

# Table of Contents

Dear Parents . . . . .	4
Welcome to Middle School! . . . . .	5
Building Connections . . . . .	6
Communication Is Key! . . . . .	8
Reading Remains Important . . . . .	10
Write Now! . . . . .	12
Real-World Math . . . . .	14
Managing Money . . . . .	16
Study Skills . . . . .	18
Let's Collaborate . . . . .	20
Gaining Independence . . . . .	22
Physical Health . . . . .	24
Mental Health . . . . .	26
Social Media: Good or Bad? . . . . .	28
Bullying and Bias . . . . .	30
Getting Involved . . . . .	32
Staying Organized . . . . .	34
Don't Forget the Fun! . . . . .	36
Odds and Ends . . . . .	38
Inspirational Poster . . . . .	40



Dear Parents,

Middle school is a whole new world for kids, and it can be a challenge, not just for them but for parents, too. It is also a time of increasing independence. However, it remains important to stay involved in your child's education. In elementary school, there were opportunities to volunteer in class, be a room parent, go on field trips, see your child's teacher at drop-off and pickup, and other events. This all changes in middle school. There are no more room parents and field-trip chaperones. Now, your child probably wants you to drop them off a block away from school. So, how are you supposed to be an involved parent? Knowing what your middle schooler is studying in school and engaging with them through various educational activities will help you stay connected and allow you to be supportive through these potentially awkward and trying times.

This parent guide will not burden you with tasks and to-do lists; rather, it will empower you with useful tools, meaningful advice, and resourceful activities to help you create opportunities for connecting with your middle schooler. Schools want parent involvement not because they want to add to your already hectic schedule but because studies have strongly indicated that students are more successful when there is a strong connection between home and school. Creating a supportive and positive learning environment at home fosters knowledge, sparks curiosity, and builds self-confidence. Plus, even though your middle schooler will probably tell you they don't want you to be involved or know what's going on at school, they secretly might!

Not every activity in this book needs to be completed. Choose what works best for you and your family. Take small steps. Live in the moment with your middle schooler. Find opportunities to talk together, and more importantly, listen! If you do that, you will naturally create a positive learning environment and you will strengthen your connection with your child. At the end of this book, there is an inspirational poster that can be posted in your home as a reminder of all that you are working toward with your middle schooler during these years.

# Don't Forget the Fun!

**Bring Back the Fun** ➤ As the years progress through middle school, it can be easy to feel like we need to check all the boxes: Homework? Check! Chores? Check! Sports? Check! But it is also extremely important to take some time to just have fun as a family! Your middle schooler will naturally start to pull away from family time and will want to spend more time with their friends. They will likely want to spend a lot of time in their rooms, too, whether they are sleeping, playing video games, or listening to music. Having some downtime is perfectly fine, but it is great to create time for fun as a family and still have a positive influence on your not-so-little one! This is your chance to remind them (without actually telling them) that they can always come to you first and that you are always there for them. Plus, we can all use a little more fun in our lives! Jump into the fun, and let that stress melt away!



## Game Night

Establish a weekly or monthly game night for the whole family. Rotate who chooses the game each time.

## Yes Day

You may have already heard of “Yes Day.” Here’s how a “Yes Day” can work for your family. Choose a day in advance that you all agree to spend together. The kids get to ask the parents to do things, and you have to say yes! Before you think this is crazy, read the following suggested guidelines. Alter them as needed for your family.

- No activity can cost more than \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- No new pets.
- No theme parks.
- Extra treats are okay, but you still need to eat regular snacks and meals.
- Requests need to be within reason.
- No driving more than \_\_\_\_\_ miles.
- Requests can't be for the future.
- No dangerous or illegal activities.
- No doing physical or mental harm to anyone.

Encourage your kids to get creative. Do they want to have a pajamas-only day or a no-chores day? Have pillow fights or water balloon fights? Create a scavenger hunt? Say yes to it all and have fun!

## Art Night

There are many great free online art tutorials on the internet that you can watch and learn to draw as a family or for some one-on-one time with your middle schooler. You can also schedule some time together to spend drawing, painting, taking photos, or using whatever art medium your middle schooler might enjoy. Schedule this as a monthly activity, and it will soon become something everyone looks forward to!

## Local Gems

Let your middle schooler plan the day, or plan it together, and get out and find some local fun! Scout out some unique street art, find the trendy new dessert spot or coffee shop, or discover a park you haven't been to. There are no doubt some local hidden gems just waiting to be found. We all tend to get so busy that we can pass right by them! Many great spots can be located using social media platforms, such as Instagram or by searching blogs.

## Pizza Night

This is a fun one for Friday nights and can be done weekly or monthly. Purchase pizza dough or make it yourself, and then set up a toppings bar. Have everyone choose their own toppings and make their own mini-pizzas or top their own sections of a larger pizza. Let them get creative with their toppings and help you plan them in advance. This can be fun to combine with movie night or game night, too!



## Cooking Together

Establish a weekly or monthly time when you cook together. It could be any one meal of the day or all the meals for one day. Plan the menu and shop for the ingredients together. It could be something simple, such as pancakes, or more complex, such as homemade pasta—let your middle schooler do the planning. Quick tip: Turn on some music to make the cleanup fun, too!



## Random Dance Party

When you see the need for it, crank up the music and have a random dance party! This works especially well in the kitchen or wherever the family usually gathers. It can be a great mood changer in the mornings before school when your middle schooler might be tired or grumpy. It is hard to stay grumpy when there is fun music and your parent is *trying* (key word) to bust some moves! Choose music you know your middle schooler likes, or choose something so ridiculous that you know it will make them laugh!

## Movie Night

Establish a weekly or monthly family movie night. Rotate who chooses the movie each time, with the guideline that it has to be appropriate for the whole family. Let them plan the snacks. You can even come up with a rating system for the movies and keep track of them!