

Fort Atkinson Middle School

SHARKBYTES



January 2021

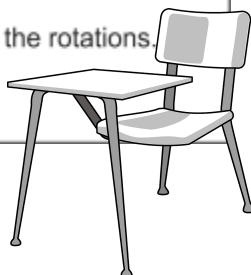
Winter break extended one day as teachers prep for classes to resume for students both in-person and virtual on **Tuesday, January 5, 2021.**

FAMS will follow an alternating schedule to reduce numbers and allow for proper social distancing.

Cohort 1 = last names starts with A - K

Cohort 2 = last names starts with L - Z

Refer to the January calendar to help clarify the rotations.



DAILY STUDENT WELLNESS CHECK

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF FORT ATKINSON

A student/person should not enter a building or be among a group of people if **ANY** of these symptoms are present:

- Temp of 100.4 or higher
- Cough
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Unusual or new rash
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Body or muscle aches
- Chills
- Congestion
- Loss of taste or smell
- Exposure to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days



January 2021

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
4 NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS - TEACHER WORK DAY	5 T TH Electives Cohort 1	6 M W Electives Cohort 1	7 T TH Electives Cohort 2	8 M W Electives Cohort 2
11 M W Electives Cohort 1 EARLY RELEASE	12 T TH Electives Cohort 1	13 M W Electives Cohort 2	14 T TH Electives Cohort 2 END OF 2ND QUARTER	15 NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS - TEACHER RECORDS DAY
18 M W Electives Cohort 1 EARLY RELEASE	19 T TH Electives Cohort 1	20 M W Electives Cohort 2	21 T TH Electives Cohort 2	22 T TH Electives Cohort 1
25 M W Electives Cohort 1 EARLY RELEASE	26 T TH Electives Cohort 2	27 M W Electives Cohort 2	28 T TH Electives Cohort 1	29 M W Electives Cohort 1



Quick Info . . .

[Yearbook order form:](#)

Order your 2020–2021 FAMS Yearbook – by clicking on the link above.

The yearbook cost is \$23 and upon receipt of your order, the charge will be added to your PowerSchool account. You can then pay online with credit card or you can bring in cash or check (to FAMS) to Mrs. Ellingson in the main office.

**For a special 8th grade option,
see the next page of this newsletter!**

Middle School Calendar Updates:

The calendar on the FAMS website is updated regularly as to Current school functions.

We appreciate your continued patience and support as we do our best with these unique circumstances.



**The next FAMS Parent Advisory Meeting
will be February 8, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.**

School District of Fort Atkinson

2020–2021 Anthology

Perseverance: We can. We will. We must.

The School District of Fort Atkinson will publish its own anthology of student writing and artwork this year. The purpose of this project is to provide an opportunity for talented writers, artists, and cartoonists in grades K–12 to publish their original work based on the common theme of *Perseverance: We can. We will. We must.*

For more information, including submission guidelines, visit <https://sites.google.com/fortschools.org/anthology/home>

Submission deadline extended to January 22, 2021

Please send any questions to anthology@fortschools.org.

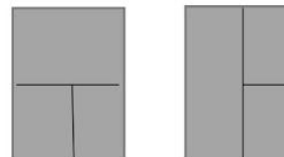


FOR 8th GRADERS ONLY: FAMS 2020-2021 YEARBOOK - DISPLAY AD

Straight from the heart and into the yearbook. We are offering the opportunity to personalize the yearbook in a very special way with a **Personl Display of Affection** ad. Space is availaable to congratulate an 8th grade graduate and/or tell them how proud you are!

Ads are avialable in the 1/4 page or 1/2 page sizes and will appear in color:

- 1/2 page \$65
- 1/4 page \$45



To reserve your space:

Please complete and submit the form below with the following by February 26, 2021:

- Photo (choose a recent photo, a baby picture, or a special event - please don't glue, staple or tape it to the form.) Note: Photos will be scanned and enlarged or reduced to fit the layout.
*While care will be taken to return photos after the final publisher's deadline in April, yearbook staff or the yearbook company does not accept responsibility for lost or damaged photos.
- Message to your student - print clearly and neatly below or attach a separate sheet.
- Payment based on selection of ad size.

Mail or drop off in the Middle School Main Office:
FAMS phone: (920) 563-7833

Attn: Bette Delsarte
Yearbook Advisor
310 S. 4th St. East
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538



Student's Name: _____

Parent/purchaser's Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Your signature: _____

Ad size: ____ 1/4 page \$45 ____ 1/2 page \$65

Neatly print your message below (or attach a separate sheet.)

Office use:

Amount paid: _____ Check # _____ Cash _____

2021 Fort Atkinson Regional Virtual Science Fair

We are excited to share that the 2021 Fort Atkinson Regional VIRTUAL Science Fair will be held on Sunday, February 14th!

Learn more about the rules, submission deadlines, prizes and more at
www.FAScienceFair.org



♥ SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2021 ♥

2021 FORT ATKINSON REGIONAL VIRTUAL SCIENCE FAIR

MORE INFO AT: FAScienceFair.org
Financial Assistance is Available
Prizes Awarded in Grade Divisions K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12

Entries can be submitted digitally starting Saturday, **February 6**.
All entries due by 8:00 pm Wednesday, **February 10**.
View digital slideshows and videos of projects on **Sat., Feb. 13**.
Watch a live-streamed Awards Ceremony on Sunday, **February 14**.

Prizes include a microscope, medals, t-shirts and money!
Fair Entry Deadline Wednesday, February 10.
[Like Us at www.facebook.com/FortAtkinsonRegionalScienceFair/](https://www.facebook.com/FortAtkinsonRegionalScienceFair/)



Tech Support –

Mirrored & Virtual Learning Technical Support Resources

GSuite/Google Tools for Education

- [Introduction to Google for Education](#)
- [Family Tech FAQs](#)

EMAIL: studentsupport@fortschools.org

Google Classroom

- VIDEO: [Google Classroom](#)
- VIDEO: [Google Classroom as a Student](#)
- WEBSITE: [Troubleshooting for Students: Google Classroom Help](#)
- WEBSITE: [For Students](#): Getting Started with Google Classroom

Zoom

- WEBSITE: [Test your Zoom Settings](#)
- VIDEO: [How to sign into Zoom as a Student](#)
- VIDEO: [Zoom Tips and Tricks For Students Using Chromebooks](#)
- VIDEO: [How to use Zoom as a Student](#) | Mic & Speakers

Rebooting your Chromebook or internet modem is always a good first step!

IMC NEWS – New Library Resources:

FAMS Library now subscribes to two new resources your kids will love!

One is a collection of digital, interactive books called **Lightbox**. The books are on high-interest nonfiction topics such as animals, sports and biographies. There are also several topics that connect to classroom curriculum. Here's a sample book on glaciers that includes researchers' live footage of a glacier breaking apart. <https://bit.ly/3kYEWaK>



The second new resource is called **ComicsPlus**. If you have a fan of graphic novels in your household, they'll definitely want to check this out. Every book in the collection is available to any FAMS student at any time. Multiple students can read the same book at the same time, and the books don't even need to be checked out.

Links to both of these resources can be found on Accessit, our library catalog. <https://bit.ly/399MZ2f>

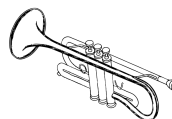
MUSIC NOTES

FAMS MUSICIANS PLEASE REMEMBER – bring your instrument to school for your in-person days!



We are excited to play our instruments in person again! We will be following guidelines to ensure safety. A specially designed musician mask will be provided for all wind players minus flutes. Flutes will utilize a DIY mask that allows the instrument to be inserted through. We are blessed with a large band room, and because the cohort schedule reduces class sizes, we will be very spread out.

There is a Band Boosters zoom meeting Monday, January 11th, at 6:30 pm. The invite will be sent in an email.



TEAM 6 NEWS

Math with Mrs. McClain, Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Steed, Mrs. Deets, and Mrs. Schreiner

Happy New Year from sixth grade math! January will find us continuing with work in our book, *Let's Be Rational*. This book focuses on adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing fractions. Please visit the CMP website (<http://connectedmath.msu.edu/>) for program help/tips.

Science with Mrs. Smith, Mr. Champeny and Mr. Suick

During the month of January, our sixth grade science classes will be studying measurement, models and designs. We will introduce a variety of measuring tools to calculate the length, mass, weight and volume of a variety of materials.



Social Studies with Mrs. Smith, Mr. Champeny and Mr. Suick

In January, our social studies classes will be studying about ancient Greece. We will be looking at the unique geography and how it helped shape the Greek society. In addition, we will be looking at the rich history found in ancient Greece from the different governments, wars, art and of course the architecture found throughout the country.



English/Language Arts with Mrs. Zarnowski, Mrs. Milbourn, Mrs. Burki, Ms. Kozak, Mrs. COUNES, and Mrs. Dwyer

January finds the sixth graders working just as hard as ever in Language Arts. Having researched a notable person of their choosing and conducting research on this individual, students will be working on wrapping up a biographical essay. Students will also be putting together a short project on their Q2 independent reading book. By the end of January, we will be launching our next theme: **Discovery!**



TEAM 7 NEWS

Math 7 - In math, students will be finishing the book Comparing and Scaling. Their next book is Moving Straight Ahead which is the Algebra unit.

Please continue to check powerschool for missing assignments. Remember that kids can retake all quizzes and tests. They need to talk to their teacher for details.



Language Arts 7 - Students are researching and creating a Public Service Announcement around an issue that they feel loyal to. The focus is to provide sufficient evidence based on research from reliable sources and present it using persuasive writing techniques. Students are also learning how to publish research in a video format and using speaking skills as part of this task.



Social Studies - In December students will be exploring Westward Expansion and Indian Removal. In addition, students will be examining a plethora of reform movements from the early 19th century. To round out December, students will study Manifest Destiny.

Science - Students will continue their study of life in the month of December. Continuing with our focus on the characteristics all living things share, students will learn about the processes that produce new cells. Once students understand the mechanics of these processes, we will end our study of life by learning about genetics and heredity. When students return from break they will begin a unit on Earth science.

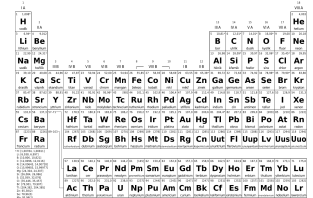


TEAM 8 NEWS

Social Studies: We are finishing the US/Canada Unit and Mexico to wrap up the first semester. We will begin the Latin America Unit second semester and students will need to memorize the countries and capitals of the Latin American countries.



In Science: Students will continue their unit on Chemistry, investigating Chemical and Physical properties and changes in matter. Students will use the Periodic Table to calculate subatomic particles and learn multiple means of modeling/diagramming atoms.

A standard periodic table of elements, showing the layout of the periodic table with element symbols and atomic numbers.

In Algebra 8: Chapter 5, Sequences, provides an opportunity for students to review and strengthen their algebra skills while they learn about arithmetic and geometric sequences. Early in the chapter, they will find themselves using familiar strategies such as looking for patterns and making tables to write algebraic equations describing sequences of numbers. Later in the chapter, they will develop shortcuts for writing equations for certain kinds of sequences.

Math 8: Students will start the book, *Growing. Growing. Growing.* This book continues the discussion of functions by examining exponential functions. Models of exponential growth and decay are numerous such as growth or decay of populations—from bacteria, amoebas, radioactive material and money, to mammals (including people). Doubling, tripling, halving, and so on, are all intuitive situations for students to help them make sense of exponential functions.

In Language Arts, Students will be completing their second quarter narrative pieces. They will also be taking the reading MAP test.



Remember that all students should be back to reading books of their choice. The third quarter unit of study will focus on the theme of Modernization.

BACKPACK NEWS

TEENS

Improving Self-Esteem

The new year brings new opportunities, new optimism, and resolutions to make improvement.

Spending more time at home, away from friends and family, can leave you feeling sad and isolated, and it can negatively affect your mental health and self-esteem. Here are a few ideas to begin your 2021 by feeling better about yourself and raising your self-esteem:

Be with people who treat you well

Some people will tear you down, and others will lift you up by their actions and words. Choose to be with people and friends who help you feel good about yourself while also being that friend for others.

Set goals

Think about the things that are good for you and will allow you to feel good—such as eating a healthy diet, adding more movement, or studying more, and make a plan to accomplish those goals and stick with it for the long term.

Focus on what goes well

Sometimes when we focus on the negatives and problems in our life, then that is all you see and believe. Work on positivity and finding the good in you and your day and notice how you feel after.

Say helpful things to yourself

Self-talk is a powerful tool that can help you either feel better or worse about yourself. If you are critical or hard on yourself, try rephrasing the thoughts to be more positive and similar to what you'd say to a good friend—continue until it's more of a habit to be thinking good thoughts about yourself.

Cutting Back Caffeine

Caffeine is a drug that causes alertness—which sometimes feels necessary with deadlines of homework and other activities on the calendar.

Teens should limit their intake to no more than **100 mg** daily to avoid potential issues such as insomnia, dehydration, bone loss (over time) and even the aggravation of certain heart problems.

Cutting back

If you are taking in too much caffeine, you may want to cut back slowly. Start by tracking how many caffeinated drinks you have a day, and substitute one noncaffeinated drink per day for a week. If you're still drinking more than 100 mg daily, do the substitution for as many weeks as it takes to be below 100 mg.

Source:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/caffeine.html?WT.ac=ctg#catnutrition>

Exercise: Staying on Track

Break it down

Do you have a BIG, overarching goal you want to accomplish? Start with smaller "bite-size" goals that will keep you on track towards your big goal.

Do what works for you

Exercising should be fun and something you enjoy—find what doesn't feel so much like a chore.

Workout buddy

Having someone to exercise with (virtually or in-person—just be sure to be physically distanced) can help keep you motivated, and accountable.

Remember Your Why

If you start to lose motivation, or want to quit remember why you started, and the reasons that you want to make your goal.

Taking Screen Breaks

Screen time is a part of our lives, and likely you and your friends may even be spending more time in 2020 looking at screens with virtual learning, Zoom family/friend check-ins, and spending more time at home.

Physical inactivity, such as sitting behind a screen for much of the day, can increase the risk of various health issues, and it's important to balance screen time.

Screen time after chores

Allow yourself screen time after all your home responsibilities and homework has been completed. If distracted by your phone, move it to another room.

Set an alarm to move & stretch

If screens are being used for a long period of time, set a timer for every 30 to 60 minutes for a reminder to get up and move and stretch.

Encourage non-screen activities

There are lots of other activities that can be done away from a screen—such as playing games, going outside, sports, crafts and reading.

Set the example

If you have younger siblings, you are able to set a positive example by practicing less screen time!

Screen-free mealtimes

Mealtimes are a great time to engage in conversation and have true family time without the dinging and beeping of your devices.

Source: [KohlsHealthyAtHome.org](https://www.kohlshealthyathome.org)
"10 Tips for Taking Screen Breaks"

BACKPACK NEWS

TEENS

(NOTICIAS DE MOCHILA) (ADOLESCENTES)

Mejorar la Autoestima

El nuevo año trae nuevas oportunidades, nuevo optimismo y resoluciones para mejorar.

Pasar más tiempo en casa, lejos de amigos y familiares, puede hacer que se sienta triste y aislado, y puede afectar negativamente a su salud mental y a su autoestima. Aquí hay algunas ideas para comenzar su 2021 sintiéndose mejor consigo mismo y aumentando su autoestima.

Estar con gente que te trate bien

Algunas personas te derribarán y otras te levantarán con sus acciones y palabras. Elige estar con personas y amigos que te ayuden a sentirte bien contigo mismo y al mismo tiempo ser ese amigo para los demás.

Poner metas

Piense en las cosas que son buenas para usted y que le permitirán sentirse bien, como comer una dieta saludable, hacer más movimiento o estudiar más, y haga un plan para lograr esas metas y cúmplalo a largo plazo.

Enfocarse en lo que va bien

A veces, cuando nos enfocamos en los aspectos negativos y los problemas de nuestra vida, eso es todo lo que ve y cree. Trabaje en la positividad y encuentre lo bueno en sí y en su día y observe cómo se siente después.

Decirse cosas útiles a sí mismo

El diálogo interno es una herramienta poderosa que puede ayudarlo a sentirse mejor o peor consigo mismo. Si es crítico o duro consigo mismo, intente reformular los pensamientos para que sean más positivos y similares a lo que le diría a un buen amigo; continúe hasta que sea más un hábito tener buenos pensamientos sobre sí mismo.

Reducir la Cafeína

La cafeína es una droga que causa el estado de alerta, lo que a veces se siente necesario con fechas límite para las tareas y otras actividades en el calendario.

Los adolescentes deben limitar su ingesta a no más de 100 mg diarios para evitar problemas potenciales como insomnio, deshidratación, pérdida de masa ósea (con el tiempo) e incluso el agravamiento de ciertos problemas cardíacos.

La Reducción

Si está tomando demasiada cafeína, es posible que desee reducirla lentamente. Empiece por hacer un seguimiento de la cantidad de bebidas con cafeína que toma al día y sustituya una bebida sin cafeína por día durante una semana. Si todavía toma más de 100 mg al día, haga la sustitución durante tantas semanas como sea necesario para estar por debajo de los 100 mg.

Fuente:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/caffeine.htm?WT.ac=ctg#catnutrition>

Ejercicio: Mantenerse en Curso

Analízalo

¿Tiene una meta GRANDE y global que desea lograr? Comience con metas más pequeñas que le permitirán mantenerse encaminado hacia su meta mayor.

Haz lo que funcione para ti

Hacer ejercicio debe ser divertido y algo que le guste: encuentre lo que no se sienta como una tarea.

Compañero de entrenamiento

Tener a alguien con quien hacer ejercicio (virtualmente o en persona, solo asegúrese de estar físicamente alejado) puede ayudarlo a mantenerse motivado y responsable.

Recuerda Tu Por Qué

Si empieza a perder la motivación o quiere dejar de fumar, recuerde por qué empezó y las razones por las que quiere lograr su meta.

Tome Descansos de las Pantallas

El tiempo frente a la pantalla es parte de nuestras vidas, y es probable que usted y su (s) hijo (s) incluso pasen más tiempo en 2020 mirando pantallas con el aprendizaje virtual, haciendo reuniones de Zoom con familiares y amigos y pasando más tiempo en casa.

La inactividad física, como sentarse frente a una pantalla durante gran parte del día, puede aumentar el riesgo de varios problemas de salud, y es importante equilibrar el tiempo frente a una pantalla.

El tiempo de pantalla después de las tareas escolares y del hogar

Permita pasar tiempo frente a la pantalla después de que se hayan completado todas las tareas y responsabilidades. Si su teléfono lo distrae, muévelo a otra habitación.

Ponga una alarma para moverse y estirarse

Si las pantallas se utilizan durante un período prolongado, configure que suene una alarma cada 30 a 60 minutos para recordarle que debe levantarse, moverse y estirarse.

Fomente las actividades que no sean de pantalla

Hay muchas otras actividades que se pueden realizar sin pantalla, como jugar, salir, deportes, manualidades y lectura.

Ponga el ejemplo

Si tiene hermanos menores, ¡puede dar un ejemplo positivo practicando menos tiempo frente a la pantalla!

Comidas sin pantallas

La hora de la comida es un buen momento para entablar una conversación y pasar un verdadero tiempo en familia sin el repicar y los pitidos de sus dispositivos.

Fuente: [Kohl's Healthy At Home.org](https://www.kohlshealthyathome.org/10-Tips-for-Taking-Screen-Breaks)
"10 Tips for Taking Screen Breaks" (10 Consejos para Tomar Descansos de las Pantallas)

Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas parents can use to help students
do well in school*

Fort Atkinson Middle School
...excellence in education



THE
PARENT
INSTITUTE®

January 2021

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- ☐ 1. Help your child set—and write down—goals for the coming year. Set some goals for yourself, as well.
- ☐ 2. Don't criticize your body in front of your child. Instead, talk about being healthy and strong.
- ☐ 3. Challenge each member of your family to learn something new this week. Plan a date when everyone will share what they have learned.
- ☐ 4. Listen to a piece of music that has no lyrics. Have your child write his own words to the song.
- ☐ 5. Ask your child to make a graph of family habits. How long does each person sleep? Who reads the most?
- ☐ 6. Talk with your child about ways each of you could improve your listening skills.
- ☐ 7. Promote healthy risk-taking to boost confidence. Applaud your child when she tackles a new challenge.
- ☐ 8. Together, watch a movie based on a book your child has read. How are the versions similar or different?
- ☐ 9. Serve your child breakfast in bed as a special treat.
- ☐ 10. Play a game that builds math and thinking skills, such as cards, dominoes or chess.
- ☐ 11. Help your child find a book in a series to read. If he likes the first one, there will be more!
- ☐ 12. Establish times when texting is not allowed, such as during mealtimes and in the car.
- ☐ 13. Together, think of *homophones*—words that sound alike, but mean different things (for example, *wail* and *whale*).
- ☐ 14. Say a sentence. Ask your child to classify it as *fact* or *opinion*.
- ☐ 15. Attendance is important. Allow absences from class only in cases of illness or emergency—not to catch up on homework or sleep.
- ☐ 16. Challenge your child to write an advertisement for a product she uses.
- ☐ 17. Put on a family talent show.
- ☐ 18. Limit interruptions during your child's homework time.
- ☐ 19. Teach your child to read a road map.
- ☐ 20. Talk with your child about the dangers of substance abuse. Trying an illicit drug just once is still abuse.
- ☐ 21. Give your child a genuine and specific compliment today.
- ☐ 22. Mention something you learned recently. This shows that education is a lifelong activity.
- ☐ 23. When shopping, give your child a calculator. Can he use math to help you find the best deals?
- ☐ 24. Take a brisk walk as a family today.
- ☐ 25. If your child's mind wanders when she studies, suggest that she jot down quick reminders of her thoughts, then go back to studying.
- ☐ 26. Limit drinks with caffeine at night. They can deprive your child of needed sleep.
- ☐ 27. Ask your child to choose a recipe to follow from a cookbook.
- ☐ 28. Teach your child to ask *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how* when doing research.
- ☐ 29. Remind your child that cheating is lying, and it is *always* wrong.
- ☐ 30. Ask your child to add two four-digit numbers. Can he figure it out on paper before you can with a calculator?
- ☐ 31. Encourage your child to take photos during a family outing.

Middle School Parents[®]

January 2021
Vol. 24, No. 5

Fort Atkinson Middle School
...excellence in education

still make the difference!



Daily conversations sharpen your child's thinking skills

What kind of thinker is your middle schooler? Can he tackle a tricky assignment in a clever way? Does he weigh all sides of an issue before picking a position? Will he give a reasoned opinion about something when asked?

If the answers are *no, no and no*, don't worry! Like other skills, your child's thinking skills can be sharpened over time.

To help your middle schooler learn to think critically:

- **Engage him in conversation.** Don't gloss over the issues of the day when sitting down to dinner. Really discuss them. Encourage your child to ask questions about the things he sees online or hears on the news. It may prompt him to consider those topics more deeply.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** When possible, avoid asking your child questions that can be answered with a simple *yes* or *no*. Instead, ask questions that are more likely to lead to a thoughtful response. "What has your science teacher said about the coronavirus?" may result in a more detailed answer than, "Did you talk about anything interesting in science class today?"
- **Read a news article** to your child or watch the news together. Then, ask him to share his opinion about specific topics in it.
- **Avoid quizzing him.** Boosting his critical-thinking skills shouldn't seem like school. Try not to make him feel as if you're testing him. Rather, keep your exchanges casual and friendly.

Set reasonable expectations for your child



It's important to set expectations for your middle schooler's academic success, but it's equally

important to make sure those expectations are reasonable.

To determine whether you're setting the bar at the right level for your child, ask yourself if your expectations:

- **Are flexible.** Have you read parenting books telling you what your child "should be" doing, thinking or feeling at this age? Then you may have lost sight of the fact that most of that information is based on *averages*. It doesn't relate specifically to what any one individual should be doing (or achieving). Keep that in mind if you find yourself setting a goal for your child just because "all the other sixth graders" seem to be meeting it.
- **Reflect who she really is.** Do you see your child clearly when you're thinking about what she should achieve? If she has been a reluctant reader since preschool, pushing her to take honors English may not make sense. Work together with her teachers to set your child up for success.

Reducing stress can improve your child's readiness to learn



Students who experience stress are at risk of having difficulty focusing in class and remembering what they learn.

To help your middle schooler manage stress, suggest that he:

- **Take several deep breaths.** It may sound simple, but it works surprisingly well. Taking time to stop and think about the issue at hand may help your child put it into perspective and discover a solution.
- **Focus on health.** Twenty to 30 minutes of exercise can relieve tension and clear your child's head. Eating right and getting adequate sleep every night will also keep your child feeling his best.

- **Keep a journal.** Some kids find that it's easier to write down their feelings than to talk about them. This is a great way to relieve stress.
- **Take a break from screens.** Unplugging from the digital world gives your child time to relax, read a book, listen to music or daydream.

Source: S. Vogel and others, "Stress Affects the Neural Ensemble for Integrating New Information and Prior Knowledge," *Neuroimage*, Elsevier.

"It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it."

—Lou Holtz

Teach your middle schooler to focus on six key areas of writing



It can be hard to help middle schoolers with their writing. They're often sensitive to criticism and resistant to sugges-

tions for improvement.

Try offering guidance *before* your child begins writing. Encourage her to focus on these six key areas:

1. **Ideas and content.** Your child's writing should be interesting to read and should stick to the topic at hand. The reader should be able to understand and follow what she is trying to say.
2. **Organization.** Her writing should have a clear beginning, middle and ending. It should clearly present a main idea. Other sentences should give details that support the main idea.
3. **Voice.** Your child's writing should represent her. Her personality, feelings and tone should shine through.
4. **Sentence structure.** Your child's writing should grab the reader's attention. The sentences should have a natural flow, similar to a conversation. Each sentence should be distinct. Your child should avoid repeating word patterns. For example, one or two sentences may begin with "I feel" or "This is" but the others should all begin quite differently.
5. **Choice of words.** Her writing should "paint a picture." When she describes something, the reader should be able to visualize it. Quality writing does not use words that simply take up space and have little meaning for the reader.
6. **Mechanics.** Your child should proofread her work and use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Are you helping your child handle new relationships?



It's not too early to start talking to your child about romantic relationships.

Are you providing guidance that will help your

child navigate tricky interactions when the time comes? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___ 1. **Have you talked to your child** about the basics of dating—respect for yourself, respect for the other person, kindness and consideration?

___ 2. **Are you remaining calm?** Many middle school relationships are more about friendship than they are about getting "serious."

___ 3. **Have you discussed rules** about relationships with your child and reminded him that school comes first?

___ 4. **Do you show respect** for your child's feelings?

___ 5. **Do you talk** about your family's values regarding appropriate behavior? Have you talked about all of the consequences of risky behavior?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are preparing your middle schooler to handle this new phase. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

Middle School
Parents
still make the difference!

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Encourage your child to make these New Year resolutions



Your middle schooler started the school year with the best of intentions. But lately, things seem to be off track. He's missing some assignments. He waits until the last minute to get things done.

Middle schoolers often need a "reboot" in the middle of the school year. Making a few New Year's resolutions is one way to get your child back on the path to success.

Suggest that your child resolve to:

- **Get organized.** Let's face it—middle schoolers are not always organized. Have your child use helpful tools to keep track of his schedule and school assignments. He can use a calendar, sticky notes, to-do lists and an assignment notebook. Help him get into the habit of cleaning out his school notebooks regularly.

- **Set a schedule.** By January, many students have abandoned their schoolwork routines. Help your child reestablish a work time, and then make sure he studies at that time every day. It won't take long for it to become a habit.
- **Give "mono-tasking" a try.** Kids claim they are multitasking when they listen to music, chat with friends and try to do assignments all at the same time. But the truth is that their brains can't really handle all that activity. Encourage your child to focus on one thing at a time.
- **Set a new goal.** Would he like to raise his English grade? Encourage him to figure out what it will take to reach that goal. When students are clear about the steps they must take to reach a goal, it's easier to make the choices that will help them achieve it!

Behavior is easier to understand if you know how preteens think



Parenting a middle schooler today can be challenging. Your child acts like he knows everything, and at times he seems so grown up.

The important word is *seems*. It doesn't matter how cool your child acts—it will be years before he can think like an adult.

Keep in mind that:

- **Emotional thinking** usually wins out over rational thinking with middle schoolers. That's why kids this age may lash out if they think they've been treated unfairly. Your child is not ready to stop and think: "I'd better cool it because I might get in trouble." He is more likely to respond with pure emotion.

Together, brainstorm respectful ways your child can respond when he's upset, such as excusing himself and walking away. Counting to 10 before blowing his top can work, too.

- **Your child lives in the moment.** He may not grasp that his semester grade may drop if he doesn't study for his test tonight. To him, the end of the semester is light-years away. What he does tonight can't possibly affect anything that far away.

Don't force your middle schooler to make a connection he is not ready to make. Instead, set firm rules about schoolwork and studying and stick to them.

Source: K.R. Ginsburg with M.M. Jablow, "But I'm Almost 13!" *An Action Plan for Raising a Responsible Adolescent*, Contemporary Books.

Q: My daughter mopes around a lot and seems very unhappy. How can I know if she's just sad or truly depressed?

Questions & Answers

A: Middle schoolers are known for their mood swings. Because of hormonal changes, they can be up one day and down the next.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown have impacted the mental health of adolescents, so you are wise to be on the lookout for depression.

Here are some facts: Kids who have a depressed parent are at greater risk of getting this illness. So are kids who are under stress, have a learning disorder, or experience a loss.

Your child might be depressed if one or more of the following signs persist for a few weeks:

- **Frequent sadness**, crying, anger or irritability.
- **Less interest in school** or other activities.
- **Feelings of worthlessness** or guilt.
- **Difficulty sleeping**, or problems oversleeping.
- **No energy.**
- **Loss or change in appetite** or weight.
- **Poor communication.**
- **Difficulty concentrating.**
- **Frequent headaches** or stomachaches.
- **Preoccupation with death** or suicide.

If you suspect your daughter is depressed, don't hesitate to get professional help. If treatment is delayed, the situation could get worse and be harder to treat.

Be available to discuss any concerns your daughter might have. Listen. Show respect and let her know you are here to help.

It Matters: Schoolwork

Six benefits of studying a foreign language



Today, fewer students in the U.S. are learning to speak a language other than English. But research shows there are significant benefits to learning another language.

When students study foreign languages, they enhance their:

1. **Memory skills.** Language students must learn and remember lots of new vocabulary. They find that strengthening their memory is like strengthening a muscle. The more they use it, the stronger it gets.
2. **Understanding of their first language.** Students start to figure out how language works. That understanding helps them improve writing, reading, and even testing skills. Students who speak a second language consistently score higher on standardized tests.
3. **Problem-solving skills.** Studies show that students who speak two languages also do better in math and science.
4. **Sense of achievement.** Learning another language is a challenge. As students master it, they see they can tackle difficult subjects.
5. **Ability to get a job.** Many employers want to hire people who can speak more than one language.
6. **Understanding of the world.** In many ways, the world is growing smaller. Speaking more than one language helps students understand the changes they see.

Source: "What Does Research Show About the Benefits of Language Learning?" American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Mastering skills and strategies makes study time productive

In middle school, your child must increase her skill level to work independently and effectively—especially during times of remote learning.

During study time, she should:

- **Answer six key questions.** Your child should always find out: *who, what, when, where, why* and *how*. This will lead to a basic understanding of many reading assignments. It will also help her write an outline.
- **Learn vocabulary.** Your child will struggle with an assignment if she doesn't understand the language in it. Encourage her to look up the definitions of unfamiliar words in the dictionary.
- **Weigh important information.** Many assignments will require your child to understand the difference between central ideas and details. Practice this with your child: "Elise dropped tears on her blue shirt as she walked up to the



house." What is more important, the fact that Elise had a blue shirt on or that she was crying?

- **Compare and contrast.** Can your child tell how things are alike and how they are different from one another? This skill will help her with several subjects, particularly English and history. Ask her, "How are a cat and a dog alike? How are they different?"

Show your child how to take responsibility for learning



Is your middle schooler sweating his next big test or assignment? Help him take responsibility for his learning by showing him how to prepare for it. The best way he can prepare is to sharpen his study skills every day. Here's how:

- **Encourage him to read ahead.** By skimming over the next day's lesson or chapter ahead of time, he'll be better prepared for class.

This may also help him ask better questions or participate more.

- **Have him review his notes.** Even if he doesn't have an assignment in a certain class, he should still look over the day's notes at night. It's a quick, easy way to remind himself of what's being taught.
- **Make sure he's in class.** Your child won't learn the day's lesson if he isn't in class. He should only miss school when it's necessary.