

Success Tips FROM A MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

A veteran educator offers advice on how to help your child succeed in middle school and beyond.

By Les Potter, Ed.D



When children enter middle school and beyond, some parents begin to feel as if their help and support are no longer needed. So, they stop being actively involved in their child's schooling and afterschool activities. But your involvement is still very important during this time.

As a middle school principal, a big part of my job is to help parents support their children emotionally as well as academically. Here is my best advice for parents:

- 1. Help your child manage homework time.** Encourage her to aim high and always do his best work. After your child has completed her homework, go over it with him, and discuss what he learned. If he has difficulties, encourage him to ask his teachers for help. Sometimes you may need to discuss difficulties with the teachers, too.
- 2. Discuss ideas and feelings about school, studies, and activities.** Be realistic about what your child can do. Don't expect top grades or high test scores if she isn't yet capable. That expectation will only cause frustration.

If necessary, find out about the school's tutoring program. Or, look into other forms of academic help.

- 3. Be sure that your child attends school on a regular basis.** Even if he is absent, he needs to keep up with his studies. Call the school if your child will be missing a day. And find out what he needs to do to make up for it.
- 4. Encourage your child to pursue interests and make friends through after school activities.** But make sure she selects just a few activities so she has enough time for schoolwork.
- 5. Know your child's friends.** Who does he hang out with? This is a wonderful time of his life, but you must be the adult and lead him through it.
- 6. Encourage your child to get to know her counselor.** The counselor will help her with her academic path. A counselor is also one of many potential adult role models for your child.
- 7. Attend parent meetings, open houses, parent education groups, and other activities for parents.** This is very important for your child!
- 8. If you can, volunteer at school.** Both your child and the school will benefit from your involvement. Schools solicit volunteers to help in a variety of ways, such as tutoring and helping out with field trips and activities.
- 9. Hold regular family meetings.** Talk over any concerns or problems that your child has.
- 10. Acknowledge efforts at school.** When your child works hard, reward him. Rewards and acknowledgment motivate him to keep doing his best. Kids love monetary rewards, but you don't have to break the bank to reward your child. You can also try a special outing together, a favorite dinner, or something else unexpected but of value.