



10 PGCPS Parent Guide: Ways to Help Your Child Succeed in Middle School

Support from parents and families is key to helping children do well academically. Here are 10 ways you can put your middle-schoolers on track. For more information, please contact the Department of Family and School Partnerships at 301-618-7456.

1 Attend Back-to-School Night and Parent-Teacher Conferences

Preteens and teens do better in school when parents support their academic efforts. Attending back-to-school night is a great way to get to know your teen's teachers and their expectations.

In middle school, parent-teacher conferences address issues like behavior problems, falling below grade-level expectations, or alternatively, benefiting from advanced class work. Conference times also help provide clarity around your child's academic performance and testing performance reports.

Parents or guardians can request meetings with teacher or school staff any time during the school year. Meetings can be scheduled to set up or revise individualized education plans (IEPs), 504 education plans, or gifted education plans for children with special learning needs.

2 Stay Connected

Knowing the physical layout of the school building and grounds can help you connect with your child when you talk about the school day. The school website has key information about the school calendar, testing dates, extracurricular activities and includes links to communications portals, such as SchoolMax and Blackboard.

3 Support Homework Expectations

During the middle school years, homework gets more intense and can take one to two hours a night to complete.

Provide a well-lit, comfortable and quiet workspace for homework. Avoiding distractions and setting up a start and end time can also help. Sit down with your child to go over class loads and make sure they're balanced. Set a time for homework each night, and encourage your child to ask for help when it's needed.

4 Send Your Child to School Ready to Learn

Preteens need 10 to 12 hours and teens need about 8 to 9 hours each night to be alert and ready to learn. Early school start times combined with extracurricular activities mean that teens often don't get enough sleep. Lack of sleep is linked to decreased attentiveness and short-term memory, inconsistent performance and delayed response time. Napping after school can push bedtimes back; encourage your child to keep a consistent sleep schedule and turn off their electronic devices at bedtime.

A nutritious breakfast also helps prepare for a successful school day. If your child is running late, encourage him or her to take a healthy, portable snack. Many schools provide nutritious breakfast options before the first bell.

5 Teach Organizational Skills

Being organized is a key to success in middle school, where most students first encounter multiple teachers and classrooms on a daily basis, and where some students are participating in extracurricular or after-school activities for the first time. Help your child keep assignments and class information together in binders, notebooks, or folders that are organized by subject. Creating a calendar will help students recognize upcoming deadlines and plan their time accordingly; be sure to include non-academic commitments.

6 Teach Study Skills

Planning is a big part of helping middle-schoolers study for tests now that they are juggling work from multiple teachers. Help your child review test material, do practice problems and share studying techniques. Be sure your child knows the test schedule to avoid studying for multiple tests at the same time. Remind your child to take notes in class, organize them by subject and review them at home.



7 Know the Disciplinary and Bullying Policies

Review the PGCPS Student Rights & Responsibilities Handbook for rules and consequences for not meeting expectations for behavior, dress codes, use of electronic devices and more. Know the policies and consequences of bullying, and how to report bullying if it happens to your child.

8 Become and Stay Engaged

Volunteering at school is a great way to show you're interested in your child's education. Follow your child's cues to determine how much interaction works for both of you and whether you should stay behind the scenes. Even giving a few hours during the school year can make an impression on your child.

9 Take Attendance Seriously

Middle-schoolers should take a sick day if they have a fever, nausea or worse. Otherwise, it's important that they arrive at school on time every day, because having to catch up with classwork, projects, tests and homework can be stressful and interfere with learning.

10 Make Time to Talk About School Every Day

Staying connected with preteens and teens as they grow more independent can be a challenge for parents, but it's more important than ever. While activities at school, new interests and expanding social circles are central to the lives of many middle school students, parents and guardians are still their anchors for providing love, guidance and support. Make efforts to talk with your child every day, so they know that what goes on at school is important to you. When children know their parents are interested in their academic lives, they'll take school seriously as well.

