

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board

April 2005

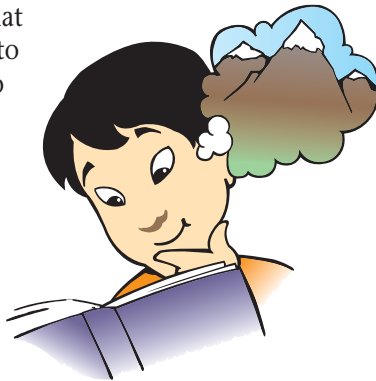
REINFORCING LEARNING

Review basic literary terms to help your child with novels

Middle school students have to analyze what they read. To do this, your child will need to understand some literary terms. You can go over them together.

They include:

- **Main idea.** This is the central point of the story.
- **Plot.** This is what happens in a story. There is a beginning, middle and end.
- **Characters and setting.** The characters are the living things (people, animals, imaginary creatures) in the story. The setting is where the action takes place.
- **Tone or mood.** Is the story serious? Is it depressing, silly or lighthearted? How does it feel? Your answers reveal the story's mood.
- **Symbolism.** A major character or object in the story may represent something else. For instance, a mountain might stand for a struggle that a character faces, or a river might symbolize the journey of life.
- **Imagery.** Is there language that helps the reader almost see, hear, smell or touch what is described?



Source: Drew and Cynthia Johnson, *Homework Heroes*, ISBN: 0-7432-2259-8 (Kaplan Books, 1-800-527-8378, www.kaptest.com).

HOMework

Allow your child to work independently

Children cannot grow into independent learners if their parents are too involved in their schoolwork.

Do you find yourself:

- **Hovering over your child** during study time?
- **Getting upset** about your child's mistakes?
- **Doing assignments** when your child struggles with them?
- **Believing** that your child's work represents your abilities?

If any of these descriptions fits you, try sitting on the sidelines more. Intervene briefly when she's really stuck. Let the teacher help out, too. Remember, as long as you're there to support her, your child will learn best from her own successes and failures.

Source: John K. Rosemond, *Ending the Homework Hassle*, ISBN: 0-8362-2806-3 (Andrews and McMeel, 1-800-943-9839, www.andrewsmcmeel.com).

DISCIPLINE

Be a consistent parent

One way to earn your child's respect is to be consistent. Consistent parents:

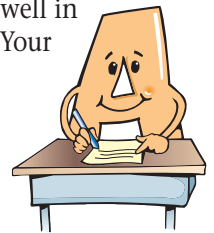
- **Make a few critical rules.** They understand that too many limits—or rules that change often—are confusing for kids.
- **Use consequences reliably.** For example, "You know the result of being late is staying home on a weekend night. So you can't go to the movies on Friday."

Source: Don H. Fontenelle, *Keys to Parenting Your Teenager*, ISBN: 0-7641-1290-2 (Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1-800-645-3476, www.barronseduc.com).

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

'A' is for attendance

The first rule for doing well in school is a simple one. Your child needs to be there. This is easy to forget when mornings get busy and your child arrives late for school, or when a family vacation would be convenient on school days. But in most cases, it's best to make attendance—and education—a priority.



BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Teach about to-do lists

Middle schoolers are notorious for being disorganized. To-do lists can help. Your child can start by writing down assignments at school. At home, have him add chores and other responsibilities. By the end of the day, each task should be checked off.

Source: "Time Management for Gifted Kids," FamilyEducation.com, www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,23-16518,00.html.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Give your child strategies for dealing with peer pressure

Q: I know kids in middle school often face strong peer pressure. How can I make sure my child is prepared?

A: As children get older, their decisions can have more serious consequences. So it's important for them to have a plan for making choices. You can help by teaching these steps:

- **Prepare.** Sometimes there isn't a lot of time to weigh alternatives. It's good to discuss intimidating situations before they arise.
- **Think.** When possible, your child should brainstorm about decisions. She can list the pros, cons and possible effects of various options.
- **Ask.** Make sure your child has someone (you or another trusted adult) to consult. Encourage her to get help with decisions that are overwhelming.
- **Imagine.** Your child should consider who else might be affected by her choice. Is she comfortable with the decision's possible consequences?
- **Review.** After a choice has been made, learn from it. Perhaps things didn't work out as planned. Or maybe the result was perfect. Evaluate what led to the outcome. If your child had to make the decision all over again, is there anything she would change?



Source: Paulette Bourgeois and Martin Wolfish, *Changes in You & Me*, ISBN: 0-8362-2815-4 (Andrews and McMeel, 1-800-943-9839, www.andrewsmcmeel.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Are you ready to discuss tough issues?

Children need to discuss difficult issues with parents. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging your child to do this:

1. Do you find comfortable ways to broach subjects, such as by talking about a TV show's plot?
2. Do you react calmly when your child mentions unexpected concerns?
3. Do you listen respectfully to your child's point of view?
4. Do you give your child honest, age-appropriate answers?

5. Do you tell your child that you are always there for him? **How did you score?** Each yes answer means you're encouraging your child to ask for help when he needs it. If you answered no to any question, consider how you could change the answer to yes.

"Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him."
— Booker T. Washington

SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

Take bullying seriously

Bullying is a problem that has received a lot of attention lately. But it's especially common in middle school. Victims may avoid school and struggle with learning. They may even become depressed or violent themselves. If you suspect bullying, don't ignore it. Contact your child's school right away.

Source: "Caregivers' Guide to School Safety & Security," National Crime Prevention Council, www.ncpc.org/ncpc/ncpc/?pg=2088-12148.

COPING WITH MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

Don't take negative comments too personally

At some point, your child will probably say something hurtful to you. Consider his opinion, but put it in perspective. Kids this age often talk first and think later. And they're still learning about how their actions affect others.

Source: Gail A. Caissy, *Early Adolescence, Understanding the 10 to 15 Year Old*, ISBN: 0-306-44762-2 (HarperCollins Publishers, 1-800-242-7737, www.harpercollins.com).

HEALTHY HABITS

Act now to keep your child from smoking

It's a sad fact that some children begin smoking in middle school. Take steps to prevent this behavior by:

- **Being** a non-smoking role model.
- **Discussing** the short- and long-term effects of smoking.



Source: "Tobacco Use Among Middle and High School Students—National Youth Tobacco Survey 1999," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/tobacco/research_data/survey/mmwr4903fs.htm.

Helping Students Learn[®]

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Executive Editor: Jeff Peters. Senior Editor: Betsie Ridnour.
Editor: Patricia Hodgdon. Staff Editor: Rebecca Miyares.
Writer: Susan O'Brien. Editorial Assistant: Pat Carter.
Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.
Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.
Copyright © 2005, 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