

How to Stay Involved in Middle and High School

When your child moves on to middle or high school, staying involved in her education can be tricky. Try these strategies to help your child succeed.

By [Linda Strean](#), GreatSchools Staff

It's not unusual for middle- and high-school students to discourage their parents from coming to school, but [parent involvement](#) is important to your teen-ager's academic success. Studies show that parent involvement is linked to achievement in the upper grades, just as it is in elementary school.

Your middle-school student is likely to be moving from learning in a self-contained classroom with one set of classmates and a teacher to a setting in which there are more teachers, many more students and higher

Books That Might Help

- *Parent's Guide to the New Teenager* by Anthony E. Wolf. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991, revised 2002.
- *Staying Connected to Your Teenager: How to Keep Them Talking to You and How to Hear What They're Really Saying* by Michael Riera. Perseus Publishing, 2003.
- *I'm Not Mad, I Just Hate You!: A New Understanding of Mother-Daughter Conflict* by Roni Cohen-Sandler and Michelle Silver. Penguin Books, 2000.
- *A Fine Young Man: What Parents, Mentors, and Educators Can Do to Shape Adolescent Boys into Exceptional Men* by Michael Gurian. Tarcher, 1999.

performance expectations. In addition, your child is going through the physical changes that make adolescence an exciting and bewildering time. She needs your support at home and at school. Here's how you can help:

Read all information on school policies and curriculum carefully.

Normally, schools send this home at the beginning of the school year.

Subscribe to the school email newsletter or join a school-to-parent or parent-to-parent network.

If your school doesn't have one, you can help start it. To find out how, read the Berkeley Parents Network's explanation of [how school mailing lists work](#).

Help your child turn her anxieties into positive action.

He may not have told you he's nervous about the transition to a new school, but that doesn't mean he's not. Go over school rules and schedules together. Suggest that he and a classmate go to the school over summer vacation so they can learn the locations and names of buildings.

Attend school events and stay involved in decisions about what classes to take.

Keeping up with college admissions requirements can help you help your child understand the long-term effects of his choices.

Once school starts, talk with your child about what happens at school every day.

Sometimes a casual chat in the car or over an evening snack will help your child feel more comfortable about opening up than an interrogation right after he — or you — have just come home after a hard day. To avert dead ends to the conversation, avoid asking questions that will get you "yes" or "no" answers. "What's the best/worst thing that happened at school today?" are good openers.

Listen to her worries, and work for changes when you think they are needed.

Support what you believe is good about the school and its rules. But remember that you can play a key role in changing school practices that you believe are wrong. There are lots of examples of [parents who have worked to make schools healthier, safer and more accountable to the needs of all students](#).

Get to know several teachers.

Don't wait for a problem to talk to them.

Don't forget about the guidance counselors.

They can keep you informed about your child's progress and behavior.

Encourage your child to explore new sports, hobbies or interests.

Help him regard failure as a necessary part of learning and growing. It's not unusual for students at this age to avoid new activities because, they reason, they can't fail if they don't try. But they also cut themselves off from chances to develop new interests and paths to success.

Be alert to signs of depression or anxiety and seek help.

Read [Understanding Depression](#) on [KidsHealth.org](#) to learn more.

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