

Helping Students Learn®

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



January 2018

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

Five kinds of social and emotional learning help students in school

Research shows that students' "social and emotional learning" (SEL) has a large and positive impact on the school learning environment. It also leads to improved student achievement and well-being. SEL is not just for school—this type of learning starts at home. Experts divide SEL into five key areas:



- 1. Self-awareness.** Encourage your child to explore her own feelings, motivations, strengths and limits. Ask how she feels about a situation. What drew her to a particular friend? What makes her proud?
- 2. Self-management.** Share tips with your child for controlling mood and behavior, such as deep breathing or focusing on a positive image.
- 3. Social awareness.** Be a role model. Demonstrate respect and compassion when you interact with people from diverse backgrounds.
- 4. Relationship skills.** If your child's relationship with a teacher or a friend is rocky, help her think through what the issues are, and what she might do to make things better.
- 5. Responsible decision-making.** Encourage your child to list the pros and cons of her options. Help her consider the potential impact of her decisions on others.

Source: R. Weissberg and others, "Why Social and Emotional Learning is Essential for Students," Edutopia, nismc.com/sel.



Study for chapter tests step by step

Middle schoolers know they should study for tests, but many don't know how to do it effectively. Teach your child this process to make studying for end-of-chapter tests more manageable. Have him:

- 1. Read the first section** of the chapter. Studying one section at a time makes it more likely he'll recall what he learns.
- 2. Think about questions** the teacher might ask about the material. If your child can't think of any, he should reread the section.
- 3. Write down each** of his questions on a separate index card. Then, he should write down the

corresponding answer on the back of the card.

- 4. Repeat the process** for each section of the chapter.
- 5. Identify key vocabulary.** He should review the chapter and make cards for unfamiliar words.
- 6. Study the cards.**

Source: "How to Prepare for Tests," The University of Alabama Center for Academic Success, nismc.com/chapter.

Volunteers get an insider's view of school

When you get involved at school, you get a chance to learn more about how the school works. This is especially helpful if your family is new to the area, or you are used to a different type of school. Working with teachers, staff or other parents can help you become familiar with the local system—and that helps your child.



Encourage your child to make learning resolutions

Your child can get 2018 off to the right start by resolving to improve his study habits. Suggest that he:

- **Designate a regular study area.**
- **Adopt a regular time** for studying. Have him review his schedule and choose a time that works.
- **Make organization a daily routine.** If your child files papers, throws out trash and puts things away each day, mess won't get in his way.
- **Use homework time** to study—even if he has no assignments due.

Put reminders in writing

One way middle schoolers try to avoid unappealing tasks is by "forgetting" about them. To help your child remember her responsibilities, have her:



- **Write things down.** Encourage her to make daily to-do lists and use sticky notes to leave herself reminders.
- **Use a calendar.** If an especially difficult assignment is coming up, your child should write it on the calendar every day. "Report due in 5 days, report due in 4 days, etc."



How can I rekindle my child's interest in school?

Q: My son has really slacked off in school so far this year. He's smart, but you would never know it from his grades. He just says, "School's not such a big deal." What can I do to get through to him?

A: Sadly, a lot of middle schoolers share this incorrect belief. While popular culture pays lip service to the idea that school matters, too often kids absorb the the opposite message from:

- **Rags-to-riches success stories.**

These are media favorites. The clincher is often that the person abandoned school. But these stories make news *because* they are rare.

- **Popular humor.** Many TV characters are not-so-bright, but funny. And many kids become popular at school for zany misbehavior.

- **Parent messages.** Parents who complain about school projects or don't make schoolwork a priority send the message that school is a hassle.

Let your son know the success stories he hears are *extreme* exceptions to the rule. Talk to him about the differences between TV life and real life. Then, show him school is your priority by asking him about it every day. Talk about ways your education has helped you. Let him know that his best chance at a happy and successful life is to take school seriously.



Do you help your child shape the future?

Middle schoolers have the power to positively affect their school careers. Are you encouraging your child to make choices that will prepare her well for the future? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

___ **1. Do you emphasize** the importance of reading, and expect your child to read often?

___ **2. Do you encourage** your child to take the most rigorous classes she is capable of?

___ **3. Do you discuss** current affairs with your child and point out their connections to civics and history?

___ **4. Do you urge** your child to take a foreign language? Starting now can give her a head start in high school.

___ **5. Do you talk** with your child about her interests and how they might apply to careers?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you're helping your child make prospects for the future bright. For each no, try that idea.

*"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."
—Franklin D. Roosevelt*

Stop rudeness in its tracks

Middle schoolers aren't always polite. To address back talk and promote civility:

- **Point out the problem.** "Your tone is not appropriate."
- **Calmly state the consequence.** "If you continue to speak rudely to me, you will lose phone privileges for the day."
- **Consider intent.** Sometimes, what sounds like rudeness is your child's attempt to express a different opinion. Show him how to restate his point using a respectful tone.
- **Notice improvement.** Are you hearing less back talk? Then let your child know.

Insist on attendance

Research says that students who are chronically absent in middle school are less likely to graduate from high school on time and more likely to drop out. The good news is that even small improvements to middle school attendance can significantly increase a student's chance of success in high school.



Source: "In Middle School, Grades and Attendances Matter," Attendance Works, niswc.com/inschool.

Give your child a boost

If your child is struggling with the larger loads of more complex homework in middle school, support from you can make a real difference. To show it:

- **Tell your child** you have confidence in her, and you know that she can do it.
- **Point out how much** she has learned so far in middle school.
- **Compliment her** on effort she shows.
- **Encourage her** to talk to her teacher about things she doesn't understand.

Source: "Helping Your Teen With Homework," KidsHealth, niswc.com/support_homework.

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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: L. Andrew McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1021