

Back to School Strategies for Success: Middle School

Presented By:
Hazel Osborn

Objectives

- Understand the changes your child experiences during this time
- Further define your parenting roles for this age
- Create strategies to make school a positive experience for your child

Understand the Changes - Physical

- Growth of hair
- Increased body odor
- Girls
 - Development of breasts, start of menstruation
- Boys
 - Development of testes

Understand the Changes - Physical

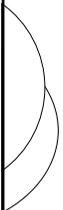
- Adolescents do not begin puberty at the same time.
 - Reassure children that differences in growth rates are normal
- These changes create concerns and anxiety over body image and appearance

Understand the Changes – Emotional

- Worry about the future – they are living beyond the moment
- Self-consciousness
- Mood swings
- They are learning to express their emotions differently; the actual feelings may be the same, however
- Fluctuate between independence and dependence
- Monitor excessive mood swings or sadness

Understand the Changes - Cognitive

- They are expanding the way in which they think, reason and learn
- They are able to comprehend more advanced academic concepts
- Their cognitive maturity will lead them to re-examine their role as a child, friend, student, etc.
- Remember, they may start to think like adults but don't have the experience to act like adults.



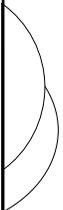
Parenting Roles - Love

- Demonstrate Love – 3 C's
 - **C**onnect
 - **C**ommunicate
 - Demonstrate genuine **C**aring and interest



Parenting Roles – Provide Support

- Give children encouragement
- Recognize when they might need extra assistance
- Support can be verbal or written or non-verbal



Parenting Roles – Set Limits

- Children need structure and supervision
- They need limits in order to feel emotionally and physically safe
- They need predictability

**Parenting Roles –
Role Model**

- You cannot NOT model
- Listen well and talk respectfully.
- Things to model – learning values, hard work...
- What would you most like people to notice about you?

**Parenting Roles –
Teach Responsibility**

- Chores
- Homework
- Have children admit to both good and bad decision making

**Parenting Roles –
Provide New Experiences**

- Introduce them to new:
 - Sports (playing and spectating)
 - Books
 - People
 - Cultures
 - Activities

Parenting Roles – Show Respect

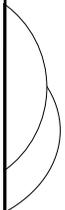
- Recognize differences
- Appreciate differences
- Practice empathy

School – What is school like?

- Children will have more responsibility
- Parents will have to work harder to stay involved – children still need you at this age
- Technology will play a large part in their school days
- Children may have more choices in curriculum and activities

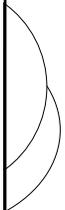
School – Strategies for Parent Involvement

- Set up a structure for your child's routine in the very beginning of the school year
- Learn school rules and regulations
- Be aware of curriculum requirements and options
- Know the homework policies and expectations
- Help your child get organized
- Discuss good study habits
- Provide a home environment that encourages learning



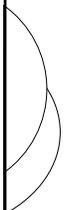
**School –
Strategies for Parent Involvement**

- Attend school events
- Volunteer in the school and at events
- Know your child's teacher(s) and key personnel
- Discuss your child's objectives and make sure the curriculum is designed accordingly
- Observe, monitor, and communicate



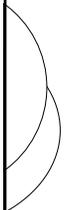
**School –
Strategies for Communication**

Understand the expectations of the school and teachers and be a “respectful advocate” for your child.



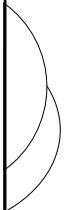
**School –
Strategies for Communication**

- Write or email teachers when:
 - Your child becomes unmotivated
 - Expectations are not clear
 - Grades drop
 - The curriculum or assignments seem inappropriate
 - Whenever you feel your child isn't being supported

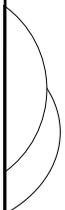


**School –
Strategies for Communication**

- Seek a meeting at the school if writing or emailing does not resolve the issue.
- Involve the school counselor or administration when appropriate.



Summary



Thank You

- Please take a moment to complete the evaluation form provided, your input is appreciated.

TIPS FOR YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL OR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL CHILD

The year your child enters middle school or junior high school is both an exciting and a challenging time. They are little fish in a big pond and often want desperately to fit in. Because your children may now see older students using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and may think they are cool and self-assured, your children may be tempted to try drugs too. Drug use goes up dramatically in the first year of middle school or junior high.

To help your children make good choices during this critical phase, you should:

- Make sure they are well-versed in the reasons to avoid alcohol, tobacco and drugs;
- Get to know their friends by taking them to and from after-school activities, games, the library and movies (while being sensitive to their need to feel independent);
- Volunteer for activities where you can observe your child at school; and
- Get acquainted with the parents of your children's friends and learn about their children's interests and habits. If it seems that your child is attracted to those with bad habits, reiterate why drug use is unacceptable.

To make sure that your child's life is structured in such a way that drugs have no place in it, you should:

- **If possible, arrange to have your children looked after and engaged in the after-school hours if you cannot be with them.** Encourage them to get involved with reputable youth groups, arts, music, sports, community service and academic clubs.
- **Make sure children who are unattended for periods during the day feel your presence.** Give them a schedule and set limits on their behavior. Give them household chores to accomplish. Enforce a strict phone-in-to-you policy. Leave notes for them around the house. Provide easy-to-find snacks.
- **Get to know the parents of your child's friends. Exchange phone numbers and addresses.** Agree to forbid each others' children from consuming alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in their homes, and pledge that you will inform each other if one of you becomes aware of a child who violates this pact.
- **Call parents whose home is to be used for a party.** Make sure they can assure you that no alcoholic beverages or illegal substances will be dispensed. Don't be afraid to check out the party yourself to see that adult supervision is in place.
- **Make it easy for your child to leave a place where substances are being used.** Discuss with your child in advance how to contact you or another designated adult in order to get a ride home. If another adult provides the transportation, be available to talk to your child about the situation when he or she arrives home.
- **Set curfews and enforce them.** Weekend curfews might range from 9 p.m. for a fifth-grader to 12:30 a.m. for a senior in high school.

- **Encourage open dialogue with your children about their experiences.** Tell your child, "I love you and trust you, but I don't trust the world around you, and I need to know what's going on in your life so I can be a good parent to you."

Tips to Help Your Child through Early Adolescence -- Helping Your Child through Early Adolescence

1. Learn as much as you can about early adolescence. Good information can help you make good decisions. Find out what changes you can expect during these years. Learn about what goes on in your child's school.
2. Stay involved in your child's life, both inside and outside of school. A positive relationship with a parent or other adult is the best safeguard your child has as he grows and explores. Find new and different ways to stay involved that work well with your child.
3. Provide both unconditional love and appropriate limits to help your child thrive and feel safe.
4. Talk with your child often about what's most important to her. Include the tough and sensitive subjects. Listen to what she has to say. Connected children are generally happier and do better in school and in life.
5. Hold your child to high but realistic standards both in school and in life. Let him know that you expect him to work hard, cooperate with teachers and other students and do his best.
6. Show that you value education. Stay in touch with your child's teachers and school officials. Check to see that he gets to school on time, completes homework assignments successfully and is signed up for classes required for college.
7. Provide opportunities for your young teen to succeed. Help your child to discover and develop her strengths. Success produces confidence.
8. Monitor friendships. Get to know your child's friends and their parents. Talk with him about friends, friendship and about choices he makes when with friends.
9. Work with your child to become more aware of the media and how to use it appropriately. Discuss what TV and movies to watch and what computer games to play. Become aware of the music she listens to and the magazines she reads.
10. Model good behavior. The best way to raise a child who is loving, decent and respectful is to live the values and behavior you hope he will develop.
11. Be alert to major problems, such as drug use, depression or an eating disorder. If the problem is too big to handle alone, get help from some of the many resources available.
12. Hang in there when times are tough. Most youngsters weather the bumps of early adolescence successfully and grow into successful adults. You play a major role in making that happen.

Parent Involvement at the Middle School Level

This article was prepared by ACCESS ERIC, with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education and is in the public domain.

Many parents who are actively involved in the education of their children at the elementary school level become less involved when their children reach middle school. However, parent involvement in a child's education during the middle school years (ages 10 to 14) is just as important in a child's success at school as it is in earlier grades. If the school doesn't have a formal participation plan for parents, it is important that parents take the initiative to continue their involvement and collaboration in their children's school.

What Is a Middle School?

Middle schools are schools that group students between the ages of 10 and 14. In some parts of the country, children from fifth to ninth grades are grouped together; in other parts, seventh- and eighth-graders are in one school. One of the most common middle school arrangements groups children from sixth to eighth grades.

What Are Middle Schoolers Like?

As children grow, they begin to experience physical, intellectual, and emotional changes. The way they learn, feel, see the world, and relate to other people becomes different from when they were younger. These changes, along with demands from present-day society and peer pressure, create conflicts and tension in the adolescent, which are reflected in their behavior in school and at home.

Young people at this age show a good number of contradictions and conflicts, which is normal. There is no "model" adolescent. All young persons are individuals with strong and weak points and with positive and negative qualities. There are some common characteristics that should be kept in mind in order to understand and help the middle schooler in daily activities at home and at school:

- Adolescents have high levels of physical and emotional energy, which may contrast with long periods of idleness, generally disapproved of by adults.
- They take risks, are curious, and love danger and adventure, yet their feelings can be hurt easily. This is the time when they feel immortal, but they worry a lot about what their friends think about them.
- They want to be independent from their families, and at the same time, they need to be pampered and protected.
- They withdraw and want a private life, and at the same time, they worry about being accepted by their peers.

- They demand privileges but avoid responsibilities. At the same time, they are developing an awareness of social problems and the welfare of others.

Adolescents from other cultures sometimes face an additional burden as they develop their identities and try to comply with the requirements of home and school. On one side, they have the values and customs of the home that the family wants to maintain, and on the other, they have to respond to the demands of their peers and teachers, who have a different set of rules.

Why Is It Important For Parents To Be Involved at the Middle School Level?

The results of recent research are very clear: When parents are actively involved in their children's education, they do better in school. *The academic level of the parents, their socioeconomic level, and their ethnic or racial origin are not determining factors for academic success.* It is essential for parents to have a positive attitude regarding education, and to demonstrate trust that their children can do well.

How Will Your Children and Your School Benefit From Your Involvement?

When parents become involved, both students and school benefit:

- Grades and test results are higher;
- Students' attitudes and behavior are more positive;
- Academic programs are more successful; and
- The schools, as a whole, are more effective.

The participation of all parents, including those with limited knowledge of English, is important to the academic achievement of their children. Such participation has many positive consequences for the family, the school, and especially for the young adolescent:

- The family has the chance to understand the school system better.
- The teachers can understand students who come from other cultures more easily.
- The students receive support from adults in order to confront the problems of adolescence-particularly where these problems are accentuated by the conflicting cultures of home, friends, and school.
- The school can become the natural extension of the home, aiding in the preservation of families' cultures and values.

What Can Parents Do To Support Education at Home?

There are many ways that parents can demonstrate to their adolescent children that they are interested in academic success and that they are available to offer support and protection when there are problems. Here are some suggestions:

- Talk with your child about what happens at school every day. Ask often if there are messages from the school.
- Spend some relaxed time with your children. Share a meal or a snack. Tell them often what you like about them.
- Listen to and share their worries. Support what you believe to be good about the school and offer your help to change any school practices that you believe could be harmful to your child.
- Avoid scoldings and arguments when your teenagers bring bad news home. Listen to their reasons and offer your help to improve the situation. It helps if your children know you believe they will be successful.
- Value their education by encouraging homework and reading. Help your children choose a good time and place to do their assignments and special projects. Provide the necessary materials and give them your unconditional support.

What Can Parents Do in the Middle School?

The way that parents become involved in the middle school can be somewhat different from what they were accustomed to in the elementary school. Generally, the building is larger, and it could be located farther from home. A middle school student may have several teachers, not just one as in the elementary school. The schedule is probably more complicated.

Don't be surprised if your teenagers feel embarrassed when you go to their school. It is not uncommon for them to resent their parents' presence at school. Here are some suggestions to increase your involvement:

- Get to know several teachers, not just one. Don't wait for a problem to talk to them.
- Keep in touch with the guidance counselors. They generally know all of the students in the school, and they can keep you informed regarding the progress and behavior of your child.
- Read all information on school policies and curriculum carefully. Normally, schools send this information home at the beginning of the school year.

- Review your child's school records each year. It is your right, and you should know what information is in the file.
- Keep informed about your child's grades and test results, especially in any subjects in which he or she has problems. Ask for help if it is needed.
- Request periodic meetings with the teachers. If you don't speak or understand English, ask for a translator or bring a bilingual friend or family member with you. Request information concerning programs that the school offers for students with limited English proficiency. Be sure your child is placed in the program that best meets his or her needs.
- Get to know other parents and form support groups to work on problems and issues of mutual interest.
- Answer notes and other correspondence the school sends. If you do not understand these messages due to language problems, ask the principal to send them to you in the language you understand.

Parenting assessment

The following questions will be helpful in assessing your parenting skills. Please circle the appropriate number on the scale that best describes you or your interactions with your child(ren).

Key: 1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = about half the time; 4 = usually; 5 = always

I respect my children as people.	1	2	3	4	5
I clearly define limits and expectations of acceptable behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
I am consistent in my actions and words.	1	2	3	4	5
I have the confidence needed to clearly and firmly communicate my needs and wants to my children.	1	2	3	4	5
I openly invite my children to participate in the rule-making process.	1	2	3	4	5
I look for occasions to "catch my children being good."	1	2	3	4	5
I find time daily to have a friendly talk with my children.	1	2	3	4	5
I listen to my children in a non-judgmental and understanding manner.	1	2	3	4	5
I recognize that my children's feelings are important and need attention.	1	2	3	4	5
I encourage my children to be individuals.	1	2	3	4	5
I recognize the need to be involved with my children and share activities with them.	1	2	3	4	5
I teach my children the value of working for what they want.	1	2	3	4	5
I discuss drugs, sex, AIDS, and other "hot" topics with my children.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel my expectations are realistic for my children's ages and abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
I try to be a good role model for my children and "practice what I preach."	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy my children and show them I think they're special.	1	2	3	4	5

This self-assessment is an ideal model. Don't worry if you don't feel that you measure up all the time. Even the best of parents can fall short from time to time. This seminar will help you sharpen your understanding and skills and give you tips on how to improve your parenting approach.

TAKE A MOMENT AND HONESTLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING...

I wanted children because...

As my child grows up, I hope that he/she will be...

Strategies that I can use to encourage this outcome are:

Ages and stages of child development

The following are only guidelines:

Expect your toddler to...

- Be self-centered; not understand other people's feelings
- Become increasingly independent
- Be aware of self as separate from others
- Explore environment and test you
- Imitate behaviors of others
- Enjoy being with other children, but have a hard time sharing
- Acquire more control over body and learn self-help skills: feeding, dressing, washing, and using toilet
- Develop language and comprehension skills, but still feel frustrated when trying to express self
- Have mood swings and much negativity
- Have drop in appetite and be fussy about food
- Have little internal self-control
- Have short attention span; be easily distracted.

Expect your preschooler to...

- Need lots of physical activity
- Gain more control over his body and become more adept at self-help skills: toileting, dressing, eating
- Establish self as separate from parents; become more independent
- Play *with*, rather than *beside*, other children
- Show empathy and want to please
- Be interested in words, ask questions, experiment with profanity, enjoy being silly

- Exaggerate, boast, tell stories, have imaginary friends, engage in fantasy play, have some difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality
- Have fears and anxieties
- Begin to understand right from wrong and relationship between behavior and consequences
- Have awareness of sexuality
- Fall in love with mother (boys) or father (girls)
- Be bossy; order people around

Expect your young school-ager to...

- Be curious and eager to learn
- Understand the differences between right and wrong, fantasy and reality
- Be more interested in real tasks with concrete goals
- Begin to develop a conscience, sense of morality, and sense of justice
- Test the limits of physical abilities, sometimes recklessly
- Need to make choices and decisions within limits
- Understand relationship between behavior and consequences
- Feel attached to parents but want more independence
- Be influenced by peer group
- Understand other people's feelings

Expect your teen to...

- Cope with physical, emotional, and intellectual changes
- Search for their own identity and separating from their parents
- Be critical of their parents
- Be moody and self-centered
- Be unpredictable and interested in trying out new behaviors
- Be strongly influenced by peer group values and opinions

Psychoanalyst **Erik Erikson** describes the physical, emotional and psychological stages of development and relates specific issues, or developmental work or *tasks*, to each stage. For example, if an infant's physical and emotional needs are met sufficiently, the infant completes his/her task -- developing the ability to trust others. However, a person who is stymied in an attempt at task mastery may go on to the next state but carries with him or her the remnants of the unfinished task. For instance, if a toddler is not allowed to learn by doing, the toddler develops a sense of doubt in his or her abilities, which may complicate later attempts at independence. Similarly, a preschooler who is made to feel that the activities he or she initiates are bad may develop a sense of guilt that inhibits the person later in life.

Infant

Trust vs Mistrust

Needs maximum comfort with minimal uncertainty to trust himself/herself, others, and the environment

Toddler

Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt

Works to master physical environment while maintaining self-esteem

Preschooler

Initiative vs Guilt

Begins to initiate, not imitate, activities; develops conscience and sexual identity

School-Age Child

Industry vs Inferiority

Tries to develop a sense of self-worth by refining skills

Adolescent

Identity vs Role Confusion

Tries integrating many roles (child, sibling, student, athlete, worker) into a self-image under role model and peer pressure

Young Adult

Intimacy vs Isolation

Learns to make personal commitment to another as spouse, parent or partner

Middle-Age Adult

Generativity vs Stagnation

Seeks satisfaction through productivity in career, family, and civic interests

Older Adult

Integrity vs Despair

Reviews life accomplishments, deals with loss and preparation for death

Key Contacts

School telephone number and school secretary name:

PTA president name and email address:

School newsletter frequency:

Principal email address:

School Web site URL:

Teacher email addresses and voice mail telephone numbers:

Presenter Bio

Hazel Osborn, M.A.

Hazel Osborn holds degrees in psychology, sociology, and anthropology, and a graduate degree with a focus on research in work balance issues. Since 1991 she has worked in the DC metro area offering consulting and training seminars on a variety of workplace issues with a focus on personal and professional growth. She has provided services to over sixty corporations as well as hundreds of family care facilities. She has published several articles in professional journals, several adult training curricula and newsletters, and two books. Hazel also works with LifeWork Strategies to deliver training and parent coaching.