MIDDLE SCHOOL

Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

December 2017

Grand Erie District School Board
Growing Excellence ... Inspiring Success

Empower your child to take a stand against bullying



Bullying—from lunchroom taunts to nasty rumors, from physical abuse to cyberbullying—is most common in the middle school years. Research shows that "popular" kids are the ones most likely to bully, and that bullying behavior is widely seen by students as "cool." Students who are bystanders to bullying—or who reward bullies with their esteem—make the problem worse.

To encourage your child to stand up to bullying, rather than just standing by:

- **Help him recognize bullying** for what it is: mean and harmful behavior. It is not harmless fun, and it is never cool. It damages the victim.
- **Tell him to walk away and get help.** Without the encouragement of peers, many bullies would not have the same motivation to bully. Your child should never ignore bullying, but he can ignore the bully. Let him know that he must tell an adult about the situation.
- **Encourage empathy.** Urge your child to reach out to the child being bullied. A friendly word can mean a lot to a bullying victim.
- **Suggest that he persuade his friends** that bullying is not cool. They can agree that they will not go along with bullying, even if the bully is popular, and they will support one another for speaking out against it.

Source: S. Wolpert, "'Cool' kids in middle school bully more, UCLA psychologists report," UCLA Newsroom, niswc.com/cool.

Start your child on the path to college

To middle schoolers, life after high school may seem so far away that they see no need to think about it. But now is the right time for your child to begin focusing on her educational future. To start the conversation:

- **Explain the benefits.** College may just seem like four more years of school to your child. Let her know that people with degrees have an easier time finding jobs, earn significantly higher salaries and live longer and healthier lives than those without them.
- **Discuss her strengths** and interests. What is she good at? What does she love doing? Whether it's writing fiction or designing bridges, there's sure to be a college program geared toward it.
- **Discuss your child's goals.** Ask her what she envisions for herself. Talk about what she can do now—such as studying harder or taking more rigorous classes—to help her reach her goals later.

Source: *Getting Ready for College & Careers: A Handbook for Grades 6 through 8*, Washington State GEAR UP Program, niswc.com/mid_college.

Encourage dependability

Students may be talented and smart. But unless they can also be counted on, they won't get far in life. Teach your child to:

- **Turn work in on time.**
- **Do his fare share** in group projects.
- **Correct mistakes.** If he lets someone down, he should make it up to them and avoid the error in the future.

Fill winter break with lots of learning



To keep your child's skills sharp over the break, plan ways for her to:

- **Do math.** Ask her to calculate the cost of the ingredients you'll need to bake a double batch of cookies, or how many strings of lights it would take to outline your home.
- **Write.** She could start a blog or write a new holiday song.
- **Read.** Visit the library together to find appealing materials.

Adapt to changing bodies



It's not surprising that adolescents fidget. Their bones are growing faster than their muscles. This can lead to "growing pains." Their hardening tailbones can make sitting for long periods uncomfortable. When your child does homework, suggest that he:

- **Take stretch breaks.**
- **Study standing up.** He could learn vocabulary words as he walks all around the house.

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

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Q&A How can I help my child make up for missing school?

Q: Our family will be traveling out of the country this month, and my child will be absent from school for several days. What can I do to make sure she doesn't fall behind?



A: Any time a child is absent from school, she misses things that can't be made up, such as class discussions. The only way to make sure your child doesn't miss out on these chances for learning is for her to be in school.

If you can't adjust your travel dates, make a point of talking with your child's teachers. Ask if she can get started now on the readings or worksheets that will be assigned while she's gone. Remember that teachers are not required to plan around your vacation schedule.

Then, while your family is away:

- **Have your child check class websites** each day if possible, and study any lesson materials posted.
- **Offer your child educational opportunities** she can't get at home, such as visits to museums or cultural sites. Discuss them as a family.
- **Include study time in your daily schedule.** If there is no assigned homework, your child should read for pleasure. A vacation from school should not be a vacation from learning.

Parent Quiz Will your child be safe at home alone?

Middle schoolers look forward to being out of school over winter break. But for working parents, it means their kids may be at home when they are not. Have you prepared your child to stay safe? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___**1. Have you established** rules about answering the door and the phone when you aren't home?

___**2. Have you taught** your child what to tell callers? "My mom needs to call you back later."

___**3. Have you given** your child several ways to reach you?

___**4. Have you given** your child contact information for people to call if he can't reach you?

___**5. Have you established** rules for using appliances and other potentially dangerous items when you are not there?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are teaching your child how to stay safe at home alone. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"Love begins by taking care of the closest ones—the ones at home."
—Mother Teresa

Make a plan for discipline

Creating a written discipline plan with your child can help her follow your rules—and reduce arguments about them. Here's how:

- **Choose a few key issues** to enforce. Set rules and consequences for them.
- **Get your child's input.** Give her a say, but remind her you have the final word.
- **Adjust the plan** as your child learns to respect boundaries.

Source: "Family Rules," Raising Children Network, niswc.com/ruleplan.

Share four reasons to read



Does your child need some convincing to spend free time reading? Remind him that reading can:

1. **Take him places.** He can travel anywhere he likes in a book's pages.
2. **Make him an expert** in a subject that interests him.
3. **Make him laugh.** Appreciating written humor develops his thinking skills.
4. **Introduce him to characters** who are facing the same issues he is.

Source: R. McMahon, "9 Ways to Get Teens Reading," Common Sense Media, niswc.com/reasonstoread.

Give gifts of service

In this gift-giving season, help your child learn the value of giving back to your community. Encourage her to:

- **Consider people who are alone.** Could she invite a neighbor to join your family for a special event?
- **Start a clothing or food drive.** Could she organize her friends to donate canned goods or gently-used clothes? Help her deliver them to a shelter.
- **Make and deliver** treats to the local firehouse or police station.

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