

Title 1 Newsletter

Middle School

March 2021

Maximize the power of your middle schooler's brain

Does your child seem to be more concerned with his friends than he is with what he's learning? Is he acting silly one minute and feeling overwhelmed the next?

If so, your child is a typical middle schooler. Brain research sheds some light on the behaviors that worry parents (or drive them crazy). Your child acts this way because, like all adolescents, his emotional brain develops faster than his rational brain.

Over the next few years, you will witness swings in your child's emotions. However, if you engage his emotional brain, you will also be able to maximize his ability to learn. Here's how:

- Use humor. Middle schoolers love to laugh and make jokes. Encourage your child to find funny cartoons, GIFs or videos about what he's learning. They can satisfy his desire to laugh and help him learn at the same time.
- Make learning personal. Middle schoolers tend to think the world revolves around them. So, link what your child is learning to his life. If he is studying the Revolutionary War, ask him to think about a time he felt like revolting against authority.
- Promote imagination. Help your child put his imagination to work when he is studying. Ask him questions like, "What would it have felt like to be there with George Washington at Valley Forge?"

Teach your middle schooler strategies to use during tests

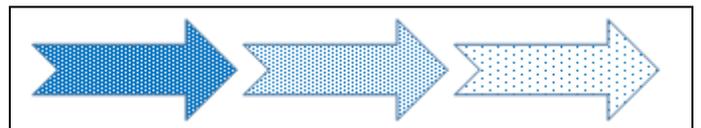
Tests certainly aren't the only measure of learning, but they are a useful way to check students' progress. And, your child will earn higher grades if she can do well on them.

Encourage your child to:

1. Read the directions carefully and underline direction words, such as compare, list, describe, define and summarize.
2. Skim the whole test quickly. She should think about how much time she has and decide how much time to spend on each question.
3. Start working. She should answer the questions she knows first and place check marks next to questions she needs to come back to.
4. Go back to the checked questions and answer each to the best of her ability.
5. Double-check her answers before she submits them. She should make sure her answers make sense and that she has not made careless mistakes.

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Ways you can support your middle schooler's education

When your child was younger, you may have volunteered in his class, hovered as he did his homework each night and forged close ties with his school. But now that he's growing and changing, your approach to school involvement needs to change, too.

Studies show that middle schoolers benefit from parents being involved in their schooling. But, during the middle school years, some things parents do at home are twice as effective at supporting their children's schooling as, say, chaperoning a class trip or volunteering in the classroom.

Research shows three things families can do are especially effective:

1. **Communicate your expectations.** Simply telling your child that you expect him to work hard and know he will go far in school can be a powerful motivator.
2. **Expand on what's being taught.** Talk to your child about the concepts he is learning every day. Then, brainstorm together about related activities. Encouraging your child to take what he's learning in school (such as math) and apply it to his everyday life (such as sticking to a shopping budget) can help him see why education matters.
3. **Talk about the future.** Does your child want to be an architect, a mechanic or a fashion designer? Help him investigate the education and training necessary to prepare for careers that interest him. Encourage him to find schools that offer the training he'll need. Remind your middle schooler that, while his plans may change, a solid education is his ticket to achieving any goal.

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Preparation is the key to better results

Tests in middle school are often more frequent, challenging and abstract than they were in elementary school. To help your child improve his test performance, share these preparation strategies:

- **Schedule plenty of study time.** Teachers usually provide advance notice, sometimes up to a week, of when they plan to give a test. Your child should start studying the day the test is announced.
- **Experiment with different methods when studying.** He can read material aloud and then explain it to you. He could create a diagram, poster or model.
- **Try "chunking."** Most students learn best when material is broken down or "chunked" into smaller pieces. Your child can make note cards with only one relevant fact on each card.
- **Think like a teacher.** Your child should ask himself several questions: What are the most important pieces of information in this unit? What are the concepts this unit is presenting? What parts of this unit will help me understand material that is coming up in the next unit and beyond?
- **Create a list of the important facts and concepts.** He can use it to make up practice tests for himself.
- **Save the last day of studying for review.** He should not try to learn new concepts on the last day. This is cramming, and crammed material is typically forgotten as quickly as it is learned.

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