

What to Do If Your Middle Schooler is Having A Problem in School



Sooner or later, almost every child will face a problem in school. During middle school, it can seem like a new problem occurs every other day. Perhaps it's a skill your child can't seem to master. Maybe it's a behavior issue. It could be homework or trouble getting along with a teacher. It might be a problem with other students.

Luckily, most difficulties are easily resolved when parents and schools work together. It's important to act quickly, before the problem gets out of hand. Here's help if you ever wonder, "How am I ever going to solve this problem?"

QuickTips®

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF:



Your child is having problems with homework?

First, talk with your child. Ask her to show you what she doesn't understand. Have your child read and explain the directions to you. If it's a math problem, have your child explain the sample problems in the textbook to you. If it's a comprehension problem, for example with a social studies text, have your child review the bold-faced words in the text. Have her read one section of the text and tell you in her own words what she read. Ask the teacher what your child should do when she has a problem with a homework assignment.

Your child is not behaving in the classroom?

Talk with your child first. Also, talk with your child's teachers and, perhaps, your school principal. They want to help. Their insights about what is happening, combined with what you know about the problem, will be useful in planning what to do. Action is usually needed both at school and at home.

Your child doesn't get along with one of her teachers?



Acknowledge your child's feelings. You might say, "It's okay not to like every teacher. But sometimes we have to learn to work with people we don't like." Find out as much as you can about why your child doesn't like her teacher. Listen

carefully and remember there are two sides to every problem. Don't necessarily believe everything your child says.

Ask for a meeting with the teacher. Be open and honest. Often, you can solve the problem just by talking about it. Be supportive of your child—but let the teacher know you understand that teaching is a difficult job. If the meeting with the teacher doesn't help resolve the issue, ask to talk with the principal and the teacher together.

Your child is not getting along with another student?

Talk with your child first. Ask your child to tell you about some specific times when she had a problem with the student. Then contact your child's teacher. Share your concerns and tell the teacher about your conversation with your child. Ask what the teacher has observed in the classroom and how you can work together to help your child.

Use a step-by-step approach

Your middle schooler may face a wide variety of problems at school. Following three simple steps may help to solve most of them:



1. **Talk calmly with your child.** Ask questions and listen quietly. Often the solution will become clear just by talking about it.
2. **Have your child try to work out the problem on his own.** Have him talk with those involved. Remind him that the goal isn't to assign blame—it's to find a solution. If your child isn't successful in resolving the problem on his own, get involved. Make an appointment with your child's teacher or counselor. In some situations, you may want your child to attend the meeting.
3. **Talk with your school principal.** If you, your child *and* the teacher cannot find a good solution, meet with your principal. The principal has lots of experience with student problems and can add yet another perspective. A calm, courteous discussion is almost sure to produce a solution that works for everyone. If not, the principal can advise you about next steps you can consider.



When is it time to contact the teacher?

Sometimes parents ask if they should “bother” the teacher with a problem. They wonder, “Should I just keep quiet and hope for the best?”

Teachers say they want to know what's going on in their students' lives—and the earlier the better. Chances are if you've noticed a problem, your child's teachers have probably seen it, too.

With any problem, it's usually best to start by contacting the teacher. You should definitely contact the teacher when:

- **Your child's grades drop.** Whether it's in one subject, or in all of them, a dramatic drop (more than one letter grade) indicates there's trouble.
- **You suspect your child** may be telling you things that aren't true. When, day after day, your child says there's no homework—but other parents say their kids have assignments—you want to get the real story.
- **There's been a change** in your family. A new marriage or a divorce, a serious illness, a move or the birth of a child can all affect school performance.



Remember, everyone is trying to help your child.

You want the very best for your child. Your school staff does, too. Sometimes, reasonable people who are all working toward the same goal will disagree. But clear, honest communication and a commitment to working together will almost always solve the problem.

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