

Helping Students Learn[®]

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board



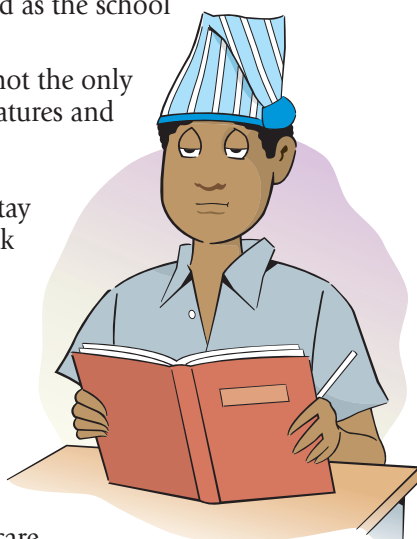
May 2013

Help your child have a strong finish to the school year!

The calendar says "May" and your child is already thinking about summer vacation! But the last few weeks of school are still very important, so it's vital that he stay focused and finish the year strong.

To help your child keep working hard as the school year winds down:

- **Stick to routines.** He's probably not the only one being wooed by warmer temperatures and extra daylight. If you find yourself letting him spend time outdoors or with friends longer and longer and stay up later and later, it's time to get back on track. Morning comes as early as ever, and if your child doesn't get enough sleep every night, he may be worn out and lethargic in class.
- **Maintain an interest in his schoolwork.** You're probably already pretty familiar with what goes on in his classes, but don't stop asking. Keep showing that you care about his education.
- **Remind your child** that if his grades suddenly slip near the end of the year, or he starts to slack off on completing homework, there will be consequences. The thought of missing a summertime movie, a trip to an amusement park or the pool may inspire him to buckle down.



Monitor your child's preteen years

Your middle schooler may be getting older, but she's still far from being an adult. While the gap between a 12-year-old and an 18-year-old is just a few years in time, it is eons in terms of maturity. She may be ready to make some of her own choices, but don't let her adopt ways you know she's not ready for. Be aware of your child's:

- **Grades.** A sudden drop in grades is a sign that she may be making bad choices. Schoolwork should always be her top priority.
- **Respect for limits.** If she can enjoy more freedom and stay within the boundaries you set, it's a sign that she has a handle on becoming more mature.
- **Companions.** Older students, especially of the opposite sex, are not your child's peers. She should not be with them unsupervised.

Source: G. Hermann, "Growing Up Too Fast—Helping Your Preteen Transition from Child to Adult," Disney family.com, <http://family.go.com/parenting/pkg-tween/article-792631-growing-up-too-fast-t/>.

Spend time with a book over the summer months

You've heard the advice: Keep your child reading over the summer to stem "summer learning loss." But what if your child doesn't like to read during the school year, let alone when he doesn't "have to"? Try:



- **Audio books** instead of movies in the car.
- **Books or magazines** instead of electronic games for waiting in line.
- **Graphic novels.** They've turned many young people into readers.

Source: M. Salvatore, "How Do You Get a 12-Year-Old Boy to Read?" Adolescent Literacy, www.adlit.org/ask-the-experts/27739.

Babysitting helps develop responsibility skills

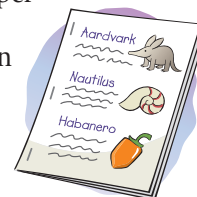
Babysitting during the summer break is a great way to nurture a sense of responsibility in your child—including responsibility for school success. But is she mature enough to handle the huge responsibility? Start by asking yourself if your child is:

- **Patient** with children and pets.
- **Self-sufficient** when she's home alone.

Source: K. Marmarou, "Is Your Preteen Ready to Babysit?" TweenParent.com, www.tweenparent.com/articles/view/138.

A personal dictionary will boost vocabulary skills

Have your child staple paper together to make a small book. This will be her own dictionary! Encourage her to write down two to five new words each day. Have her look up the definition of the word and write that in the notebook. She can even draw a picture of the word to depict its meaning.



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How can I ease my child's transition to high school?

Q: My child is a good student and she loves school, but the thought of starting high school seems to overwhelm her. Is there anything I can do to make the transition go more smoothly?

A: Absolutely! Although you can't guarantee your child an easy transition from middle school to high school, there are some things you can do this summer to prepare her for the change. For example:

- **Listen to her.** When your child talks about her fears about high school, pay attention. You might assume she has a general fear about starting a new school. It could turn out, though, that she's worried about riding on a different bus. If you can understand what her concerns are, you can help her address them.
- **Help her get organized.** High school means a bigger workload. Help your child prepare this summer by teaching her to stay organized. Give her all the supplies you can—colored folders, highlighters, sticky notes, a calendar to write down assignments. If she has a cell phone and her school allows it, suggest that she download a calendar app.
- **Visit the school.** Check to see if the school allows students to take a tour of the high school during the summer. The more familiar she is with its layout, the more comfortable your child will be on the first day of class.



Source: *Moving Right Along: Engaging Parents for Student Success in the Middle Grades*, The Parent Institute, www.parent-institute.com.



Will learning be a priority this summer?

While summer vacation is supposed to be a relaxing time for your family, it is important to make sure your child keeps learning! Are you committed to learning as a family this summer? Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions:

- ___ **1. Have you made** a plan to keep your child reading all summer so his reading skills don't get rusty?
- ___ **2. Have you made** a list of interesting and educational places to go and things to do?
- ___ **3. Have you agreed** upon daily limits on TV, computer and video game time?
- ___ **4. Have you suggested** that your child make plans to shadow someone with a job in which he may be interested?

- ___ **5. Have you encouraged** your child to find a sport or activity to participate in this summer?

How well are you doing?

Mostly yes answers mean you are committed to making this summer a time for learning. For each no answer, try that suggestion from the quiz.

"Adolescents understand everything that we're not saying."
—Brad E. Sachs, Ph.D.

Explore forms of writing

Summer is a good time to learn two things about writing: It has a purpose and it can be a lot of fun! Here are some fun and purposeful writing ideas. Your child can write:

- **A book review.**
- **Trivia questions** about a favorite sport.
- **A letter** of complaint/compliment to a company.
- **Fan fiction** starring a favorite personality or character.



Source: readwritethink, "Resources for Grades 7-8," National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association, www.readwritethink.org/parent-after-school-resources/grade/7-8/.

Note-taking skills will help now and in the future

Taking good notes is essential in high school and college. Now is a good time for your child to develop, practice and perfect this skill. Organizing notes into two columns is one strategy that works for many students:

- 1. Create two columns**—one narrow, one wide.
- 2. In the narrow column**, write down main ideas. When taking notes from a text, look for words in bold type. When taking notes from a lecture, listen for clues, such as "You should remember this" or "Three reasons"
- 3. In the wide column**, fill in some details about each main idea. Writing in complete sentences isn't necessary.

Source: A.K. Dolin, *Homework Made Simple*, Advantage Books.

Courtesy at home leads to success in school

You want your child to be courteous and respectful. To teach polite behavior, rein in critical remarks. Don't let your child hear you criticizing teachers or other adults. If he hears not-so-friendly comments from you, he may start thinking it's okay for him to make similar remarks.

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