

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TIPS

During the upcoming weeks of virtual learning and uncertainty of when schools will reopen, parents are now acting as at-home instructors, guiding students through classwork provided to them as well as locating additional educational opportunities. Below are some tips and resources to support parents as they establish routines for their middle schoolers and engage them in learning.

Acknowledge that this is a Change

Any change in routine can influence a middle schooler's motivations and engagement; middle schoolers typically thrive on routine. During this time, it is important to prioritize family and self-care. Set aside time for your middle schooler to participate in activities that they enjoy.

Establish a New Routine

Staying at home will be the new normal for a while, so maintaining a daily routine can help improve your child's productivity. Routines don't necessarily have to have clear breakdowns of every activity and the times they begin and end on a schedule. Establish when activities or schoolwork will take place throughout the day (morning, before lunch, after lunch, etc.) and maintain a regular sleep schedule.

Daily Instruction does not need to be 6 to 8 hours long

Typical school days are 6 to 8 hours long because teachers pack their lessons with collaborative activities and routines for classrooms of 25 students. Instructional time for just one middle schooler is a different experience, where assignments are completed one after the other. When setting aside time to complete school work in a day, between 2 to 3 hours would be enough.

Provide Breaks

When determining when schoolwork will be completed, provide breaks between assignments or activities. Breaks can include time to move around, a snack break, or an activity your middle schooler enjoys. If your middle schooler just spent a lot of time completing schoolwork while looking at a screen, a break from screen time may be best.

Include Exercise and Stretching Throughout the Day

Exercising, either individually or as a family, is a great way to break up parts of the day, to get everyone moving after sitting for long periods of time, and to improve motivation & concentration. Some options for exercise are to go on walks outside (while still practicing social distancing from others), bike rides, playing in the backyard if that is available, workout videos, family yoga, or dancing to some music. Building stretch breaks into the day can also be a way to take breaks from work and move around while still at home.

Set up Opportunities to Socialize Virtually

By connecting your middle schooler to classmates and friends virtually, they can complete school work together or spend time socially. Organizing time to virtually connect with family members is another way to provide additional social opportunities for your middle schooler.

ASA MIDDLE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Daily Reading Time

20 to 30 minutes of daily reading time built into every day provides a way for your student to grow academically while providing a different form of entertainment. This reading time can be in addition to, or part of, the daily schoolwork planned.

Here are some reading resources:

- Epic (www.getepic.com) is an online digital library that is offering its resources free for parents for 30 days
- Audible (<https://stories.audible.com/start-listen>) has opened their kids & middle grades collections for free
- Your local library: many libraries have their e-books and audiobooks still available
- Support your local bookstore by ordering and having books delivered to your home
- Many of your middle schoolers favorite authors are reading their books on their website or Youtube. Look them up online to see what they are offering.

Learning Experiences Don't Always Have to be on Screen, or on Paper

While learning at home, learning can be hands-on and interactive. Based on what your middle schooler has been learning about at school and what they like to do, you can provide some enjoyable activities to learn from.

Some ideas include:

- Cooking and baking meals
- Gardening or projects around the house
- Building objects or inventions with recycled items or other materials
- Projects like creating board games about topics they have learned about
- Other choices or ideas your middle schooler may come up with on their own!