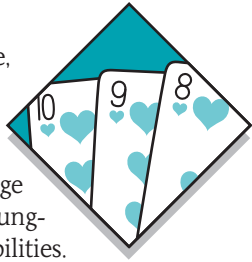


Shared Activities For Fun And Learning

There are many activities a parent and a sixth-grader can enjoy together. These have the added bonus of helping to build learning skills.

Get out the board games. Scrabble, chess, checkers, and dominos are games that build language or mathematic skills. Card games such as hearts, rummy and cribbage are math-based and sharpen a youngster's logic and problem-solving abilities.



Do map study together. A family trip is an ideal occasion to get your sixth-grader involved in map reading. Plan a real or imaginary trip to a distant friend, relative, or vacation spot. Have your child figure out the best route. How many miles? How many hours would it take to get there?

Visit a planetarium. After your visit, go outside with your child at night and observe the moon and stars. What is the moon's shape? Help your child find information on the moon's phases in the newspaper or on a calendar.

Search out a book on substance abuse. Go to the library with your sixth-grader and look at books the two of you could read together on the effects of harmful substances – tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, for example. By agreeing on a book to study, you'll start future discussions on a positive, team-spirited note.

Go on nature adventures together. Find out when a local nature group is having a hike or a bird-watching expedition. Join it. Invest in pocket-size guides to birds, flowers, trees, seashells, and other natural features of our region.

Keep vacation journals. One enjoyable family activity is keeping separate journals of a special trip or vacation. You'll be amazed at the different perspectives each of you may bring to a particular day's activities.

Introduce the daily crossword puzzle. If you subscribe to a newspaper, show your sixth-grader the crossword puzzle feature. He or she may become adept at this pastime that combines problem solving with learning new words.

Time-Savers For A Working Parent

Time for yourself is short and precious. Try some of these tips from **The Parents Solution Book** by Lea Bramnick and Anita Simon, 1983, Putnam Press:

Birthday gifts in batches. Buy three or four birthday presents suitable to give to boys or girls your child's age. (Books are always great!) Store them away for the times you find out about an upcoming birthday party that's just days – or hours – away.

Make trips do double duty. Before you leave the house to pick up a child, ask yourself what other errands could be grouped together and done at once.

Have a secret stash of loose leaf paper, colored markers, colored paper, report covers, and other supplies, so you don't make emergency dashes to the mall every time they're needed.

Have some "easy dinners" on hand. On a day when you must pick up one child from athletic practice, take another to the doctor, and get other errands done, plan an easy supper – soup and sandwiches? – to spare yourself a heavy-duty cooking chore.

Check These Out!

Public libraries have many books, tapes and videos about parenting and child development. Use your library card to check out these and other excellent resources. Invite your young student along to check out books or tapes, too.

For special resources related to parent education and support in your community, contact local social services, schools, hospitals, libraries or United Way.

Not much, just chillin: the hidden lives of middle schoolers /Linda Perlstein (B)

Ten talks parents must have with their children about violence /Dominic Cappello. (B)

The tween years: a parent's guide for surviving those terrific, turbulent, and trying times between childhood and adolescence /Donna G. Corwin (B)

What did I just say!?! :how new insights into childhood thinking can help you communicate more effectively with your child

/ [Denis M. Donovan, Deborah McIntyre]. (B)

Prodigal sons and material girls:how not to be your child's atm / Nathan Dungan. (B)

(B) book

Healthy Stages is a program of Hampton's Healthy Families Partnership.
100 Old Hampton Lane, Hampton, Virginia 23669 www.hampton.gov/healthyfamilies
Copyright ©1997 City of Hampton Virginia. All rights reserved. Revised 2005.

Non-Profit Org
US Postage
PAID
Hampton, Va
Permit #847

Healthy Stages

6TH GRADE

Sixth Grade: Welcome to Middle School. *Healthy Stages* is a free, once-a-year newsletter. It is designed to reach you during your child's current grade in school. Every effort has been made to pack its short articles with helpful facts. We suggest you keep *Healthy Stages* around for the entire school year. Put it in a folder with other important information about your child. Refer to it from time to time. Its articles may help you deal with a problem or try a new approach in parenting.

In most areas, grade six is the first of three years in middle school. The changes your child will experience are many. And, as you may have noticed, your son or daughter is changing, too. Your young student may display a definite mind of his or her own – just one sign of the many emotional and physical changes to come in this, the first year of adolescence.

Along with everything else, schoolwork will change, too. Your sixth-grader will have different teachers, change classes, and possibly attend school with a new group of students from other elementary schools. Youngsters this age are expected to become increasingly independent in their study habits, as well as more thorough in their preparation of papers and projects.

See that your student has a study area. Let it be known that you expect good study habits. Give praise when they're exhibited.

We hope you look forward to all that this year brings. And we hope you'll turn to *Healthy Stages* often. We want to help you make this school year one that both you and your child will remember with joy.



The 11-Year-Old: Each One is Unique

While children of 8, 9, and 10 may be alike in many aspects of their development, at age 11, your child becomes unique – a majority of one.

The Boston Children's Hospital's New Child Health Encyclopedia notes that puberty begins for girls between ages 8 and 13, and for boys, between 9 and 14. (Puberty is defined as the point at which children's bodies begin to take on adult characteristics.) Some girls will begin their menstrual period at age 11, which signals the beginning of puberty. Parents of girls need to prepare daughters with both the facts and the supplies they will need at this time. A parent also should be alert to recognize when a daughter needs to begin wearing a bra for her developing figure.

Your sixth-grader is entering an important development period. He or she is now in early adolescence. It is a time when youngsters begin to establish a separate identity. They may question family traditions or values. They may test both your patience and your rules.

As this emerging young person begins to develop, there should be no family teasing about bodily changes. Such changes should be comfortably discussed between parent and child, but should never be the subject of jokes. Remember that this is a very sensitive age. Virtually every boy and girl feels he or she is developing too quickly or too slowly. She agonizes over a pimple. He despairs of his height or build.

In private talks, make your pre-teen aware that proper hygiene calls for special care of their bodies. Adolescents perspire more. They produce increased oil in hair and on skin.

How can you help at this time of growth? Be supportive of your developing adolescent. Stand ready

to answer any questions about bodily changes. Provide ample supplies of soap, shampoo, toothpaste and other bathing and hygiene necessities. Above all, let your youngster know you're proud of his or her stage of growth. Reassure him that he's loved. Let her know you think she's special. You may not get thanks for the effort. Let your reward be the knowledge that you're helping a beloved child begin the journey to young womanhood or manhood.



Nurturing Your Child

Adjusting To Middle School: How To Help

It's an exciting change. But most children face the transition to middle school with a mixture of elation and fear. A sixth-grader entering middle school goes from a familiar place where he or she was a "big kid" to being the youngest group in a school that's often much larger. There's a change from having one primary teacher to as many as six or seven. There's the adjustment from being with one set of classmates to being with a different set every class period. Add to this the fact that an 11-year-old's body is changing. And his or her social life is far different from just a few years ago.

Your sixth-grader may, on one hand, long for greater freedom and independence of the coming teen years, yet also miss the simpler, less stressful times of childhood. Here are some steps to help your child deal with all that's happening:



- ♥ **Be alert.** During the first weeks, your child may be anxious about finding classrooms, changing classes, and following a new schedule. Be ready to offer reassurance and help with problem-solving.
- ♥ **Be available.** Your middle school child may not seek your opinion on all that's going on, but he or she will still find your guidance crucial. Be available for talks – or for help with homework when it's requested.
- ♥ **Be involved.** This is a time when many parents feel less needed as a partner with the school. The truth is, there's no time more important to stay involved with your child's school. See the article on this topic under "The Parent Teacher Partnership." And be forewarned: because middle-schoolers can be lax about remembering to bring home notices of parent-involving activities, it's helpful to stay informed by networking with other sixth-grade parents.
- ♥ **Act promptly if problems emerge.** If grades or motivation drop significantly, look closer. Are there problems with friends? Are your child's study habits the issue? Don't hesitate to contact the school guidance counselor for help if you sense a problem that might be more than just a temporary setback.
- ♥ **Encourage extracurricular activities.** The many interest groups and activities that present themselves in middle school give your child a new arena for self-expression. Help him or her choose one or two favorites, while keeping activities at a level that will avoid stress.

For your own peace of mind, remember that your child isn't alone. The transition to middle school is a struggle for most youngsters. Time, patience, and some appropriate help from you will help him or her see things through and begin to enjoy this exciting new adventure in education. Information in this article was excerpted from "Making the Move to Middle School" in Issue #10, 1995, *Parenting Insights*.

Healthy Matters

Preparing To Deal With Alcohol Issues



Research has shown that by the time most youngsters finish eighth-grade, more than half of them have had alcoholic drinks with friends. Many students aged 10 to 12 have friends or know classmates who drink. If you haven't already done so, begin now to make your child fully aware of alcohol's dangers.

- ♥ **"Just say no" isn't saying enough.** You need frank and continuing talks with your child about what to do when he or she is offered alcohol by a friend.
- ♥ **Keep talks non-threatening.** Let your child know you realize students are trying alcohol at younger and younger ages. Encourage his or her free expression of feelings about alcohol. Use calm language and factual information to help your son or daughter form solid defenses against the illegal and dangerous use of liquor.
- ♥ **Let your house be a "hangout"** when you are at home. If your child is allowed to have friends over from time to time, you'll get to know his or her peer group.
- ♥ **Set a positive example.** Keep drinking moderate if alcohol is used in your home. If anyone in the family has a problem with alcohol, act decisively in seeking professional help. Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and Alateen programs are available throughout the area.
- ♥ **What about cigarettes and drugs?** These same tips can be used with equal effectiveness in dealing with issues related to cigarette smoking and drug use.

The Parent-Teacher Partnership

Stay Involved With Your Child's School

Your child in middle school may act embarrassed to be seen with you at the mall, let alone school. But he or she still needs your interest and involvement. Here are parenting partnership suggestions from the National Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore:

- ♥ Attend all open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. It's important to come to know the individuals who teach your child and what they expect.
- ♥ Attend your child's choral or band concerts, athletic games and other events. It matters more than your child may let on.
- ♥ Take an active interest in course selections. Learn about college preparatory requirements, even if your child doesn't yet seem interested in college.
- ♥ Make homework a priority that comes before TV watching or play.
- ♥ Don't expect your child to act grateful (now) for your interest in the school.
- ♥ When you become aware that a teacher is doing a good job with your child, tell him or her. Better yet, write a note with a copy to the school's principal.
- ♥ Take part in at least one parent-school activity. You'll meet faculty and other parents, and you'll show your child you value the school.

Information in this article was excerpted from "Partnership Pointers" in Issue #2, 1994, *Parenting Insights*.