

Helping Students Learn®

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board



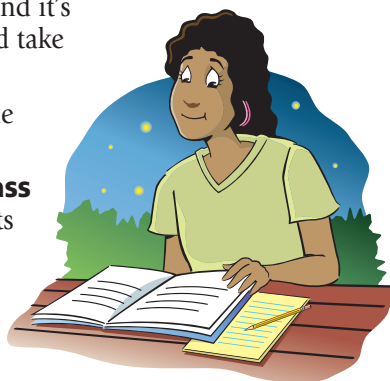
May 2012

Keep your child motivated and focused until the last day of school

Your calendar says May, and your child is already easing into “summer vacation mode.” But this is a critical time, and it’s important for your child to stay focused and take the last few weeks of school seriously.

To keep your child motivated through the end of the school year:

- **Talk about what she’s doing in class** every day. Continue reading the handouts she brings home and keep on top of upcoming tests and quizzes. Show her that her education matters to you and it just might become her priority, too.
- **Stick to routines.** The weather is warmer and the nights are longer, but this is not the time to ease up on routines. They are vital when it comes to keeping your child focused on school. Keep homework and bedtime routines in place. Summer will be here soon enough.
- **Head outside.** If the weather is too perfect to stay indoors after school, let your child take her books outside and study there. Even better, grab your own book or magazine and join her!
- **Plan a special activity to celebrate the end of school.** It doesn’t need to be anything elaborate. A small present or treat may be all the motivation your child needs to keep working hard during those last few weeks!



Manners matter in life

Getting together over a meal happens all the time socially and in the business world. So table manners count. Your child needs to use napkins and utensils, politely pass a plate (or ask for one to be passed) and chew with his mouth closed. He also needs to use mannerly words like *please* and *thank you*. Work on these respectful habits this summer.

Prevent learning loss

Summer vacation means sleeping late and hanging out with friends. Unfortunately, it can also mean learning loss if kids don’t engage in learning-rich activities. According to research, most kids lose roughly two months’ worth of math skills and score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer break. So keep your child’s mind active. Visit the library, the zoo or a museum together. And encourage her to keep reading!



Source: “Know the Facts,” National Summer Learning Association, http://www.summerlearning.org/?page=know_the_facts&hhSearchTerms=%22know+the+facts%22.



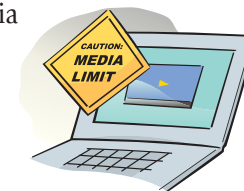
At the end of the year, review & reset

The end of the school year is a good time to review your goals and expectations for your child. You can discuss how things went this year, and talk about new goals for next year. First, get feedback from your child:

- **How** does your child think he did this year? Did he achieve his goals? What would he like to change for next year?
 - **What** would he like to learn in high school? What can he do now to get on the right path?
 - **How** is his life outside school? Is he happy with the way he spends his free time?
 - **What** does he dream about being or doing someday?
- After your child has his say, reset:
- **Your expectations.** Let your child know you expect his best efforts. But be realistic, and remember most children are strong in some subjects, but not so strong in others.
 - **Goals** for next year—or adjust goals from this year. Let your child know that you will support him on the goals you come up with together.

Limit summer media time

Reports show that media time—time spent watching TV, using the computer or cell phone or playing video games—increases dramatically over the summer months. Remember to keep a healthy balance for your child. He should use part of the summer to try new interests and take on new responsibilities. Staring at a screen won’t get him far on that journey.



Source: “150% Surge in Children’s Television Viewing During Summer is Focus of New Campaign,” Smart Television Alliance, www.reuters.com/article/2008/06/30/idUS151842+30-Jun-2008+PRN20080630.

Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



MIDDLE SCHOOL

May 2012

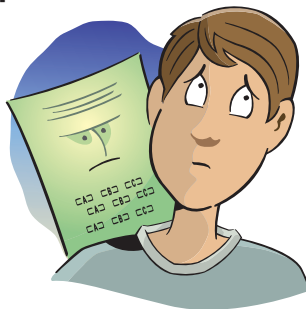


How can parents & students conquer test-taking anxiety?

Q: My son gets nervous at testing time. He has a lot of tests coming up and I want to make sure he does his best. Can you offer some suggestions on how I can help him overcome his test anxiety?

A: Your child is not alone. A lot of students become overly anxious about taking tests. The best remedy for test anxiety is preparation. Encourage your child to:

- **Ask specific questions** about each test. Will it be true-false? Multiple-choice? Essay? Exactly what material will it cover?
- **Begin studying** several days before the test. Cramming adds stress, not knowledge.
- **Make up practice questions** and answer them in his own words. Review past quizzes, class notes, handouts and corrected homework for clues on what might be on the test.
- **Review textbook chapters.** Reread headings and subheadings. Note pictures and charts. Study chapter summaries and review questions.
- **Study when he has the most energy** and feels the most alert. Help him eliminate distractions. He should study in blocks of time, say 40 minutes of studying followed by a 10-minute break.
- **Get a good night's sleep** before the test.



Is your child ready for a safe summer?

Summer is prime time for fun—and also for risk. That's a special consideration for middle schoolers, who may not always be in sight of an adult. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you are preparing your child for a safe summer:

- ___ **1. Do you require** your child to wear a hat or sunglasses to protect her eyes from the sun?
- ___ **2. Do you have** your child wear protective gear, such as a helmet, when on wheels (bike, skateboard, etc.)?
- ___ **3. Do you keep** track of where your child is, who she is with, and what she is doing?
- ___ **4. Do you avoid** giving your child jobs she is not ready for, such as using a riding mower?
- ___ **5. Do you encourage** your child to drink plenty of water when out in the heat?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you are focused on summer safety. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz to change your answer to yes.

"Safety first" is
'safety always.'
—Charles M. Hayes

Share the newspaper with your child this summer

Summertime is perfect reading time. Tap into your child's increasing ability to understand and care about current events. Read a newspaper in print or online every day and share an article of interest with your child. Then challenge her to find an interesting article to share with you.

Source: "Choosing Books for Preteens and Teens," Reading is Fundamental, www.rif.org.

Take advantage of time off to spend time together

With school out for the summer, your child will likely spend more time at home. This is a chance for the two of you to grow closer. That bond that will become more important as he goes on to high school. You might:

- **Have more family meals.** Summer is a great time to teach your child a few basics, such as how to prepare a salad.
- **Celebrate the weekend.** Tell your child that several hours of each weekend will be yours together and have him make a (reasonable) list of what he'd like to do.

Parents' support helps kids make good decisions

It's a myth that "parents can't do much" to keep a child from 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 she is protected. A loving relationship fosters:

- **Strong** self-concept.
- **Good** judgment.
- **Independence** and no need to follow the crowd.



Source: L. Steinberg and A. Levine, *You and Your Adolescent: A Parent's Guide for Ages 10–20*, Harper Perennial.

Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Erika Beasley. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2012, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1021