricular activity, he should do his part. Others may succeed or fail based on whether he pulls his weight.
- **Make amends.** Everyone makes mistakes. It's part of life. But your child should also try to correct his errors. If he lets someone down, he should say: "I'm sorry. I won't let it happen again. How can I make it up to you?"



- **Be cheerful.** Showing up and doing the job is important. But if your child does it while scowling and muttering under his breath, he likely won't be asked again. And that's how wonderful opportunities are missed.

A positive attitude is the key to success in and out of school



A positive attitude can motivate your child to put in the effort she needs in order to succeed—

and can keep her going even when she feels like giving up.

To foster a positive attitude in your middle schooler:

- **Tell her to focus on the things she can change.** A negative attitude often results from feeling helpless. For example, your child probably can't change the material in her classes. If that were her goal, she

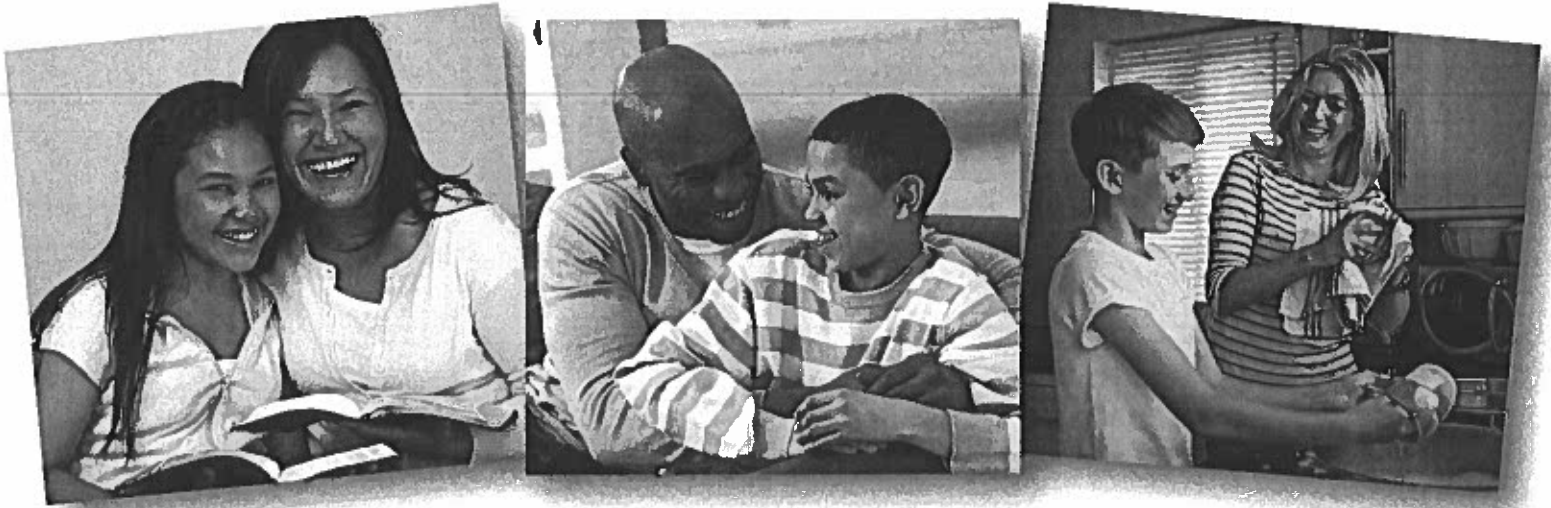
would feel helpless and negative. But she *can* change how much she prepares. That can lead to success and a positive feeling of empowerment.

- **Encourage her to think of others.** It's amazing how doing something good for another person can lift a person out of a bad mood. In this season of giving, challenge your child to bring a smile to someone else's face.
- **Ask her to keep a positivity journal.** In it, she can write about things that bring her happiness.

Parent Pointers

Calendar

Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School



THE PARENT INSTITUTE

December 2018 • January • February 2019

Parent Pointers

Calendar

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
December 2018						<p>1 Will your family celebrate a holiday this month? Ask your child to take the responsibility for one or two traditions.</p>
<p>2 Does your child study well with others? If so, let him start a study group.</p>	<p>3 What is the coldest place in the nation today? The warmest? Have your child look in the paper or online to find out.</p>	<p>4 Eliminate distractions and try not to interrupt your child during her homework time.</p>	<p>5 Ask your child to take photos during family events. This may build his interest in participating.</p>	<p>6 Look online or in the newspaper for a list of holiday events. Plan to attend one this month as a family.</p>	<p>7 Think of synonyms for words with your child. For example, a synonym for <i>talk</i> is <i>converse</i>.</p>	<p>8 Bake cookies with your child. If you're doubling a recipe, have her do the math.</p>
<p>9 Talk about how your family can do something for others.</p>	<p>10 Talk with your child about a choice you have made. Then talk about the consequences.</p>	<p>11 Help your child exercise his memory. What did he eat yesterday? Two days ago?</p>	<p>12 Limit drinks with caffeine at night. They can deprive your child of needed sleep.</p>	<p>13 Attendance at school is important. Don't let your child miss school or arrive late just because he's tired.</p>	<p>14 Before your child buys something, encourage her to compare prices and return policies.</p>	<p>15 If your child doesn't know how to do laundry, teach him. Feeling competent makes a middle schooler feel good.</p>
<p>16 Respect your child's privacy by knocking before you enter her room. It boosts self-esteem and independence.</p>	<p>17 If your child loses items, make him responsible for replacing them. He'll learn to be more careful.</p>	<p>18 Faced with a thorny situation? Try talking with other parents. Teachers can also be a good source of advice.</p>	<p>19 Choose a word and rearrange the letters in alphabetical order. Can your child figure out the word?</p>	<p>20 Write your child's name in a vertical column. Have her use each letter to begin a line of a poem.</p>	<p>21 Ask your child to plan and schedule a fun family night.</p>	<p>22 Encourage your child to talk to older relatives about their childhood days.</p>
<p>23 Give your child a hug today.</p>	<p>24 Read a favorite children's book aloud as a family.</p>	<p>25 Give the gift of time to your child. Time alone with a parent is important to kids.</p>	<p>26 Share stories about your family's history with your child.</p>	<p>27 Let your child overhear you say something positive about him to someone else.</p>	<p>28 Look for a skill you and your child can learn together. It's a fun way to get to know your child on a new level.</p>	<p>29 Have breakfast with your child today. Talk about what she likes best about her friends.</p>
<p>30 Ask your child for advice on a problem you are facing.</p>	<p>31 Help your child create a time line of the past year.</p>					

Parent Pointers

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
January						
		1 Help your child set a goal and write a plan to achieve it.	2 Encourage your child to start a diary or journal.	3 Encourage healthy eating. Allow your child to choose some fruits and vegetables at the grocery store.	4 Make a list of the best times you had during the last year. Schedule time on the calendar to do those activities again.	5 Ask everyone to write down two positive things about each member of the family. Don't forget to include yourself.
6 Ask your child to brainstorm dinner ideas for the week.	7 Compliment your child on something about his appearance today.	8 Ask your child: "If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?"	9 Take turns making statements with your child. Identify each one as either <i>fact</i> or <i>opinion</i> .	10 Post an inspiring quotation where your child will see it.	11 Let your child invite friends to stay for a family dinner. It's a great way to learn more about her peer group.	12 Suggest that your child write a letter to a relative, author, lawmaker or celebrity.
13 Middle schoolers need time alone with their thoughts and feelings. Suggest activities your child can do alone.	14 After your child takes notes, have him review them for key ideas. He can draw a picture to illustrate them.	15 Try to have a rhyming conversation with your child. It may be tough at first, but you'll get better!	16 Make up trivia questions about your family. Quiz one another at the dinner table.	17 Let your child take over a responsibility you've previously done for her. Present it as a positive step.	18 Has it been a hard week at school for your child? Go out together for a treat.	19 Visit the library and check out two copies of the same book for you and your child to read.
20 If you're making a big purchase, have your child help you research options and make the best choice.	21 Tell your child that school is his job. It's more important than sports, hobbies and TV.	22 Point out an example of prejudice to your child. Talk about ways to deal with intolerance.	23 Figure out the average of something with your child, such as family members' ages.	24 Don't use problems with homework as an excuse to criticize or argue with your child about other issues.	25 Show your child her baby book. Talk about how special she was—and still is.	26 Try a new recipe with your child. This helps him practice following directions.
27 Learn a new word at breakfast. Challenge family members to use it three times during the day.	28 Encourage your child to write a thank-you note to a favorite teacher.	29 Praise your child when she has studied hard. This will encourage her to keep it up.	30 List your priorities in life, including family. Does your schedule reflect what's most important?	31 Ask your child to compare your family's values to those of TV or movie characters. How are they different or alike?	2019	

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Parent Pointers

Calendar

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
February 2019						
					1 Encourage your child to write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper on a topic that concerns him.	2 Allow your child to daydream. This builds imagination and problem-solving skills.
3 Talk to your child about the importance of good sportsmanship.	4 Power struggles don't work with middle schoolers. Too much parental control causes rebellion.	5 Notice and talk about the good qualities of your child's friends.	6 Ask your child to add two four-digit numbers. Can she figure the answer on paper before you can with a calculator?	7 Tell your child why you value education. Talk about your child's long-range goals.	8 Listen to a piece of music that has no lyrics. Have your child write his own words to the song.	9 Have your child do some road math. How long did a car trip take? How many miles were driven? What was your average speed?
10 Help your child think of tough situations she might face with friends. How would she handle them?	11 It's the birthday of Thomas Edison. Teach your child Edison's saying: "There's no substitute for hard work."	12 Is your child having a problem at school? Have him brainstorm ways he could solve it—without your help.	13 After your child goes to bed, leave a valentine where she'll see it when she wakes up tomorrow morning.	14 Have each family member prepare one part of a meal, then enjoy it together.	15 Look for a free concert or play you can attend with your family this weekend.	16 Spend 20 minutes on DEAR time today (Drop Everything and Read).
17 Look for an educational show on television to watch with your child tonight.	18 When helping your child with schoolwork, be positive, even if he gets discouraged.	19 Some middle schoolers are embarrassed by affection in public. But they still like hugs at home!	20 Have your child quiz you on a homework assignment. Thinking up questions will help her learn.	21 Share ideas with your child about the best ways to remember facts for a test.	22 Teach your child to ask <i>who</i> , <i>what</i> , <i>when</i> , <i>where</i> , <i>why</i> and <i>how</i> when doing research.	23 Have everyone spend 30 minutes cleaning up the house. Many hands make light work.
24 Take a walk with your child and use all five senses to observe the world around you.	25 Read an editorial with your child. Tell him if you agree with the opinions stated. Ask what he thinks.	26 Encourage your child to keep a list of her activities and accomplishments.	27 Don't say, "I know how you feel." Middle schoolers believe their feelings are unique.	28 Ask your child: "If you could trade lives with somebody you know, who would it be? Why?"		

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