

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



December 2018

The School District, City of Erie  
Federal Programs

## Encourage estimating to give your child real-world math practice

Making a connection to real world uses for subjects your child is studying can stimulate her interest in them. Estimation, for example, is a math skill that most adults use on a regular basis. And it is often the first step to finding a precise answer to a mathematical problem.



Offer your child frequent estimation challenges using ideas from daily life. Then encourage her to check her answers by working the problems through, or by comparing a "real life" answer to her estimate.

Here are some examples to get you started:

- **How many times** will she have to shovel snow off the neighbor's driveway to earn \$1,000 if she gets paid \$18 every time?
- **How long does she think it will take** her to finish the book she's reading if she reads about 10 pages an hour?
- **How many chocolate chips** does she think fit in a quarter cup?
- **How long will it take** to get to Grandma's house if the car is going 27 miles an hour and Grandma lives 5 miles away?
- **How many shoebox-sized packages** can she wrap with one roll of wrapping paper?

Source: B. Hoffman, M.S.Ed, "Why Teaching Both Estimation and Accuracy is Important," My Learning Springboard, [niswc.com/estimate](http://niswc.com/estimate).



## How to listen to your middle schooler

Open communication between parents and children can be a challenge. For many parents, talking with their adolescent seems like talking to the wall. But often, it's because the parents are talking more than listening.

To improve communication with your middle schooler:

- **Create times** when your child can have a chance to say what he wants. Time in the car is ideal. Be quiet and give him an opportunity to break the silence.
- **Let him finish.** Don't assume you know what your child was going to say. Allow him time to pause and think.
- **Don't hijack** the conversation. Your child begins talking about the new kid in school. You jump in to say that you met his parents and they ... . Your child may have been about to share something with you. But now, he may not.
- **Don't always delay.** You may be busy when your child wants to talk. But if you always put him off, he may save his news forever.

## Parenting instills respect

Your child needs you to be her parent, not her friend. Friends have equal power in a relationship; parents and children do not. Be firm and consistent when dealing with your child. Treat her fairly and you'll demonstrate respect. Be reliable and set a good example, and you'll earn it.

## Keep attendance strong

How was your child's attendance this fall? Was he in school every day? Did he make it to every class?

If so, congratulate him and help him keep up the good work. If not:

- **Emphasize** that attending every class every day is your child's top priority.
- **Make sure** he gets the rest, nutrition and exercise he needs to stay healthy, alert and in school.
- **Establish** consequences for missing school. Now he'll have to miss activities he likes and use the time to study material he missed.



## Get set for group study

Working in groups can teach students to collaborate and reinforce learning. When your child sets up a study group, help him:

- **Choose participants carefully.** They should all want to do well in school and be comfortable with one another. Students should take turns leading so one member doesn't dominate the group.
- **Be clear about the purpose.** Structure and routines make study groups productive.

Source: K. Eckart, "Group project? Taking turns, working with friends may improve grades," Science Daily, [niswc.com/group](http://niswc.com/group).





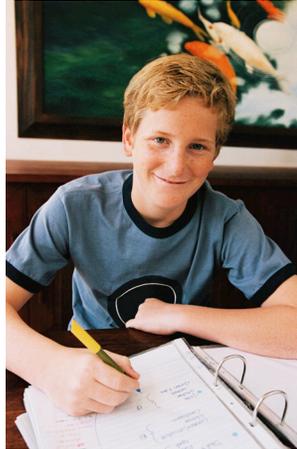
## How can I help my child handle a bigger workload?

**Q:** Now that my son is in middle school, he has a lot more homework. He seems a bit intimidated. How can I keep him from being overwhelmed?

**A:** Keeping up with the demands of six or seven classes can make even confident students worry sometimes. The key is to help your child see his assignments as a series of small, manageable tasks, rather than as one giant workload.

To help him break things down:

- **Give your child a calendar.** He should note when assignments are due. Have him block out times, such as school hours and sports practices, when he won't be able to do homework. Now he can see the tasks he has to do, and the time available in which to do them. That puts your child in control.
- **Divide up big assignments.** If he has a research project to do, explain that he should do it in steps: Choose a topic, gather research materials, write an outline, etc. Have him set a deadline for completing each step. Then encourage him to make daily to-do lists.
- **Regroup each week.** Every Friday, review assignments with your child. What has he completed? What's on for next week? Is his calendar up to date? The last week of the month, have him flip the calendar page to see what's coming up. Then compliment him on his organizational skills!



## Are you unlocking your child's potential?

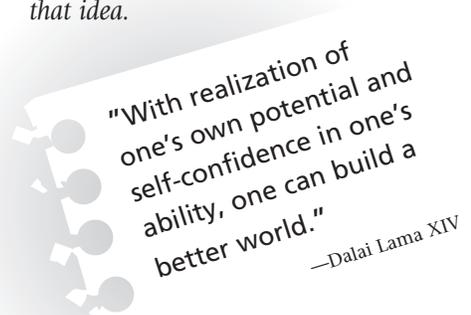
What does it mean to be a success in school? Successful students work to the best of their abilities to reach their own potential. Are you encouraging your child to be all she can be? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you compliment** your child's positive study habits?  
"Your binder is so organized—I'm impressed."
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you point out** how much your child has learned?  
"You knew no Spanish in September, and you can say whole sentences now!"
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you model** a strong work ethic? "I'm going to edit my report; I can make it better."
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you help** your child focus on what she can learn from the mistakes she makes?

- \_\_\_ **5. Do you tell** your child that all you ask is that she *do* her best, not that she *be* the best?

### How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are helping your child *do her best*. For each *no*, try that *idea*.



## Honesty matters in school

Honesty is a defining characteristic of good students—and good citizens. Stress to your child that cheating is wrong, and it won't help him learn or get smarter. Remind him that honest people:

- **Have self-respect.** They don't have to worry about being caught in a lie.
- **Are respected by others,** who know they can count on them.
- **Earn more freedom.** Parents—and teachers—give more freedom to students they can trust.

## Energize your child's efforts

Does your child have an early case of the winter blahs? To recharge her motivation:

- **Praise and encourage.** Say three positive things to your child for every one correction. "You've turned in your homework on time all month. I bet that feels great!"
- **Offer specific suggestions** to make her efforts more effective. "Taking notes while you read will help the material stick in your mind."



## Neglect is more than an honest mistake

When your child makes an honest mistake—in school or at home—the best response is to help him think of ways to avoid making it again. But if he neglects his responsibilities and doesn't do work he is expected to do:

- 1. Talk to your child** about where he fell short and why.
- 2. Remind him** that his contributions as a student and a family member count.
- 3. Impose a consequence** that relates to the responsibility he neglected.

Source: K. Thomsen, M.S., *Parenting Preteens with a Purpose: Navigating the Middle Years*, Search Institute Press.

### Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Copyright © 2018, The Parent Institute<sup>®</sup>,

a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1021