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10 Tips for Middle School Parents

<http://www.schoolfamily.com/school-family-articles/article/801-10-tips-for-middle-school-parents>

Ways to stay involved in your child's education— even when he/she'd rather not have you around.

Middle school can be a confusing time, for parents as well as for their kids. Your child is becoming more independent yet still needs your support as much as ever. While you may decide to allow your child more autonomy in some areas, be sure to stay actively involved in your child's school. Research shows that children whose parents are engaged in their education are more likely to achieve academic success. Here are some tips for getting involved in your child's middle school learning experience.

1. **Get to know the teachers.** It's a good idea to meet each of your child's teachers. Ask about their expectations. Find out how much time your child should spend on homework each night. Find out whether there will be regularly scheduled tests and if so, when. Ask about the best way to get in touch if you have questions. If the teachers use email, be sure to get their addresses.
2. **Find a niche for yourself at your child's school.** Unlike in the lower grades, middle school classrooms don't need extra adults on hand. But you can volunteer in other ways. Serve as an adviser for an extracurricular activity such as the school paper, chess club, or science fair. Help out in the computer lab. Being in the school is a great way to get a feel for what goes on there.
3. **Do behind-the-scenes work.** If you can't be in school during the day, ask teachers and other school personnel to pass along some work that you can do on your own. Photocopy homework assignments; collect recyclables for a science or art project; serve on a parent-school advisory council; join your middle school PTO or PTA.
4. **Volunteer to chaperone school dances and drive kids to school sports competitions.** You'll meet other parents, school staff, and your child's classmates.
5. **Go to school meetings and events.** Attending concerts, plays, assemblies, meetings, and other activities is a good way to become familiar with your child's school community.
6. **Find out about homework assignments and school tests.** If your school has a website where teachers list homework assignments, get in the habit of checking it regularly. If not, contact your child's teachers and ask them to alert you when there's an important project or test coming up.
7. **Talk to your child about school.** Ask specific questions to draw out your child. Ask "How do you think you did on the math test?" "Did Mr. Phipps say anything funny today?" "What games did you play in PE?" More about having a conversation at school.
8. **Give your child a quiet place to study and do homework.** Find an area in your home that is free of distraction where your middle-schooler can concentrate on homework. Be available to help if your child has a question.
9. **Check your child's homework, but don't do it for her.** Offer to check math problems, proofread written papers, and look over spelling words. If you find a mistake, point it out to your child and help her figure out the correct answer.
10. **Post a family calendar in a central place.** Write down important school dates, including parent meetings, due dates for projects, and tests. Encourage your middle schooler to add to the calendar and to check it daily.