

# Middle School Parents®

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Chambersburg Area School District

***still make the difference!***



## Your child needs to attend school every day until the year is over

**T**he end of the school year is almost here and the temptation to skip school may be strong.

It's important to make sure your child does not give in to that temptation. Attendance at the end of the year is just as important (or more so) than at any other time.

The exception, of course, is if your child is sick. Never send a child with any flu-like symptoms, such as a fever over 100 degrees, to school. Keep your child home until he has no symptoms. He should also be fever-free for 24 hours, without use of medications.

Otherwise, keep in mind that:

- **Your child is almost surely** preparing for final exams or end-of-year state tests.

- **Missing days of school** can cause your child to miss a test or an important review.
- **Research shows** that children with strong attendance perform better on state math and reading tests. Research from one state showed that a majority of students passed both math and reading only if they had attended school at least 95 percent of the time.

Continue to:

- **Be firm with your child.** He *must* attend school.
- **Schedule doctor's appointments** outside school hours.
- **Wait until school is over** for the year to take family trips.

Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, "Attendance Matters!" [www.mpls.k12.mn.us/Attendance.html](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/Attendance.html).

## Use discipline to teach your child responsibility



You want your child to become a responsible young adult. One way to help her is to rethink how you discipline.

Think of discipline as giving your child chances to behave responsibly and avoid penalties—while gaining privileges—in the process.

The key is to spell out your expectations ahead of time. The penalties for acting up shouldn't be a surprise. Here's how it might look:

- **The chance:** You give your child permission to surf the Web. But she must not visit "off-limits" sites. If she does, she'll lose her computer access.
- **The privilege:** If she follows the rules, she'll get to enjoy the computer.
- **The penalty:** If she visits those sites, anyway, she'll give up the computer for a period of time.

By presenting the house rules to her in this way, you're giving her some control. That's because she won't be "getting in trouble" when she misbehaves. She'll be earning or forfeiting privileges based on her actions.

Source: Teri Brown, "The Consequence System: Use Opportunity and Responsibility to Parent Your Preteen," [DisneyFamily.com](http://DisneyFamily.com), [www.preteenagerstoday.com/articles/discipline/the-consequence-system-1114](http://www.preteenagerstoday.com/articles/discipline/the-consequence-system-1114).

# Motivate your child to remain focused the last weeks of school



The calendar says “May.” Chances are, though, your child is already lapsing into “summer vacation mode.” But

the last few weeks of school are just as essential as the first few, so it's critical that she stay focused and take them seriously.

To keep her motivated to succeed through the end of the year:

- **Make school the priority.** Talk to your child every night about what she's doing in class. Continue reading any handouts she brings home and keep on top of upcoming tests and quizzes. Show her that her education matters to you. It might just make it matter more to her.
- **Stick to routines.** Have you slacked off on enforcing a regular study time and bedtime now that the weather is warmer and the

nights longer? Stop! Routines are vital when it comes to keeping your preteen focused on school, so stay with them. Summer will be here soon enough.

- **Head outside.** Who says your child can't enjoy the balmy weather and get her homework done at the same time? If it's a too-perfect-to-stay-inside evening, let her take her books out back and study there. Even better, grab the newspaper and join her!
- **Plan an activity.** Celebrate the end of school by doing something special. It may be all the motivation your child needs to keep working hard these last weeks!

**“Our patience will achieve more than our force.”**

—Edmund Burke

# Combat negative peer pressure by having a strong relationship



It's a myth that all kids will eventually give in to negative peer pressure. Some are actually never faced with it. Others who are, are able to withstand it.

What makes the difference? You. It's another myth that “parents can't do much,” to keep a child from giving in to negative peer pressure.

Each moment your child feels your love, support and trust, is like a deposit in a bank. The larger the deposit, the more he is protected.

Remember that a loving relationship with your child fosters:

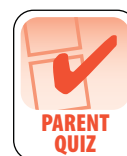
- **Independence.** Because you have given your child age-appropriate choices and responsibilities, he is

independent and not afraid to “go his own way.” He feels no need to follow the crowd and turns down offers he knows are not in his best interest.

- **A strong self-concept.** Your child thinks of himself as a worthy person. Why would he mess that up with risky behavior?
- **Good judgment.** Your child chooses friends who also think enough of themselves not to hurt themselves. These friends don't ask your child, a person they value, to hurt himself, either.

Source: Laurence Steinberg and Ann Levine, *You and Your Adolescent: A Parent's Guide for Ages 10-20*, ISBN: 0-06-273461-X (Harper Perennial, www.harpercollins.com).

# Will your middle schooler have a safe summer?



Summer is prime time for fun—and also for risk. Especially for middle schoolers, who may not always be in sight of an

adult. Are you preparing for a safe summer? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you require** your child to wear sunscreen and a hat when he is out in the sun?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you insist** your child wear a helmet when on a bike, scooter or skateboard?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you know** where your child is, who he is with, and what he is doing? Do you discourage hanging out after dark?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you consider** your child's maturity before assigning chores, such as mowing the lawn with a riding lawn mower?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you encourage** your child to drink plenty of water when working, playing or exercising outdoors in the heat?

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are focused on summer safety. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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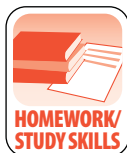
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# Teach your middle schooler how to set realistic academic goals



Your child may be a whiz when it comes to completing assignments on time. But how well does she actually study? That is, how good is she at reading and absorbing material when there's nothing to hand in?

Studying isn't the same as "doing homework," because there's no particular task to complete. Instead, a successful study session hinges on your child's ability to go over text or materials and retain the information for later.

To help your child study more effectively, encourage her to:

- **Take notes** on what she's reading. It'll help her distill the material down to its most important parts.
- **Make flashcards** or other aids. She may be more apt to use study tools she's created herself.
- **Pay attention** to illustrations and chartes. These textbook "extras"

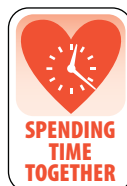
often contain valuable data that may appear later on a test.

- **Describe** what she's just read in her own words. If she can't, it's very likely she didn't understand the material in the first place. Of course, even the best study habits won't pack much punch unless they're used regularly—and in the right environment. To ensure your preteen gets the most out of her study sessions:

- **Have her hit the books** at the same time every night.
- **Limit distractions.** But that doesn't have to mean total silence. If she works well while listening to music, that's fine.
- **Keep a dictionary** out in the open. Yes, it's bulky and old-fashioned. It's also priceless. So get it down off the shelf!

Source: "Tips For Helping Kids and Teens With Homework and Study Habits," Child Development Institute, [www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/studytips.shtml](http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/studytips.shtml).

# Establish, maintain positive family connections this summer



Soon your child will have an extended break from the regular routine. With school out for the summer, she will likely spend more time at home.

This is an opportunity for the two of you to spend some quality time together. Here are some ideas:

- **Increase the number** of family meals. With a looser schedule, your child should be more available not just to eat with you, but also to assist you.
- **Get active.** If summer days are too hot for exercising outside, take advantage of the long, warm, summer evenings. If you both like

a sport, such as tennis, play together. Or just walk and enjoy each other's company—as well as the conversation that happens more naturally at these times.

- **Celebrate the weekend.** Summer weekends are precious and few. Never let them go to waste. Have your child make a (reasonable) list of what she'd like to do together.
- **Make memories.** Take photos to record your summer with your child. Spend an evening together placing them in an album or making a scrapbook.

Source: Peter L. Benson and others, *What Teens Need to Succeed: Proven, Practical Ways to Shape Your Own Future*, ISBN: 1-57542-027-9 (Free Spirit Publishing, [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)).

**Q:** I try so hard to do everything right when it comes to parenting my child, but I always fall short and end up feeling frazzled. How can I do better?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** By being nicer to yourself—and more realistic! Nobody does "everything right" when it comes to parenting. *There is no such thing as a perfect parent*, so don't try to be one.

Instead, focus on taking care of yourself as much as you do your child. Because the more balanced and content you are, the less likely you'll be to become frazzled when you hit bumps in the road.

To start taking better care of yourself:

- **Get support** from other parents. Once a month, make a point of meeting with other parents to vent, laugh and unwind. Nobody understands the stresses of raising kids today better than fellow moms and dads.
- **Get support from the school.** If your child has serious problems at school, go to the guidance counselor or school psychologist for help. Having a professional to talk to may make it easier for you to deal with your child's problems.
- **Make time for fun.** Is your week an endless loop of work, kids, laundry and errands? Break out of your rut! Whether it's dancing, painting or playing softball, find time to indulge your passions. Doing what you love may make you happier overall. And a happier parent is a better parent!

—Maria Koklanaris,  
The Parent Institute



# It Matters: Summer Learning

## Be firm about limits on screen time this summer



Many kids watch more than twice the TV in the summer as they do during the school year. And that doesn't count

the time spent in front of the computer or with a cell phone.

As a parent, you need to monitor this. On the one hand, your child deserves time to relax. For most kids in middle school, this includes the TV, computer and phone. But on the other, moderation and limits are very important.

Here are some reasons why:

- **Too much screen time** can affect your child's maturity. A middle school child should use part of the summer to take on new responsibilities, learn new hobbies and try new interests. Staring at a screen won't get him too far on that journey.
- **Research shows that time** in front of a screen can be the difference between a child being overweight or not overweight. Not surprisingly, the overweight children used more screen time.
- **Students in middle school** socialize with friends on the computer and cell phone. But too much of this might replace "face time." Your child needs to spend "real life" time with friends and family, too.
- **Time in front of a screen** is time your child is not spending in more healthy pursuits, such as exercise and reading.

Sources: CBC News, "Overweight teens get too much screen time: report," Canadian Broadcasting Centre, [www.cbc.ca/health/story/2009/10/08/child-obesity-screen-time.html](http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2009/10/08/child-obesity-screen-time.html).

## Consider your child's maturity level when encouraging reading

**Y**our child's elementary school years are well behind her, and high school looms large (maybe even next fall!). Keep your child's progression to young adulthood in mind. It's a key to encouraging her toward a lifelong habit of reading for pleasure. Here are some tips:

- **Tap into your child's** more sophisticated ability to understand and care about current events. Read a newspaper in print or online every day and pledge to share at least one article of interest each day with your child. Challenge her to find an article a day for you as well.
- **Your child is beginning to think** about her place in the world and the difference she can make. She may enjoy books about kids her age asserting themselves to make a difference. Ask a librarian for suggestions.



- **You are still the most important** person in your child's life. Ask your child to pick a book for the two of you to read and discuss.
- **Your child has more defined** interests now. She may even have career goals. Look for books, magazines and articles that highlight these interests.

Source: RIFNet, "Choosing Books for Preteens and Teens," Reading is Fundamental, [www.rif.org/parents/tips/tip.msp?View=19](http://www.rif.org/parents/tips/tip.msp?View=19).

## Prevent summer learning loss with activities and books



Summer vacation means more than splashing in the pool, sleeping late and hanging out with friends.

Unfortunately, it can also mean serious learning loss.

According to research:

- **All kids lose knowledge** over the summer if they don't engage in learning-rich activities.
- **Kids score lower** on standardized tests at the end of summer break than they do on the same tests at the beginning of break.

- **Most kids lose roughly** two months' worth of math skills over the summer. (It's even worse for low-income kids.)

To prevent summer learning loss, keep your child's mind active during the long break. Visit the library. Go to the zoo or a museum together. See a performance at your community theater. And encourage him to keep reading!

Source: "Know the Facts," National Summer Learning Association, [www.summerlearning.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=73&Itemid=358](http://www.summerlearning.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=73&Itemid=358).