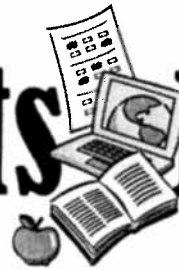


Helping Students Learn[®]

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

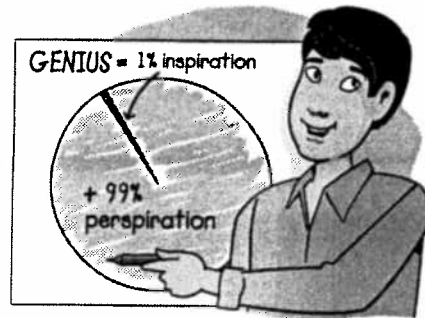
Hornell City School District



December 2014

A positive attitude can inspire your child to work toward success

As Thomas Edison is often credited with saying, "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." What will motivate your child to do that hard work to achieve his goals? A positive attitude. A positive attitude about school can keep your child studying, problem-solving and learning long after he might otherwise want to give up. It can keep him going until he succeeds.



To encourage your child to have a positive attitude:

- **Have a positive attitude yourself.** If you are negative or pessimistic it is not reasonable or even fair to ask your child to be positive.
- **Help him focus on the things he can change.** A negative attitude often results from feeling helpless. For example, your child probably can't change the material in his classes. If that were his goal, he would feel helpless and negative. But he can change how much he prepares. That can lead to success and a positive feeling of empowerment.
- **Encourage him to think of others.** It is amazing how doing something good for another person can lift you out of a bad mood. Challenge your child to bring a smile to someone's face. A person who does that often is usually a positive person.

Source: "Positive Attitude: Reflections for Middle School Parents. Helping Families Teach Good Character." Orange County (Florida) Public Schools, niswc.com/positivity.



A written plan makes discipline clear

Some middle schoolers don't need much discipline: A talk about values and a few basic rules will do. But others resist rules and enjoy arguing. If your child is among them, try a written discipline plan. Here are some guidelines:

- **Keep it simple.** Choose your "top five" issues and post the rules and consequences for those.
- **Involve your child.** A child who needs a written discipline plan is also a child who does not like to give up control. Give her some input about rules and consequences. But you get the final say.
- **Monitor her progress.** Kids mature over time. When your child

is able to stay within boundaries consistently, you may be able to update the plan. Decide on the next steps together.

A written discipline plan takes away your child's ability to argue. Just point to the plan and show her what you agreed to. Seeing the rules posted will help her remember them.

Source: "Curb Your Teen's Bad Behavior with Discipline that Works," WebMD, niswc.com/written-plan.

Is it bullying? How to tell

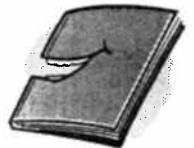
It isn't always easy for middle schoolers to recognize bullying, particularly when the bully is popular.

Explain to your child that he should focus on the actions. Are they hurtful? Are words meant to cause sadness, fear or shame? Then it's bullying even if the person doing it is someone everyone likes.

Get your child reading again

If reading has slipped on your child's list of priorities, remind her of some of the many reasons why it's worth her time:

- **Reading makes her an expert.** It is the best way for her to learn as much as possible about her areas of interest.
- **Reading takes her places.** And she can learn things that can help her get there in person someday.
- **Reading can make her laugh.**
- **Reading introduces her to people like her.** Your child may find that characters her age face the same issues she faces.



Source: "Teenagers and Reading," RIF, niswc.com/reasons.

Traditions build connection

He may not admit it, but your child likely gets a sense of security and connection from participating in family traditions. That's good. Students who feel connected to their parents tend to do better academically.

Your child may question some traditions, but urge him to take part. You can also try starting new ones, such as:

- **Writing and sharing** poems about each other.
- **Making a family album** for the year.
- **Volunteering** as a family.



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What should I do when my child has to miss school?

Q: We will be traveling over the holidays, and my seventh grader will miss a week of school. How can I keep her from falling behind?

A: First, take a look at your itinerary. Can you alter your plans so your trip falls within the school's break? Making plans around the school schedule is the only way to make sure your child doesn't miss out on learning.

If your travel dates are written in stone, though, to help her stay on top of things:

- **Talk to her teachers.** Well in advance, explain the situation to each of them. See if your child can get started now on planned assignments and readings. If the teachers maintain updated classroom blogs, see if your child can follow each day's lesson from afar. Keep in mind that teachers are under no obligation to adjust to your vacation schedule.
- **Focus on learning while you're away.** Explore museums and cultural/historical attractions and discuss them as a family. Immerse your child in educational activities she might not get at home.
- **Set aside time for reading.** Even if your child doesn't have school assignments to complete while she's away, insist she read for pleasure. A vacation from school should not be a vacation from learning!



Are you raising a well-adjusted child?

Middle school students can be self-absorbed. But parents shouldn't let kids get too wrapped up in themselves—especially at gift-giving times of year. Students who respect the needs of others function better in the classroom. Are you helping your child develop a sense of balance? Answer *yes* or *no*:

1. **Do you give** your child a lot of love, but make sure he is not the center of attention all the time?
2. **Do you listen** to your child's concerns, without tolerating a lot of whining?
3. **Do you make** firm, fair and consistent decisions for your child, and avoid giving in if he demands that you change your mind?
4. **Do you recognize** that your child doesn't need the "latest" of everything?
5. **Do you require** your child to do household chores?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are working to raise a well-adjusted child. For each no, try that idea.

"Adolescence does not only happen to the adolescent, it happens to the entire family."

—Brad E. Sachs, Ph.D.

Set goals for a bright future

You will help your child more if, rather than emphasizing grades, you focus on preparing her for the future. To encourage her success:

- **Help her set goals.** You're not the only one who should have high expectations for your child. She should, too!
- **Broaden her horizons.** Expose your child to different learning opportunities.
- **Support positive risk-taking.** Praise your child when she tries a new class or a new sport. If she embraces the unknown now, she may be more confident later.

Source: E. Medhus, M.D., *Raising Everyday Heroes: Parenting Children to Be Self-Reliant*, Beyond Words Publishing.

Line up some study buddies

Even great students need help sometimes. Make sure your child has the phone number of a friend in each class—his study buddy. They can agree to call each other when either one:

- **Gets confused** and needs more explanation about an assignment.
- **Is absent** or forgets to write down an assignment.



Responsibility takes practice

Living up to commitments isn't always easy, and it may take your child a long time to learn to do it. Be patient. To help:

- **Don't nag.** Saying "You agreed to do math after dinner," is better than "Why can't you ever do what you say you will?"
- **Think like your child.** She has things other than her chores on her mind. It doesn't mean she is willfully defying you.
- **Use positive consequences.** "After you clean up your room, I will take you to the mall."

Source: K. Greder and M. Schnurr, "Teaching Responsibility to Young Teens," Iowa State University, niswc.com/no-nag.

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Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas parents can use to help students
do well in school.*

Hornell City School District



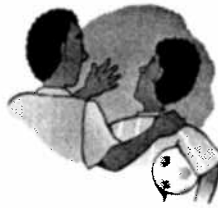
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December • January • February 2014–2015

December 2014

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Talk to your child about your expectations. Is there a new responsibility he thinks he could handle?
- 2. Challenge your child to see how many nights she can go without TV.
- 3. Ask your child to count how many fruits and vegetables your family eats in a day. Fewer than five? What improvements can you make?
- 4. Commit to keeping holiday plans from interfering with your child's study routines.
- 5. Praise your child when he studies hard.
- 6. Brainstorm with your family about a common challenge, such as how to assign chores fairly.
- 7. Enjoy some physical activity with your child.
- 8. Suggest your child donate some of her time over the holidays. Look for volunteer activities you can do together.
- 9. Give your child a coupon good for time together.
- 10. Ask your child to be in charge of a holiday task, such as taking photos.
- 11. Ask your child to explain a homework assignment to you.
- 12. Learn some sign language. Can your family use it to communicate?
- 13. Together, make a collage of photos taken of your child this past year.
- 14. Have each family member prepare part of a meal, then eat together.
- 15. Start a jigsaw puzzle with your child.
- 16. It's the anniversary of the Boston Tea Party. Help your child learn about this historic event.
- 17. Listen to your child's favorite radio station in the car. Exchange opinions about what you hear.



- 18. Watch the news with your child. Ask what he thinks about an important issue.
- 19. With your child, think of as many city nicknames as you can: Windy City (Chicago), Mile High City (Denver), the Big Apple (New York).
- 20. When shopping, have your child try to figure the tax on your total.
- 21. Practice the art of compromise. Pick something you are flexible on to negotiate with your child.
- 22. Have your child call or check out your state's tourism office online. Is there a place she'd like to visit?
- 23. Ask your child how school is going. Would he like to improve his grade in a particular subject?
- 24. Do a secret good deed with your child. The fun is in helping out, not in getting thanks.
- 25. Turn off the TV for an entire day.
- 26. Make a positive comment about one of your child's friends.
- 27. Practice active listening with your child. Listen carefully while she talks. Repeat what you heard in your own words.
- 28. Hang a chalkboard in your home. It's a fun place to practice math problems.
- 29. Visit a nearby college and have a bite to eat in the snack bar.
- 30. Making a rule? Remember to be firm, fair and consistent.
- 31. When your child brings home a test, notice which answers he got right. Help him recognize his successes.

Helping Students Learn

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January 2015

- 1. Help your child set—and write down—goals for the coming year. Set some for yourself, as well.
- 2. Learn the symptoms of eating disorders. Never criticize your child's weight. Emphasize the need for proper nutrition.
- 3. Ask your child, "Is there anything you wish you understood?" Then research the topic together.
- 4. Cook a special breakfast for your child. Students need good nutrition to learn well in school.
- 5. Mention how education has helped you in your job and everyday life.
- 6. Develop a morning routine for your family. It makes getting ready easier.
- 7. Make a household rule as a family. Write it down, along with the consequence for breaking it.
- 8. If your child wants to talk when it's inconvenient, promise to talk later.
- 9. Call out words from a dictionary. Take turns guessing how to spell them.
- 10. Help your child open a savings account at a local bank. Discuss how much she should regularly set aside.
- 11. Give your child a study hint, such as doing the hardest homework first.
- 12. Adolescents can be too critical. Praise your child when he is kind.
- 13. Suggest a few activities that your child can do alone.
- 14. Help your child consider consequences before she makes a decision.
- 15. Ask your child what he likes most about his classes.
- 16. Take your child to a high school sporting event. Talk about her goals for high school.
- 17. Check out an astronomy book at the library. Together, learn some new facts about the planets.

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 18. Sort through family photos and put them in albums. Let your child write captions.
- 19. Read and talk about a poem with your child.
- 20. Teach your child to make to-do lists and check off tasks as they are completed. He'll be organized, and recognize his accomplishments.
- 21. Talk with your child about how rights come with responsibilities.
- 22. Ask your child about her hardest school subject. Together, brainstorm strategies to make it easier.
- 23. Help your child think of ways to say *no* to smoking.
- 24. See a movie with your child. Then share your "reviews."
- 25. Invent something with your child.
- 26. Ask your child to teach you something he is learning, such as a math skill.
- 27. Encourage your child to write a letter to a teacher or coach who has positively influenced her.
- 28. Let your child make choices about his wardrobe within reasonable limits.
- 29. Spend a few minutes thinking of things you are grateful to each other for. Then write each other thank you notes.
- 30. Remind your child that you will always love her, no matter what.
- 31. Make a family tree with your child.



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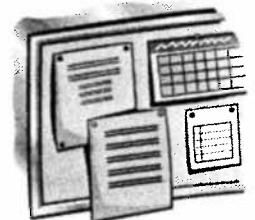
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February 2015

- 1. Cut out 14 small hearts. Write a reason you love your child on one each day. On Valentine's Day, tape them together to make a chain of hearts.
- 2. Consider enrolling your child in a computer class or activity.
- 3. Have your child estimate how long an assignment will take. Write it down. Then see how long it really takes.
- 4. Make plans to attend a school event with your child. Ask him to suggest ones that interest him.
- 5. Talk with your child about your priorities. Make sure she knows her school success is a top one.
- 6. When your child argues, help him focus on solutions rather than blame.
- 7. Give your child some privacy today.
- 8. Limit TV viewing to fewer than 10 hours a week. Your child's grades may go up.
- 9. Talk to your child about substance abuse.
- 10. Ask your child about school rules. Review the school handbook together.
- 11. Ask to see your child's homework.
- 12. Talk about stereotypes with your child. Discuss why they're unfair.
- 13. Ask your child, "What's the most hectic part of your day?" Brainstorm together about how to make it more organized.
- 14. Find three ways to show your child how much you love her.
- 15. Visit a museum, or have your child pick a favorite work of art from a book. Why does he like it?
- 16. Have your child name one of her role models. Ask her to explain her choice to you.

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 17. Test your child's observation skills. Can he describe someone that just passed you on the street? Challenge each other.
- 18. Tell your child that you believe in her ability to succeed.
- 19. Look into taking a CPR class with your child.
- 20. Before your child visits a friend's home, make sure that a responsible adult will also be present.
- 21. Visit a restaurant with your child. When you get home have him write a review of the food and the service.
- 22. Discuss the qualities that good friends have. Is your child happy with her friends?
- 23. Think of ways you and your child waste time. Together, find ways to improve.
- 24. Encourage interest in after-school activities. They can prevent misbehavior.
- 25. Start a family bulletin board. Ask everyone to post interesting things. Talk about what you see there.
- 26. Does your child study well with others? If so, let him start a study group.
- 27. Have a family meeting to talk about a problem. Ask your child to write down everyone's ideas.
- 28. Make chores more fun by playing music. Sing along while working.



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