Stay Involved in Your Child's School and Other Activities

Your child may need more independence in his or her early teens, but it is still important for you to remain involved and interested in your child's school and after-school activities.

Learn about your child's school. Ask your child's principal or school guidance counselor for a parent handbook or manual. Ask about the classes that your child's middle school offers and what classes he or she will need to take in middle school and high school.

Keep in touch with your child's school and teachers. Attend parent-teacher conferences, read school newsletters and stay in regular communication with your child's teachers. See if it is possible to communicate with your child's school and teachers by phone and/or email.

Attend school events. Go to sports events and concerts, attend PTA meetings, back-to-school nights and awards events. Participating in events like these will allow you to stay aware of the school's activities, as well as your child's interests and hobbies.

Volunteer in your child's school. Look for ways to help out at your child's school. This may include serving on school committees, making phone calls, assisting your child's teachers, or acting as a parent chaperone.

Stay aware of your child's homework and school demands. Middle school teachers will usually assign your child more homework than he or she received in elementary school. It is important for you to keep track of your child's homework expectations and deadlines. However, do not do homework for your child. Encourage your child to do his or her best work on homework assignments.

Monitor your child's progress. Be aware of your child's progress on school work, tests and assessments, and grades so you can address any potential problems or issues before they become larger.

Remember your child's next transition — to high school. Make sure that your child is aware of the classes and programs he or she will need to take in middle school to be prepared for high school and beyond. Help your child acquire the skills and knowledge needed in various subjects such as English, science, history, mathematics, foreign languages and computer classes. No matter what classes, programs or interests your child may want to pursue in middle school, help him or her also consider the options available during high school and post-high school education and use the time in middle school to prepare for those future educational opportunities.

For more information:

Helping Your Child Through Early Adolescence, U.S. Department of Education at:
http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/adolescence.

Helping Your Child with Homework, U.S. Department of Education at:
http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Homework/.

National Middle School Association at:
http://www.nmsa.org/.

Family Education Network at:
http://www.familyeducation.com/home/.

ACRN

America's Career Resource Network

Is your Child *ready* for Middle *School?*

A parent's guide for preparing their child for educational success in middle school . . .

No Child LEFT BEHIND

This brochure was created using a grant from the Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

The Middle School Years: What Should Parents Expect?

How is Middle School Different?

Most parents probably attended a junior high school that had grades seven through nine. Today, fewer students attend junior high schools, and most now attend middle schools, which are usually for grades six through eight, although some middle schools start as early as fifth grade.

Transitioning into middle school can be a huge adjustment for your child. The routines, school work, campus, teachers, friends and fellow students are usually very new. This change can be overwhelming and may have an impact on your child's motivation and self-esteem.

Middle school students experience a number of physical, emotional and mental changes. As a middle school parent, you should be aware that your child will experience fluctuating emotions and motivation levels, and will be exposed to new situations and experiences. Peer pressure, academic demands, exposure to new social environments and physical changes will be added distractions to an already new and sometimes overwhelming world.

As a parent of a middle school child, you will need to maintain constant communication and connection with your child. Keep in mind that while your child may need more space and independence to discover new interests and build skills and knowledge, he or she will also need your continued support and guidance throughout the middle school years.

How Can I Help My Child Move from Elementary to Middle School?

Helping your child transition from elementary school, where he or she was familiar with the school environment, can be challenging. Some ways to help your child through this move may include:

- Attending an open house at the middle school. This will help your child become familiar with his or her new building, classrooms and lockers.
- Meeting with your child's school guidance counselor. Ask the counselor's advice on how to help your child transition into his or her new school.
- Exposing your child to a broad range of experiences and programs. This will allow your child to identify new interests in academic subjects, community involvement and sports. Encouraging your child to participate in new programs can help him or her explore new interests and start to consider future plans.
- Setting ground rules for your child. Make sure your child knows what time to get up, be ready for school, and when to do homework. Continually tell your child that he or she is expected to do his or her best in school.
- Helping your child get organized. The amount of homework, school work and after-school activities increases in middle school. Help your child learn good study habits. Habits such as doing homework at a certain time, talking about assignments, writing assignments in a calendar, going to the library, and cleaning out his or her backpack will help your child be more organized and focused at school.

Keep Your Child Motivated to Learn and Do Well In and Out of School

It is important to encourage your child to do his or her best in school and in any outside activities in which her or she may participate. As a parent you can do this by:

- **Showing love.** Provide support and encourage your child to develop his or her interests. Let your child know that you support and love them is vital to maintaining a close parent-child relationship.
- **Teaching responsibility.** Encourage your child to be responsible for chores, completing homework assignments, taking on community activities, and acknowledging good and bad decisions that he or she has made.
- **Being a role model.** Sometimes a parent's actions can speak louder than words. Show that you value education and exhibit the values and behavior you hope your child will develop.
- **Providing your child with a range of experiences**. A range of experiences in sports, music, volunteer activities, travel, etc., will allow your child to discover and develop his or her strengths.
- **Setting limits.** Discuss with your child what TV shows, movies and video games are appropriate for him or her to watch or play. Be aware of the activities and friendships that your child has. It is also important for you to know what music your child listens to and which magazines he or she reads.
- **Talking to your child.** Be aware of what your child is doing. Talk to your child about his or her day, activities, school work, friends and interests. Listen to your child and discuss the subjects that are important to him or her, even if those subjects do not seem important to you.
- **Being aware of potential issues.** Know and understand the potential problems or pressures that face your child such as drug use, depression, eating disorders and poor school performance so that they can be addressed as soon as possible.