

OCTOBER 2022 / NOVEMBER 2022

Riverside Public Schools

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<http://www.riversideps.org>

Supt. Stephanie Kaczor • Cedar Site Principal Deb Brownfield

• Spalding Site Principal Sarah Nordhues • HS AD Dan Wolken • MS AD Marcus Donner



RIVERSIDE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Cedar Rapids, NE | Spalding, NE



Holiday Breaks

Fall Break Oct. 21
Thanksgiving Break Nov.
23, 24, and 25

Come join us Monday, February 20th, in the Riverside Cedar site library at 6 PM for an informational meeting on school security and community safety. We will share our current protocols and procedures, as well as work with you, the community, on how we can provide a safer community together for our youth. All families and community members are welcome!

Riverside Public School



Home of the Chargers



From the Desk of the Superintendent

By Ms. Kaczor

Happy Fall! What an exciting time of year for educators, students, and parents. It feels good to get back into a routine and it is fun to look forward to a year filled with possibilities. With classes in full swing and fall activities underway it makes it a very busy time of year. Thanks to the support of our wonderful staff, students, families, and communities, we are off to a great start.

Normal: the word of the year coming off another year that was anything but. Throughout the summer and beginning of the school year, one phrase we heard over and over was “normal year.” As we all discuss how and when we will get back to normal, it might be time to acknowledge that we are truly living in extraordinary times. And maybe, instead of hoping for “normal”, we should hope the upcoming year will be amazing. As life settles into what is commonly referred to as “our new normal,” we need to remember and appreciate the growth we have experienced and all we have to be thankful for. Riverside is doing just that!

RPS starts the year with eleven new staff members- Mark Plagmann as Cedar site maintenance, Carol Rykman as kitchen and custodial at the Cedar site, Rachel Keber as an English instructor at both campuses, Cherry Plagmann as Cedar site music and art instructor, Amber Prosocki as a 1st-grade teacher at the Cedar site, Heidi McManaman as a districtwide librarian, Brody Kelley as 2nd/3rd-grade teacher at the Spalding site, Megan Berger as an assistant girls basketball coach, Sam Polk as an assistant boys basketball coach, Troy Kleffner as assistant football coach, and Brooke Kruger as a speech-language pathologist. We welcome them and their families to our community and are excited about the energy and enthusiasm they bring to Riverside Public School.

Along with new staff members, we also welcome 10 new K-12 students to the district. We also welcome 25 of our youngest Chargers to school on August 23rd as they begin their educational journey as preschoolers. This rounds out our student enrollment for the 2022/23 school year at 239 students.

At the September Riverside Board of Education meeting, the 2022-2023 budget was approved. The district saw a 4.23% increase in district valuations. The board of education approved a 56.04 cent levy. This is a 1.09 cent or 1.9% decrease over the past year. With this 1.9% levy decrease, the board voted to increase the tax asking to \$4,596,140 which was a 2.33% increase from the previous year. With our previous year's levy of 57.12 cents, we were in the bottom 10% of the lowest levy's in the state. We predict our new levy of 56.04 cents, will have Riverside in the bottom 5% of the lowest levies in the state of Nebraska.

Assessment and data are important pieces to school systems in today's world. Technology and social and emotional supports are essential parts as well. As we continue to grow in these areas and receive data regarding our growth as a district, we will keep you well informed. Due to the pandemic, only certain portions of school data will be released this year due to no state data collected in the prior two school years. We anticipate district trends and demographic data to be released later next month from the Department of Education. We will share all of this data with the public at that time. We are excited to be back in school and are looking forward to this 2022-2023 school year and all that it brings. There will be many great accomplishments that our staff and students will achieve this year and we are thrilled you are a part of the journey with us!



1st row--Tina Smith, Mary Auten, Dan Wolken, Pete Asche, Cory Valasek, Steve VanDeWalle, Kyle Berger, Carter Camp, Denny Bloom
2nd row- Marcus Donner, LaTravia Dobson, Meridee Heikes, Jayne Nelson, Malisa Ragar, Calen Choyeski, Peg Ray, Angie Pfeifer, Kalie Bloom, Mary Bopp
3rd row-Sharon Bennett, Tana Dozler, Cecilia Baldwin, Cherry Plagmann, Kelly Steenson, Ari Ray, Gladys Asche, Brooke Kruger, Lisa Hamling, Cathy McConkey, Carol Rykman
4th row-Nanda Armatys, Sarah Feik, Melissa Weltruski, Mark Plagmann, Sammi Molt, Tricia Martinsen, Lisa Thayer, Sherri Kelley, Heidi McManaman, Rachel Usasz-Keber, Julie Rankin
5th row-Janet Feik, Tiffany Holka, Amber Prososki, Deb Brownfield, Tammy Iburg, Erin VanDeWalle, Sarah Nordhues, Nancy Hendrickson
6th row- Dennis Weltruski, Lacey Berger, Sherri Molt, Stephanie Kaczor, Datrece Voichoski, Brody Kelley, Angie Langer, Kim Webb, Barb Newquist, Deb Slevin
Not pictured - Tom Armatys, Lori Beeson, Mitch Glesinger, Molly Keehn, Mike Morgan, Kallen Ryan, Scott Schmieding, Troy Kleffner, Megan Berger, Sam Polk

**Riverside Board of Education Recommends
Switching To “At Large” vs. Wards District**
Superintendent Ms. Stephanie Kaczor

The Riverside Board of Education is currently composed of two wards: Ward 1 is made up of representation from the original Cedar Rapids school district with 5 members. Ward 2 representation includes 4 members from the original Spalding Public school district.

Members	Term Exp.	Ward
Pres. Brian Swerczek	2024	1
V. Pres. Karen Penne	2024	1
Sec. Kallen Ryan	2022	1
Treas. James Molt	2024	2
Terry Glesinger	2024	2
Dan Ray	2024	2
Dee Schalk	2022	1
Tom McPhillips	2022	1
Chris Slevin	2022	2

Last fall, the Legislature redistricted legislative boundaries. Following this process, counties had to work diligently to redraw precinct boundaries. Since our district elects its school board members by ward/district, we were required to redraw our ward lines following the county's work based on our current census numbers.

The process of changing potential boundaries and ward lines is required every 10 years so that each board member has equal population representation in their respective district. Where our school district encompasses four counties, election officials in all four counties had to coordinate precinct drawings to maintain equal population representation in each of our two wards.

While working through this complex process, the Riverside Board of Education evaluated the pros and cons of the current ward structure and explored the option of nominating and voting on candidates at large, thereby opening up the electoral process to broader participation for all in our Riverside district.

Last winter, pursuant to section 32-554(1)(b) of the Nebraska statutes, the Riverside Board of Education requested that the proposition below be placed on the ballot at the general election in November of 2022. Current vs. proposed details for voters are as follows:

Current Ward Structure	Proposed "At Large" Structure
Voters are able to vote for Riverside school board candidates running for the Ward in which they reside only	All voters in the Riverside district are able to vote for all candidates running for the Riverside school board, regardless of residence
Four candidates can run for school board from Ward I, and five candidates can run for school board from Ward II	All nine school board candidates can come from any portion of the district

When you go to the polls this November, your ballot will consist of:

1. Voting for school board candidates in your current ward based on your residence
1. The proposed resolution to nominate and elect school board members at large

If the resolution passes by a majority vote this November, it will go into effect for the next general election in 2024. If you have any questions, please reach out to me or any member of our school board.

PROPOSITION ON THIS NOVEMBER BALLOT:

Shall candidates for the Board of Education of Riverside Public Schools, legally known as Boone County School District 06-0075, be nominated at large and elected at large.

Yes, Candidates shall be nominated and elected at large.	No, Candidates shall not be nominated and elected at large.
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A Message from Mrs. Nordhues

The start of the school year is off and going. This summer the Nebraska Association of School Administrators and Nebraska Public Schools shared this quote as a grassroots movement, "Rooted in Academics, Grown for Success." Ever since reading this quote I keep referring back to it as I want to make sure that here at Riverside we are growing our learners and preparing them for success. The start of this year has already brought many successes. Our elementary students have been doing an exceptional job kicking off the year and meeting their reading benchmarking goals. Several of the students completed their summer packets, and worked extremely hard over the summer which showed!! Great work parents and students. We have completed NWEA MAP testing for all students in K-8 and from first glance they look good. Scores are important, but more importantly all the kids put forth their best efforts and were good sports about taking the tests. Another added bonus is that all middle school students were here both days tested! Thank you parents for your continued support and making sure your students are here on testing days! Another huge success with all of your help was our attendance at Parent Teacher Conferences. We had 100% attendance at the Spaldingn Site elementary and 85% for the middle school. I appreciate all of your support and always want you to stay in communication with everyone at Riverside. Other ways to stay connected are through the SeeSaw App, email, PowerSchool, Facebook, school messages, the Riverside App, and calling the school. Again, thank you for your continued support as we continue to grow our student's successes!

Sincerely, Mrs. Nordhues

Scholastic Book Fair!!

This year's book fair was a HUGE success thanks to parents, grandparents, students, and teachers who have found a love within the pages of a book. The book fair brought in over \$2,600 dollars, which will give RPS almost \$1000 toward new books for the libraries. As an added thank you for every one book purchased, the buyer was able to enter their name twice for a chance to win one of 6 books being given away. Spalding winners were: Mrs. Sherri Kelley, Mrs. Lisa Thayer, and Lauren Webb. Cedar winners were: Mrs. Kathy McConkey, William Rutten, and Freya Couchenor. Instilling a love for books at any age, will increase a child's comprehension, exposure to vocabulary, and improve fluency.

Yours Truly,

Heidi L. McManaman

Homecoming 2022 was celebrated the week of September 12th through September 16th. There were various activities throughout the week. Staff and students dressed up for spirit days, hosted a parade in Spalding, played football and volleyball games, and held the dance to end homecoming week.

The spirit days included Monday: Adam Sandler Day, Tuesday: Teacher and Student Swap, Wednesday: Way back Wednesday, Thursday: Senior Citizen Day, and Friday: Blue and Gold Day.

Each class made a large banner to hang up for display in the gym. Winners of the banner contest included High School: Freshman, Middle School: 8th grade, Cedar Rapids site elementary: 1st grade, Spalding site elementary: combination 2nd and 3rd grade.

Friday was the big finale for the week. All students traveled to Spalding to decorate their class floats for the parade. The parade was announced on main street by Principal Sarah Nordhues. The class winners for the best decorated floats were Seniors: Emma Rankin and Kayce Martinsen with Pool Party, High School: Juniors with The Greatest Show on Turf, Middle School: 6th Grade and Elementary: combination 4th and 5th grade. After the parade, there was a pep rally at the gym. The cheerleaders got the crowd fired up for the football game by doing cheers and numerous games such as musical chairs. The dance team performed also.

The Charger football team took on the Nebraska Christian Eagles in the afternoon game at 2:30 p.m. The final score was 19-13 in favor of Riverside.

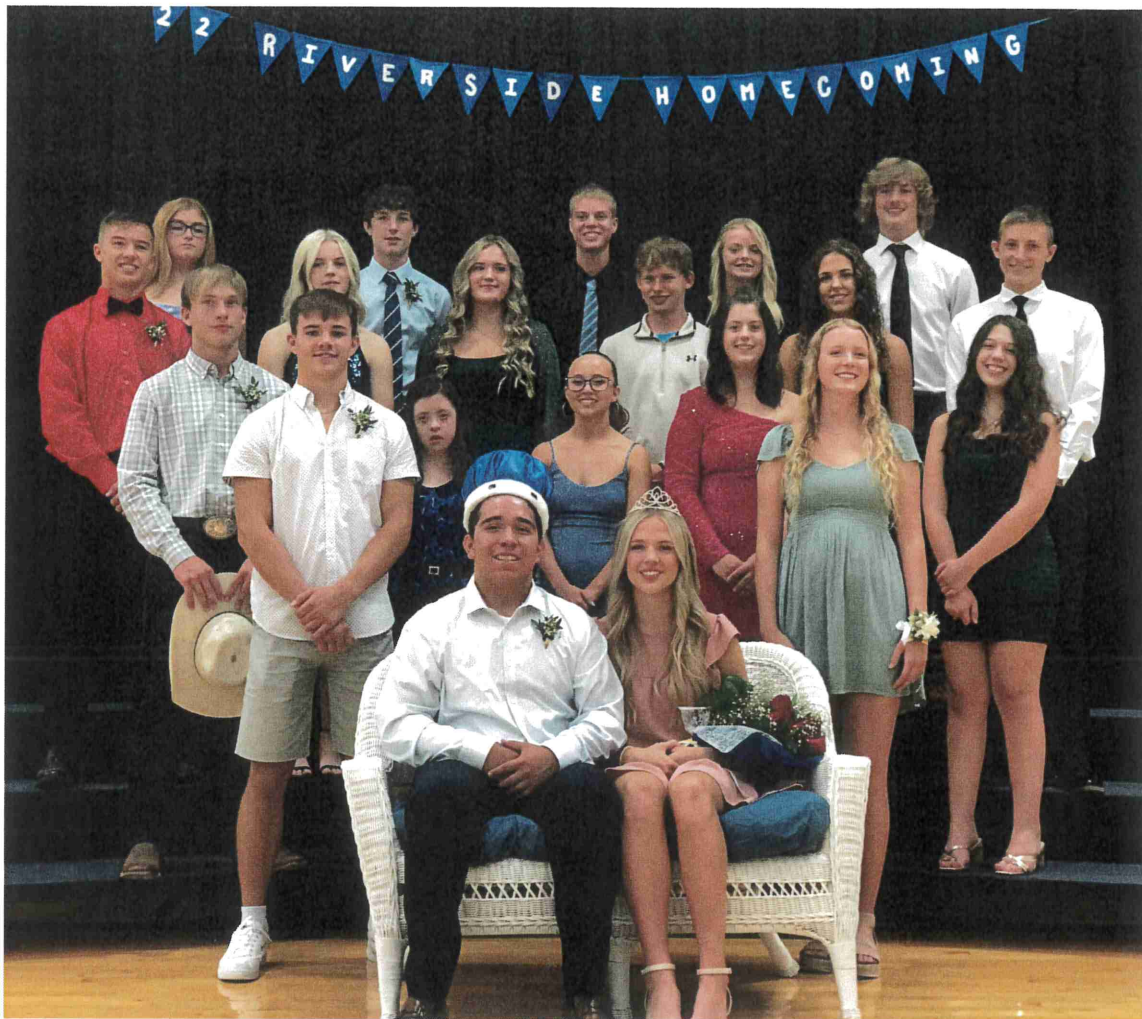
The Coronation began at 6:30 p.m. Friday night with the senior march followed by the attendants from each class.. Freshman attendants were Carter Molt son of Jim and Cassie Molt and Audrey Schilousky daughter of Justin & Nancy Hanson and Dustin Shilousky. Sophomore attendants were Jack Molt son of BJ and Sammie Molt and Liz Esch daughter of Jerry Esch and Susan Esch . Junior attendants were Tye Dozler son of Dick Dozler and Sherry Haber and Addie Murphy daughter of Tony and April Murphy.

Riverside welcomed the past 2021 King, Tony Berger, son of Dave and Arlene Berger. Tony attends college at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. His major is Auto Collision Repair. Riverside welcomed past 2021 Queen, Hope Schalk, daughter of Joel and Dee Schalk. Hope attends the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Her major is elementary education.

The two alumni then crowned the new king and queen. The 2022 Riverside Homecoming King was David Lozano, son of Gerado and Norma Lozano and the 2022 Riverside Homecoming Queen was Kayce Martinsen, daughter of Brent and Tricia Martinsen.

The students were served pizza, pop, and homemade cookies and bars supplied by the student council members. The dance concluded at 10:00 p.m.





First row: King David Lozano and Queen Kayce Martinsen

Second row: 2021 King Tony Berger, 2021 Queen Hope Schalk

Third row: Tye Dozler, Alexandra Scarlett, Jazmine Walz, Maddie Thober, Alexia Staub

Fourth row: Jack Molt, Liz Esch, Addie Murphy, Andrew Krick, Emma Rankin, Ted Hemmingsen

Fifth row: Audrey Schilousky, Carter Molt, Casey Greger, Averil Fulton, Carson Bloom

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Title I-Educational Service Unit 10

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



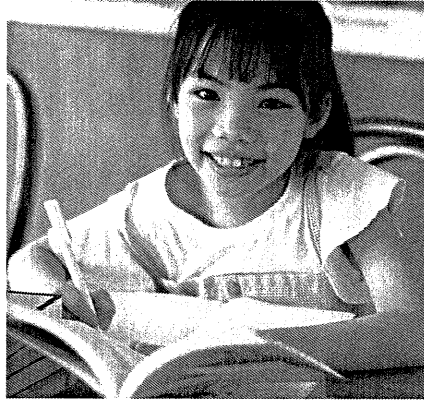
September 2022

Put simple ideas to work now to support learning all year long

Schools and families share a common goal: helping students learn, grow and thrive. And it takes both schools and families to achieve it.

At school, the start of a new year is a time to establish routines and priorities. To do the same at home and set your child up for a productive year of learning:

- **Create a study space** that is comfortable for your student. It can be at a bedroom desk, at the kitchen table or on the couch. It just needs to have plenty of light and few distractions when your child is working.
- **Make a weekly schedule.** Plan time for schoolwork, play, activities and relaxing. Be sure to include a family reading time. Reading together regularly shows your child that reading is important.
- **Keep a family calendar.** You can use a different color for each family member's activities.
- **Set up a folder** for school notices so they won't get misplaced.
- **Cut back on recreational screen time.** Set a weekly limit on time spent passively watching screen media.
- **Update contact information.** Provide your work and emergency numbers to the school. Collect teacher and attendance office contacts.



Establish a key partnership

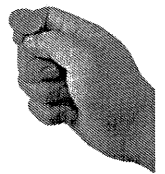
You and the teacher are at the center of your child's daily life. Teamwork between you benefits your student. To foster it:

- **Participate** in Back-to-School Night to find out about teacher expectations.
- **Update the teacher** about changes and challenges your child is facing.
- **Show your child** you respect the teacher.

Encourage cooperation

Leadership is a positive quality in a student. But *bossiness*—being demanding, not listening, not cooperating—just makes working with classmates and teachers harder. To help your child learn to contribute in a group:

- **Have family members take turns** making some decisions for everyone, such as what vegetable to eat for dinner.
- **Set house rules.** If one person divides the cookie, the other person gets to choose which piece they want.
- **Teach fair ways** to make decisions, like flipping a coin to see who goes first.



Make reading an activity your child will enjoy doing every day

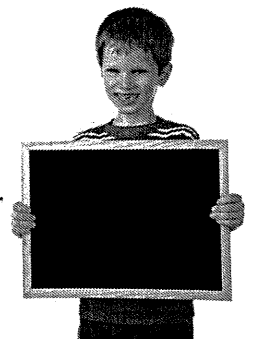
Even after elementary schoolers learn to read, they must practice regularly to develop their skills. Strong reading skills will make learning every subject easier for your child. To encourage frequent reading:

- **Give your child choices.** Offer a wide variety of reading material—books, age-appropriate news articles, graphic novels etc. Let your child choose what to bring home from the library.
- **Connect reading to life.** Read together about historical events that happened near your home. Look for books related to things your child likes to do.
- **Set a timer.** If your child resists reading, say "Read to me for three minutes." Add another minute every few days.
- **Act out stories.** Help your child stage a family play or make a video of a current favorite book.
- **Read aloud.** When children listen to books, they can enjoy more challenging words and stories.

Have your student teach

One of the most effective ways to reinforce learning is to ask your child to teach the material to you. Try these three strategies with your "student teacher":

1. **Show interest** in what your child is learning in school. Ask your student to explain concepts and read texts aloud.
2. **Take a quiz.** Let your child ask you questions about the material.
3. **Ask for help.** How does your child think you should solve a problem? What should you do first?



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Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

September 2022

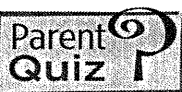


How can I help my child make up for lost learning?

Q: My third grader lost ground academically during the pandemic and struggled with grade level work last spring. How can I help my child get back on track this year?

A: Your student is not alone! Studies show widespread drops in math and reading test scores since 2019. But there's also good news: There are many ways you can work with the school and your child to help recover that lost ground. Here are some ways to get started:

- **Meet with your child's teacher** as early as possible this fall. Talk about subject areas that give your student trouble. Ask what you can do at home and about school resources that can help. Many schools and districts are using relief funds to implement tutoring programs, for example.
- **Prioritize school attendance.** Don't let your child miss out on class instruction, discussions and demonstrations.
- **Help your child set learning goals** and plan steps to meet them. Every time your student completes a step, recognize the effort.
- **Plan for out-of-school learning.** Visit a historic site together. Get a book on minerals from the library and spend an afternoon rock-hunting. Building your child's base of knowledge helps with learning in school.



Are you establishing healthy habits?

Families play a vital role in helping students do their best in school. One key way to do this is by ensuring that your child gets needed rest, nutrition and exercise. Are you promoting healthy choices? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you maintain** a regular bedtime for your child? Elementary schoolers need at least nine hours of sleep daily.
- ___ **2. Do you feed** your child breakfast each day? Food fuels kids' brains for learning.
- ___ **3. Do you find** fun ways for your child to get moving? Daily exercise improves memory and focus.
- ___ **4. Do you review** the rules often about safely interacting with others, and make sure your child understands them?

- ___ **5. Do you teach** your child to wash or sanitize hands frequently throughout the day?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child establish habits that support learning. For each no, try that idea.

"The habits we form from childhood make no small difference, but rather they make all the difference."

—Aristotle

Mistakes are good teachers

The way your child responds after making a mistake in schoolwork makes the difference between learning and being stuck. When you see that your student has made an error:

- 1. Ask,** "Do you understand why this is wrong?" If the answer is *yes*, have your child correct the mistake. If the answer is *no*, offer guidance or suggest asking the teacher for help.
- 2. Explain** that fixing mistakes helps kids understand them, so they can avoid making them again.
- 3. Recognize** progress and remind your child that people get smarter when they learn from mistakes.

Source: H.S. Schroder and others, "Neural evidence for enhanced attention to mistakes among school-aged children with a growth mindset," *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, Elsevier B.V.

Concentrate on listening

Listening and learning go hand in hand. To build your child's listening skills, be a good role model. When your elementary schooler is telling you

something, stop what you are doing. Offer your full attention. If your child asks a question, repeat the question and then respond.



Enjoy the fun of writing

To encourage your child's interest in writing, have some fun doing it together. Set a timer for five minutes then spend the time writing about one of these ideas:

- **The best birthday** I can imagine.
- **Something I'd like to try** and why.
- **The most exciting thing** I've ever done and how I did it.

Afterward, share what you each wrote.

Helping Children Learn®

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Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Title I-Educational Service Unit 10

MIDDLE SCHOOL

September 2022



Team up from the start to make this a great year for your child

A new school year is a fresh start. That's welcome news for students whose learning has been affected by the pandemic. And there are lots of ways you can help ensure that your child starts—and continues—the year strong.



Middle school is demanding, and most students, even those who do well, will sometimes need a little boost. If this happens to your child, know that one person alone may not be able to “fix” the issue. But a joint effort between you, the school and your child can get your student back on track.

To support your middle schooler this year:

- **Encourage your child** to ask for help at school. Teachers want to help students master material and they have lots of effective strategies.
- **Stay positive** when talking to your child about schoolwork. Focus on solving problems, not on placing blame on your child or the teachers.
- **Remember that teachers** want your child to succeed. If a challenge arises, contact the teacher and ask how you can work together to help your student overcome it.
- **Help your child** strengthen school skills at home. That can mean reviewing math or history facts. But also work on qualities that help students be more effective in class, such as listening and thinking decisions through.



Explain the purpose of education

Research shows that middle schoolers are more likely to succeed in school when their families help them understand that doing well is about more than getting good grades. It's about reaching their future goals.

Kids this age want more independence, but guidance from you still makes a difference. In fact, “lack of guidance” is a top reason capable students don't go on to college.

A long-term study of data from thousands of students also found that by middle school:

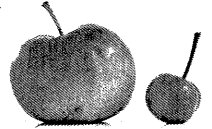
- **Kids begin losing interest** in grades. Help your child set learning goals and celebrate progress.

- **Building parent-teacher** relationships can be challenging. If you can't meet in person, emails and phone calls can help you stay in touch.
- **Family engagement matters.** Stress the long-term benefits of education with your child.

Source: N.E. Hill and D.E. Tyson, “Parental Involvement in Middle School: A Meta-Analytic Assessment of the Strategies That Promote Achievement,” *Developmental Psychology*.

Teach conduct by example

When it comes to teaching behavior, showing is more effective than telling. So model “good student” conduct for your child. Do what you say you will. Admit your mistakes and never belittle others for theirs. And be sure to take time to listen and understand your child's side when you disagree.



Sleep is vital homework

Lack of sleep affects students' ability to concentrate and remember. Studies show six out of 10 middle schoolers don't get enough. To make sure your child does:

- **Stick to a regular bedtime** (even on weekends) that allows nine hours of sleep.
- **Set a screen-time curfew**—devices go off at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- **Suggest a short nap** in the afternoon. Limit it to 10 to 20 minutes.

Source: “Sleep in Middle and High School Students,” CDC Healthy Schools.

Foster positive study habits

Establishing strong study habits now will help your student achieve throughout school. Help your child learn to:

- **Get organized.** Show your student how to use a calendar or planner to keep track of assignments and test dates.
- **Divide big projects** into smaller, more manageable parts.
- **Estimate time** needed to accomplish tasks. Have your child guess how long a task will take, then time it. This will help your student plan future study time effectively.
- **Be self-aware.** When is your child most alert? Encourage your student to do homework and studying in those times.



Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

MIDDLE SCHOOL

September 2022



My child rejects my interest and advice. What can I do?

Q: My eighth grader and I used to be really close. But all I hear from my child these days is "Leave me alone!" How can I stay connected and involved in my middle schooler's life?

A: It has been years since life—in school and out—was truly "normal" for most kids. That is a major chunk of life for a middle schooler, at a time when kids are also going through physical changes and emotional upheaval. All that stress and anxiety can affect relationships. It may seem challenging to stay involved in your child's life, but the important thing is to try. Your connection supports your child's school success and well-being.

To navigate this tricky time:

- **Expect some resistance.** Your child will be irritated by some of what you say or do—no matter how you say or do it. Try not to take it personally. Instead, set guidelines for respectful behavior.
- **Maintain perspective.** If your middle schooler didn't care about you or your opinions, you would probably not get such a strong reaction.
- **Listen more than you talk.** Show interest, but don't ask constant questions or give unwanted advice. If you are quiet, your child may talk.
- **Seek help if your child's behavior** seems unusual. A doctor can evaluate signs of depression or other medical conditions.



Parent Quiz

Are you emphasizing academic honesty?

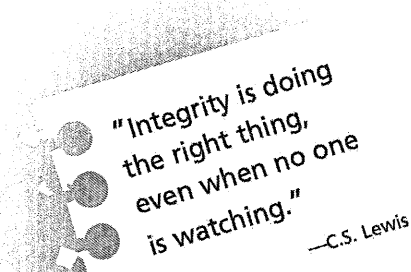
Students cheat in school for lots of reasons. Some may not understand what academic honesty is. Others believe that it doesn't really matter. Are you teaching your child why honesty in school is vital? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you discuss** cheating with your child, and say that it is *always* wrong?
2. **Do you talk** about different forms of cheating, such as using apps to solve homework problems and sharing test questions with other students?
3. **Do you explain** that copying online material without giving credit to the source is also cheating?
4. **Do you discuss** cheating's consequences (failure on the work, or even in the class)?

5. **Do you set** a positive example by being honest yourself?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are making it clear that being honest in school is important. For each no, try that idea.



Share social media smarts

Social media has become a go-to source for news—even for middle schoolers. But it is full of misinformation. So it's important that students learn to evaluate what they see, and not just accept it. Teach your child to ask questions like:

- **Who wrote or posted this?** Is the source credible? A person may have an official sounding title that's totally fake.
- **Are the ideas one-sided** or extreme? The post may be designed to persuade rather than inform.
- **Is the same information** available elsewhere from credible sources?

Source: A. Weinberg, "Helping Students Find the Truth in Social Media," Edutopia, George Lucas Educational Foundation.

Tests don't have to be scary

If the thought of a test gives your child the shivers, these preparation strategies can help ease the anxiety. Encourage your child to:

- **Get clarification.** Few things are scarier than the unknown. Have your child ask the teacher about what the test will cover.
- **Get a head start.** Studying in several short sessions over several days is more effective than cramming the night before. Your child will also have time to get help if necessary before the test.

Try three ways to motivate

Motivating middle schoolers isn't always easy. To encourage your child to do what needs to be done:



1. **Discuss it before** your student ever turns on a screen.
2. **Make it routine.** Set a regular homework time, for example.
3. **Support your child's** interests. Showing enthusiasm for something your student enjoys working on may inspire similar effort in other areas.

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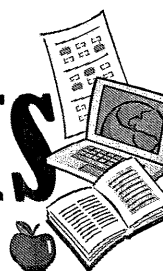
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HIGH SCHOOL



September 2022

Give your teenager opportunities to sharpen thinking skills

In high school, students learn more than basic subject matter. They are also learning to think in complex ways. Your teen is developing:

- **Advanced reasoning skills.** These help students think about multiple possibilities and hypothetical situations.
- **Abstract thinking skills.** Abstract thinkers can consider intangible concepts, such as *justice*.
- **Metacognition.** This means students can think about *how* they are processing what they are learning and feeling.



To support your student's emerging thinking skills:

- **Exchange world views.** Ask about your teen's political ideas and spiritual beliefs and share your own. Withhold judgment.
- **Provide a willing ear.** Listen to your teen's concerns. If you hear "You wouldn't understand," suggest turning to a trusted family friend for advice.
- **Offer chances to have a say.** Ask your teen's opinion on family rules and consequences, for example.
- **Encourage involvement.** If your teen feels strongly about an issue, help discover ways to contribute and gain a deeper understanding.



Keep your teen's mental health in mind

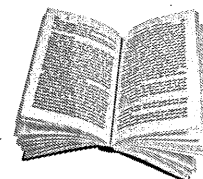
Experts warn that world and national events in recent years have contributed to a mental health emergency for children and teens. Fortunately, supportive family and school relationships promote students' mental well-being.

- To bolster mental health:
- **Foster a sense of control.** Allow your teen to manage responsibilities and make some decisions independently.
 - **Build up physical health.** Help your teen find time for sleep and exercise. Both improve mood and learning ability.
 - **Suggest setting aside 20 minutes a day for mindful relaxation,**
 - **such as writing in a journal or creating art.**
 - **Encourage your student** to connect with teachers, classmates and friends, online and in-person.
 - **Contact a doctor or counselor** if you become concerned about your teen's state of mind.

Source: "AAP-AACAP-CHA Declaration of a National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health," AAP.org, American Academy of Pediatrics.

Promote pleasure reading

When researchers asked 15-year-olds in the United States about reading, more than half said they only do it when they have to. But it takes practice to develop reading skills and stamina. Reading for pleasure leads to more reading. To encourage it, emphasize that the choice of reading material is up to your teen.

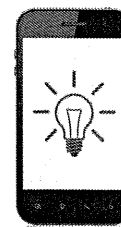


Source: S. Sparks, "How to Nurture Lifelong Readers in a Digital Age," Education Week.

Share social media savvy

According to a recent survey, teens spend about 90 minutes a day scrolling, posting and sharing on social media. Colleges and employers look at students' social media activity, so encourage your teen to:

- **Review** and update privacy settings.
- **Think** before posting.
- **Delete** inappropriate posts.
- **Focus** on creating a positive reputation, by posting and sharing credible content about topics your student cares about.



Source: "The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens, 2021" Common Sense Media.

Study skills improve results

Two things often happen when students lack effective study skills: They spend more time than they need to on schoolwork or they get frustrated and quit. To help your teen study effectively, share these strategies:

- **Eliminate distractions,** like unneeded screen devices, before starting to study.
- **Review class notes** each evening.
- **Schedule several** short study sessions over a few days, rather than one long one.
- **Vary topics.** After studying science formulas, your teen should study English or history before turning to math formulas.

Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



HIGH SCHOOL

September 2022



How can I revive my teen's interest in school?

Q: My 10th grader has lost interest in school. The year has just started, and already my teen isn't turning in assignments. When I ask about them, I hear "I don't care if I pass or not." I'm afraid I will have a dropout on my hands. What can I do?

A: One of the challenges of recovery from the pandemic is how to reengage the many students who have disengaged in the past two years. Every teen is different, so the best way to begin is to figure out why your student has lost interest in school.

Ask some questions, such as: What is different in your teen's life than it was in middle school? Are the same people important to your student? Are the classes this year harder or easier than in the past? Your teen's teachers from last year may be able to provide some insight. A school counselor may also be able to steer your teen and your family to helpful resources.

It's important for your teen to be part of the conversation. Sit down together. Say that you are concerned because you care about your teen. Explain that even if your student doesn't care about school, you do. Together, decide on some specific goals for this year (make sure they are realistic!). Then focus on positive steps your teen can take. Making up every missed assignment may not be possible, but doing tonight's reading is. Each step your student takes can provide motivation to take another.



Parent Quiz

Are you preparing for a productive year?

Students do better in school when they establish positive habits at home. Are you providing the guidance and encouragement that will help your teen get the year off to a strong start? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ 1. **Have you helped** your teen set a regular time for studying and doing assignments?
- ___ 2. **Have you shown** your teen how to use calendars and to-do lists to stay on track to fulfill responsibilities?
- ___ 3. **Do you plan** one-on-one time with your teen?
- ___ 4. **Do you encourage** your teen to read something for pleasure every day?
- ___ 5. **Have you reviewed** your family rules with your teen? Make adjustments that reflect

your student's maturity and responsibility levels.

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are promoting behavior that supports school success. For each no, try that idea.

"Success occurs when opportunity meets preparation."
—Zig Ziglar

Set a course for the future

Students in every year of high school can take steps to prepare for graduation and higher education. Here are just a few:

- **Freshman** can get involved in activities that have meaning for them and make a four-year plan of classes to take.
- **Sophomores** can research colleges that might be of interest, take virtual tours and learn about sources of financial aid.
- **Juniors** can make sure the classes they are taking meet both graduation and college admission requirements.
- **Seniors** can chart application deadlines and make a plan for meeting them.

Solve a discipline problem

Teens occasionally do things that make parents want to yell. But loud, harsh words won't get your point across to your teen—and they can be harmful. Research shows that harsh verbal discipline increases the risk of depression and academic troubles.

Instead, make it clear that since your teen created the problem, it's up to your teen to fix it. If your student earns a poor grade, for example, remain calm and ask, "How do you plan to improve?"

Source: R.F. Hentges and M. Wang, "Gender Differences in the Developmental Cascade From Harsh Parenting to Educational Attainment: An Evolutionary Perspective," *Child Development*.

Express clear expectations

Your expectations are an important guide and motivator for your teen in school. To make them clear from the start:

- **Take time to discuss** school and schoolwork every day.
- **Explain that your teen's** best effort makes you prouder than an easy A.
- **Ask your teen** to create routines for homework and studying. Show confidence in your teen's ability to get things done without reminders from you.



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