

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Insist on regular attendance through the last day of school

Your child has a fever. That is a definite reason to keep her home from school. "Spring fever," however, doesn't count. School is still in session and your child needs to be present. As tempting as it may be to let your child "take a break" after staying up late to work on a project or to skip school because the project isn't quite finished—or because it's a particularly beautiful day outside—don't give in.

Regular attendance is critical for two major reasons:

- 1. The time for end-of-year exams is approaching.** Reviewing for these exams is important to your child's success. Your child needs to be at school.
- 2. Your child still has regular schoolwork and assignments** in addition to exams. Missing school at this busy time can cause your child to fall behind very quickly.



Education is your child's top priority. That's true even when the spring weather beckons. Allowing your child to miss school (except for illness or family emergencies) sends your child the message that school is only important some of the time. Make sure you schedule medical appointments and family vacation during times when school is not in session.

Source: "Report to Parents – School Attendance," National Association of Elementary School Principals, www.naesp.org/resources/2/Report_to_Parents/2008/rtp09-08.pdf.



Help your child increase vocabulary

The greater your child's vocabulary, the more he will increase his reading comprehension and understanding of higher-level conversations—skills that will help him in high school and beyond. Encourage your child to:

- **Read something** beyond his comfort level. This is a great way to encounter new words. It may help if he keeps a notebook close by as he reads so he can jot down words he doesn't know.
- **Look it up.** The dictionary is one of your child's most important tools. Keep one handy—and if your child doesn't know what a word means, tell him to crack that dictionary open and find out!
- **Use the new words** he learns when he speaks. Compliment him on his strong vocabulary.
- **Talk with adults.** Be careful not to "do the talking for him" when he is around adults. He'll be learning important social skills while improving his vocabulary.

Source: Eric Jensen, *Student Success Secrets*, ISBN: 0-8120-9488-3, Barron's Educational Series.

Prepare for upcoming tests

End-of-the-year tests are coming soon! Share these test-taking tips with your child:

- **Take** a deep breath.
- **Read** the directions carefully.
- **Focus** first on the questions to which you immediately know the answers. Then go back to the trickier ones.
- **Use** all your time! Check your work.

As a family, try volunteering

April 22nd is Earth Day. Use this as an opportunity to discuss volunteering activities as a family. Call a family meeting. Then:

- **Make a list** of projects family members would like to do. Search the Internet for volunteer activities in your area. Look in your local newspaper. Or ask your child's counselor or teachers for suggestions.
- **Start small.** Try a one-time activity, such as a park clean-up day. Then your family can decide if you would like to commit to more service activities.



Source: Peter L. Benson and others, *What Teens Need to Succeed*, ISBN: 1-57542-027-9, Free Spirit Publishing.

The upside of downtime

Talking and listening are some of the most meaningful things you can do with your child. Have relaxed conversations as you:

- **Prepare** meals together.
- **Go** for a walk
- **Drive** in the car or ride on a bus.
- **Shop** for groceries.



Source: "Talking with Preteens," the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, www.pamf.org/preteen/parents/talking.html#Activity%20B%20-%20Quality%20Time.

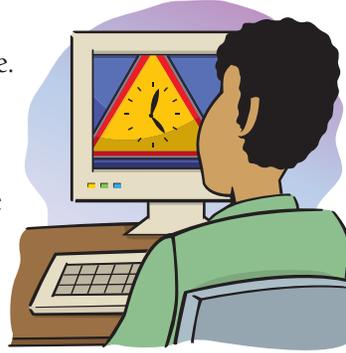


How can parents keep tabs on kids' computer usage?

Q: My middle schooler is very tech-savvy—but I'm not! How can I monitor his online activities when so much of this is over my head?

A: Your responsibility is to keep your child safe. Your child may be tech-savvy, but remember that you're world-savvy. To help your child be responsible about online activities:

- **Set time limits.** Decide how much leisure time he can spend on the computer or his cell phone—and stick to it.
- **Spell out what he can and can't do online.** Is "chatting" with others a definite no-no? Are adult-oriented or violent sites absolutely forbidden? Tell your child.
- **Go over the basics of online safety** with your child. If you're not sure of them yourself, visit sites like www.wiredsafety.org or www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguide.htm and learn together.
- **Keep the computer out in the open**—in the kitchen, the living room or another common area of your home.
- **Set cell phone rules.** No calls or texting after a certain time. At bedtime, keep the phone in a common area.
- **Set parental controls.** Ask your Internet service provider about ways to block certain websites.



What is your child doing after school?

After school is when students are most likely to get into trouble. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see how well you are monitoring your child's after-school time:

- ___ **1. Does your child have** an adult contact after school, such as a relative, neighbor or sitter?
- ___ **2. Do you stay** in touch by phone or other means if you are not with your child?
- ___ **3. Have you set** rules about who may be in the house when you are not there? Do you check on your child to make sure she follows rules?
- ___ **4. Have you discussed** the dangers that kids can get into after school (such as drugs and alcohol) and how your child can avoid them?

- ___ **5. Do you encourage** your child to get involved in extracurricular activities?

How did you do? *Each yes answer means you are working hard to keep your child safe and productive after school. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.*

"Few things help an individual more than to ... let him know that you trust him."

—Booker T. Washington

Teach your child how to make better decisions

You can help your child sharpen her decision-making skills. Encourage her to:

- **Write down** the issue.
- **Consider** potential solutions or ideas.
- **Evaluate** the options. Weigh the pros and cons of each option.
- **Put** her plan to work.
- **Reassess** the situation. How is her strategy working?

Motivate children with love

Many parents wonder how to motivate their middle schoolers to succeed. The best way is surprisingly simple: Offer love and support. To do this:

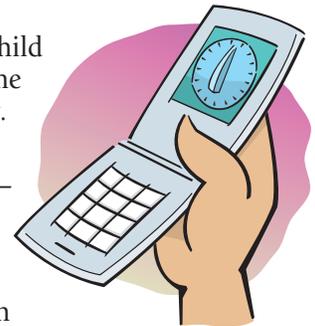
- **Enjoy** plenty of time with your child.
- **Express** high expectations.
- **Praise** your child's good work.

Timers prevent 'lost' time

Middle schoolers don't have a good sense of time. They might play video games for an hour and think it's only five minutes. Then they're amazed they don't have any time left for homework.

To help your child develop better time sense, use a timer.

Limit activities to a certain time—like 10 minutes. Then set the timer. The timer will tell him when his time is up. Your child will gain a better sense of how much he can *really* accomplish in certain amounts of time.



Source: Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese, *The Roller-Coaster Years*, ISBN: 0-5530-6684-6, Broadway Books.

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