

How to *Work With* Your Child's Teachers



Middle school students learn best when families and teachers work as a team. Families know their children better than anyone else. And research says families have a big influence on children's success—all the way through middle school and high school. When families and teachers work together, the results can be powerful. Here are some ways to work with all of your child's teachers throughout the year.

QuickTips

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START AT THE BEGINNING

Start off on the right foot and establish a good family-school partnership as early in the school year as possible. Here are five things to do during the first few weeks of school:

1 Get to know your middle schooler's teachers—the sooner the better. Attend back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences. But don't wait for a special event if there is a problem or if your child has any special needs. Teachers need to know everything they can about your child.



2 Share important information that can make understanding your child easier for teachers. Sometimes things that happen at home can affect how children learn. A family move, a divorce or an illness in the family can all leave a child feeling a little off-kilter.



3 Find out what's expected. Ask about tests, long-term projects and other special assignments.

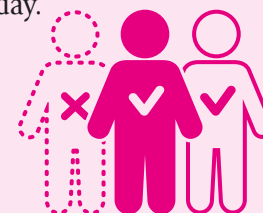


4 Join the parent-teacher organization. Try to volunteer for at least one event during the year.



5 Make sure your child comes to school on time each day. Attendance is important. Learning builds day by day.

Teachers can't do the job if your child is absent. Getting into this habit early sets the stage for good attendance all year long.



Stay in Touch

Some families don't realize their child is having a problem in middle school until the report card comes home. But, by acting early, you can work with your child's teachers to solve problems before they get out of hand. Here are some ways to monitor your child's school performance:

- **Set a regular time for schoolwork.** Consider doing some work yourself at the same time. While your child is doing schoolwork, you can sit nearby and pay bills or do other work of your own.
- **Look at tests.** When your child brings home a graded test, sit down and discuss it. Praise correct answers and go over incorrect ones together. Then talk about how your child could do better on the next test.
- **Work with teachers** if your child seems to be having problems. Agree on a way to communicate regularly, such as exchanging weekly emails to make sure your child has turned in all assignments. If the school has a parent portal, ask the teacher how often you should check it.



Here's the Help Teachers Recommend

The National PTA asked teachers what they wished families would do to help their children in school. Here's what teachers said:

- **Encourage your child's best effort.** Show you believe that education is important. Explain that you expect your child to do as well as possible.
- **Set a good example.** Actions really do speak louder than words. For instance, when you spend time reading, you show your child that reading is enjoyable and useful.
- **Emphasize academics.** School is your child's most important job. Other interests—from friends to sports to recreational screen time—must take a back seat.
- **Provide resources at home.** You don't need a lot of expensive equipment—but your child needs a place to study. (The kitchen table works just fine.) Access to a few basic tools—like pencils, paper, a calculator and a dictionary—will make study time easier.



Be Sure to Say 'Thanks'

Has a teacher done something special to help your child? Does a teacher make school so interesting that your child looks forward to it each day? Take a few minutes to say "thanks."

Your note can be handwritten or typed—on fancy paper or on a page taken from your child's notebook. Teachers are just like the rest of us—they want to feel appreciated. And, when teachers do something really special, let the principal know.



It's a Partnership

Neither families nor teachers working alone can do everything they need to do to help students learn. But when families and teachers are on the same team, children win every time.

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