



How Can You Help Your Middle School Student?

Here are some suggestions for how to help your student from a former middle school teacher and parent of 3 current middle school students...

- **Make sure your child has a regular time and place to do homework.**
Middle school students need consistency. It's very important that every student works on homework at about the same time every night. Students will be more likely to remember to do homework. On days when there is no homework assigned, you could have them read. It is also important that students have one place they can sit and do homework. A homework spot should be somewhere that is as quiet as possible and comfortable, but not so comfortable that a student falls asleep there (for example, sitting in bed is probably not the best place). Students should also avoid doing homework in front of the television.
- **Make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast every day.**
Students need brain food every morning. A good breakfast could include eggs, cereal, toast or a piece of fruit. If you can't afford to buy breakfast, send your student to school where s/he can get a free, healthy breakfast. A healthy breakfast feeds the brain so it can begin working right away. A healthy breakfast also helps avoid catching every flu bug and virus. Please avoid letting your child drink pop, coffee and/or energy drinks, which are loaded with sugar and caffeine. Middle school students are in the middle of puberty and need the best food to help them grow into healthy young men and women.
- **Make sure your child gets at least 8 hours of sleep every night.**
Students who have not had enough sleep have a hard time paying attention in class. Middle school students are still growing and need time to rest. Students who don't get enough sleep are also more likely to get sick. Please encourage your child to be in bed before 10 pm, so they can get a great night's sleep.
- **Make sure your child reads at least 30 minutes 6 days a week.**
Reading is a very important skill. Students who read well will have an easier time in all of their classes. As with sports or playing an instrument, students will only become better readers if they have many chances to practice reading. Your child should be able to check out books in the school library, but you can also go to the public library for more variety. There are even many teachers who have books your child could borrow. Something to think about – I pay my children \$1 for every 100 pages they read (sometimes kids need an extra incentive).
- **Make sure you take time to listen to your child.**
Middle school is probably one of the most difficult times in a person's life. Middle school children's bodies are in a constant state of change, which also affects their emotions. Middle school students are often emotional. These students may be happy one minute and sad the next. The one thing that remains constant is a middle school student's need to talk about his/her "issues." Don't force your child to talk to you, but be available to listen. Don't take it personally when your child doesn't want to talk or even if s/he gets angry at you for "no reason." Sometimes they don't even understand their own emotions.
- **Make sure you take time to celebrate successes with your child.**
Middle school students often feel "beat up" for the many things they do wrong, so it is really important for the adults around them to celebrate with them when they do something wonderful. You may wish to celebrate when your student does his/her homework every day for one week. For another student, you may wish to celebrate when a grade is raised from a "D" to a "C." Do your best to attend concerts, parent conferences, sporting events and other special events.