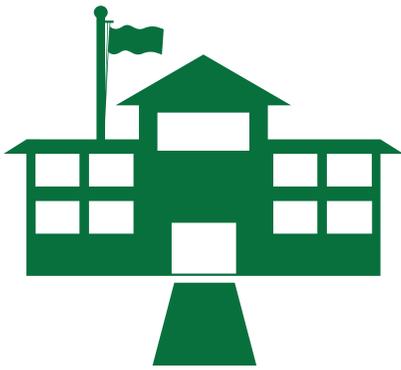


Back to school: Middle School Edition



The middle years of a child's education can be some of the most crucial in their development. They are growing both mentally and physically, learning more about themselves and finding their place in the world. Often this is when children want parents to back away, however, this is an important time for parents to stay closely engaged with their child.

Here are some tips and facts for ensuring your child is able to successfully navigate her middle years:



Thinking Ahead to Career and College

It is never too early for a student to start thinking about what they want to do for a career or what postsecondary path they might want to pursue after high school.

Many postsecondary institutions offer programming for students throughout their middle school years. The University of Minnesota has day camps and year-long programs in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). For more information, check out cse.umn.edu/enrichment. Such programs seek to get students excited about careers in the STEM field while also helping them develop

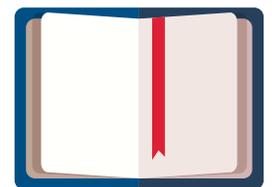
academically. Check with the local postsecondary institution in your area to see what opportunities exist. Connecting your child with programming at a college or university will not only help develop his interests, but it will make college seem accessible and get him thinking about whether a two-year, four-year or certificate program is right for him.

Get Involved

Encourage your child to get involved with a sport or extracurricular activity. These afterschool activities can be offered by their school or through an outside organization. Participating in afterschool programs will keep their minds stimulated outside of the classroom, create opportunities to make new friends, and help develop their interests as they look to career and college.

Developing Successful Study Habits

Minnesota has some of the most rigorous academic standards in the nation. Our students are expected to master high-level concepts in math, reading and science before graduating from high school. Helping your child develop smart study habits will be critical for her success throughout her K-12 education and into career and college. See the next page for a list of good study habits!



Study Tips:

1. **Find a quiet space free from distractions** – Encourage your student to find a space away from anything that will distract her as she studies. This can be the library or a designated “phone and TV free zone” at home.
2. **Time management** – Homework deadlines can sneak up on a student before he knows it. Encourage your child to keep a planner with important dates. This will help him learn how to plan ahead and set aside the appropriate time needed for each assignment.
3. **Join a study group** – Getting together with other students for study time is a great way for middle school students to support and learn from each other. Students will also gain skills in how to work in a group that will continue to be useful in a career or college setting.
4. **Don't be afraid to ask for help** – If your child is struggling with her coursework, encourage her to find a tutor or schedule time to meet with the teacher for one-on-one instruction.
5. **Get a good night's sleep** – If your child has a big test or presentation the next day, being well rested is just as important as studying.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments

By fourth grade, students have already been exposed to a testing environment. Students take state standardized tests, the MCAs, for reading in grades 3-8 and grade 10; math tests in grades 3-8 and grade 11; and science tests in grades 5, 8 and in high school.

These tests provide parents with a look into how their child is doing academically, but are only a snapshot of their child's development. Teachers work with students every day in the classroom and can offer parents meaningful information on their child's day-to-day progress.

Creating a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

An important part of a student's development is supporting their mental and physical growth.

Parents and family members can help prevent bullying and cyberbullying, and help children learn in a number of ways, most importantly, by being engaged, attentive and loving.

Regular communication between parents/family members and their child or pre-teenager is important. In fact, spending 15 minutes a day listening and talking with your child or pre-teen can help build the foundation for a strong relationship and provide reassurance that they can come to you with a problem. It can also help your child or pre-teen recognize and respond to bullying. **KnowBullying**, a mobile app, can help get the conversation started. The app provides tips on talking about school, work, relationships, life and bullying. You can help prevent bullying and increase communication with your child or teen while making dinner, shopping, or anytime you and your child have 15 minutes together. To learn more about creating safe and supportive learning environments, visit the **Minnesota Department of Education School Safety Technical Assistance Center website**.



Want to learn more?
Visit education.state.mn.us

Minnesota Department of
Education