

# Fort Atkinson Middle School

# SHARKBYTES



March 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	T/H Week ***** Early release at 1:30					
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	M/W Week ***** Early release at 1:30 ***** Parent Advisory Mtg 6:30 p.m.					
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Daylight Savings - Turn your clocks ahead!	T/H Week ***** Early release at 1:30		St. Patrick's Day 	School Board Mtg - 6:30 p.m.		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	Early release at 1:30				End of 3rd quarter No classes!	
28	29	30	31	Apr 1	Apr 2	Apr 3
	 No classes - Spring Break!	No classes - Spring Break!	No classes - Spring Break!	No classes - Spring Break!	No classes - Spring Break!	

Weekly pick-up for  
virtual student materials  
is on Thursdays from  
3:30-5:30 p.m.  
Please pull up to marked  
area at High Street entrance.

\*\*\*\*\*  
MS course selection for the  
2021-22 school year  
should be complete  
If you have not selected  
your Middle School classes  
for next year, please contact  
FAMS Pupil Services!

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**SPRING BREAK -**  
Begins: March 26th  
Return to school: April 5th

Tech Support For Virtual Learning  
You may email us at:  
[studentsupport@fortschools.org](mailto:studentsupport@fortschools.org)

Reboot your chromebook as a first step,  
and be sure you are logged in to your  
@fortschools account.



## 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



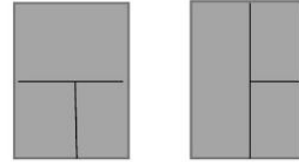
**ACT NOW: Deadline extended to March 19th!**

## FOR 8<sup>th</sup> 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 available to congratulate an 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduate and/or tell them how proud you are!

Ads are available 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 by ~~February 26, 2021~~: **Deadline Extended**

- 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. 4<sup>th</sup> 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.)

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Office use:

Amount paid: \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Cash \_\_\_\_\_



**FAMS Girls Basketball** had a great season. We were able to merge grade levels, 7th & 8th, and had a lot of fun with a SOLID group of 13 girls. We have made many gains and overcome some pretty weird times: wearing maskings, sanitizing constantly, and staying 6 feet apart. And on top of that, we had a few victories, but the smiles and laughter (even under their masks) made it all worth it!  
GREAT JOB LADIES!



## 2021 FA ARCHERY CLUB

In their 9th season, the Fort Atkinson Archery Club hosted their Annual FASSP Shootout Saturday, February 27th. Last year we had 27 schools and over 400 students participate. This year, with COVID-19 considerations, teams will be shooting in their own school gyms and emailing scores in to us to tally. While a little unconventional for competition, this format does allow for students to participate and gain experience. Two parents per archer were allowed to attend the home tournament, offering a few fans!

FA Archery is offered at the Middle School, High School, as well as Purdy and Luther Elementary.



## Is your student thinking about participating in **FAMS** spring season of **Track and Field**?

**Before a student is able to participate they must:**

- 1) Know and understand our buildings athletic code and academic requirements. The code of conduct can be found (pages 25-32) at this link: [FAMS Athletic Code](#)
- 2) Complete the online registration process. (Required just once per year!) Fort Athletics registration can be found at this link: [Athlete Registration](#)
- 3) Have an **up to date physical exam** or alternate year acknowledgement.
- 4) Pay the athletic participation fee.



Contact the FAMS Main Office with any questions: (920) 563-7833.

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## Nominate an excellent teacher for the: **Wildermuth Award for Excellence in Education**



The Wildermuth Award for Excellence in Education was created to reward an educator in the School District of Fort Atkinson for exemplary work in the area of education. The recipient of the award may be a teacher, media specialist, guidance counselor, school social worker, school psychologist, or other certified staff member.

The Fort Atkinson Community Foundation, the SDFA, and the Fort Atkinson Education Association sponsor this award that is given in memory of Ron Wildermuth, former Director of Instruction. This annual award is presented each fall at the teacher orientation program. Ron's family requested this particular occasion because Ron was very involved with the orientation program every year.

Teachers, administrators, community members, parents, and students can make nominations, which will be accepted through Friday, April 9, 2021. If you wish to nominate an educator for this award, please return your nomination form to Matt Wolf at Fort Atkinson Middle School by the April 9th deadline.

Nomination forms are available in each school office and on the SDFA website ([www.fortschools.org](http://www.fortschools.org)) or here: [Wildermuth nomination](#).

According to the guidelines that have been established, the committee will consist of the following members, with each serving a three year term: six teachers (one representing each building); one Administrator; one community member; and the previous year's award recipient

If you would like further information about the Wildermuth Award, please contact Matt Wolf, Wildermuth Committee Chair at Fort Atkinson Middle School, 920-563-7833 or [wolfm@fortschools.org](mailto:wolfm@fortschools.org).



Preparations for the 2021 summer school session are in full gear. **We are looking forward to restoring our in-person summer school program!** If your family is interested in virtual learning opportunities, we will be offering mirrored learning academic courses for our at-home learners as well as some fully virtual camps throughout the summer.

The Summer School Session will begin on Monday, June 21st, and end on Friday, July 23rd. There will be no summer school on Friday, July 2nd and Monday, July 5th to recognize the 4th of July holiday.

The District is excited to offer a wide variety of great classes and camps for your family to consider!

**The District will again use a PRIORITY REGISTRATION system.** During PRIORITY REGISTRATION, parents/guardians will have the opportunity to indicate which courses or camps their children wish to take this summer using the online registration system (similar to last year). Using this information, the District will then determine the number of sections to run for each class in an effort to ensure that kids get the classes that they desire this summer.

**PRIORITY REGISTRATION will be open Friday, April 9th until Monday, April 19th. Please mark your calendar and share with your friends.**

By using PRIORITY REGISTRATION, you are giving your child the best chance to get the class(es) he/she wants this summer. There are three registration help sessions planned: Monday, April 12 from 8:00 to 9:30 AM and again from 3:15 to 6:00 PM at the Luther Elementary IMC. The third help session is on Wednesday, April 14 from 3:15 to 6:00 PM at the Purdy Elementary IMC. An interpreter will be available to help.

Registration information, including student logins and class lists, will be sent home on Thursday, April 8th. If you have any questions throughout the process, please call the Summer School Office at 920-563-7802 or email [summerschool@fortschools.org](mailto:summerschool@fortschools.org). We hope your child will join us this summer for lots of fun!



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## MUSIC at FAMS ...

**BAND ...** It sure has been great to be making music again!

Students now have a small repertoire of music they can play as an ensemble. They continue to augment their understanding of music through Chromebook activities as well. Because of our new focus on ensemble playing, there are fewer assignments than there were first semester. This means current assignments will have greater weight toward the final grade than previously; students are encouraged to stay on top of Powerschool and complete any missing work.

Students should be practicing their new music at home. They can also take advantage of the practice resources available to them through their MusicFirst accounts, including **PracticeFirst** and **Sight Reading Factory**.

**ORCHESTRA ...** students are hard at work learning new tunes, new techniques, and enjoying making music together.

As a reminder, assignments are due on Sundays and are one way students show their progress. Instruments should be going home after school so that students can practice and work on their assignments. We are making great progress and are excited to see where the rest of the school year takes us!



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## GRADE 6 TEAM NEWS ...

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

Hello from 6<sup>th</sup> grade math. We are wrapping up *Variables and Patterns* and will begin *Covering and Surrounding* next. During our examination of this book, your 6<sup>th</sup> grader will study the area and perimeter of triangles, rectangles, and trapezoids and surface area and volume of prisms and cylinders.. Stuck on a concept at home? Have your 6<sup>th</sup> grader tune into our web pages. There, you can find links to our book and some basic homework tips. Also, give Khanacademy.org a visit - use the site to find a multitude of free videos and practice problem sets! Please visit the CMP website (<http://connectedmath.msu.edu/>) for program help/tips.

**Social Studies with Mrs. Smith, Mr. Champeny and Mrs. Agnew**

Sixth grade social studies classes will be learning about the Roman Empire and what life was like for the Roman people.

**Science with Mrs. Agnew, Mrs. Smith, and Mr. Champeny**

In March we will start our Weather, Water, and Climate unit. We will start by looking at the atmosphere and how it affects our weather.

**We're happy to welcome back Mrs. Agnew!**

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

We will start off March by continuing our argumentative unit. Within the Discovery Unit theme, the students will begin researching an unsolved mystery and writing an argumentative speech. During the presentation, students will share their claim, reason, and evidence about their unsolved mystery. We will also complete another independent reading project.



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## 7TH GRADE TEAM NEWS ...

**Math 7** - Students will be studying from the book, *What Do You Expect?* Students will gain an understanding of experimental and theoretical probabilities and the relationship between them. The unit also makes important connections between probability and rational numbers, geometry, statistics, science, and business.



**Language Arts 7** - In March, students will continue to read science fiction texts to explore our 3rd quarter theme of preservation.

Students will also write and deliver an argumentative speech around an issue they have researched. While studying the genre of argument, they will also work on tracing and evaluating a speaker's argument.

**Social Studies** - In Social Studies, we will be finishing our Civil War unit by examining both tactical and cultural issues that led to Union victory. Emphasis will be put on total war tactics used on southern cities and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. We will conclude March by examining Reconstruction and its effects on race relations in the south.



**Science** - In science students will be completing their study of geology. The unit will conclude with a look at rocks, fossils, and what they can tell us about Earth's past. Students will then begin a new unit on physics. The unit will focus on motion and energy and the role they play in our daily lives.



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## TEAM 8 NEWS – 8th graders are ...

**Social Studies:** Students will be finishing up the general Latin America unit and begin to look more closely at the regions and individual countries of Latin America. We will examine the history, culture, governments, and economies for these countries. The Latin America unit will conclude with a unit test. We'll begin our last unit, which will cover Europe, at the start of 4th quarter.

**In Science:** Students will conclude their chemistry unit and begin the study of environmental science. The focus of the unit is interconnectedness. Our time is spent looking at the ways that living things depend on their environment and each other for survival. We will also look at how humans fit into this picture, discussing how our success is tied to the success of other species and the environment.



**In Algebra 8:** Chapter 7, Exponential Functions. This chapter provides an opportunity for students to learn more about the family of exponential functions. Students will also build more advanced algebra skills, such as solving for an indicated variable, simplifying or rewriting exponential expressions, working with fractional exponents, and finding the exponential function that passes exactly through any pair of given points. Students will begin Chapter 8, Quadratic Functions. This chapter will challenge students to find connections between the different representations of a quadratic function. Through this endeavor, students will learn how to rewrite quadratic equations in several forms, and how to use a graphing calculator or Desmos to assist them.



**Math 8:** Students will continue working in the book Say It With Symbols. This book develops the understanding of using symbolic expressions to represent and reason about relationships. The students will write and interpret equivalent expressions, combine expressions to form new expressions, predict patterns of change represented by an equation or expression, and solve equations.

**Geometry:** Students will be finishing chapter 7 and their studies of quadrilateral proofs and coordinate geometry. Just in time for Pi Day, students will be learning about circles and polygons. They will review polygon angle relationships, and area formulas, and combine them with their trigonometry skills to find areas and perimeters of new shapes. Students will also study how the areas and perimeters of similar figures are related.

**In Language Arts** Students are learning about the concept of Modernization through the reading of Traditional and Modern Literature, focusing on how modern literature has been rendered new. In the second half of the quarter, students will be working in small groups to research one side of a modern argumentative topic which will then be used in a debate. Students should continue reading regularly outside of class.







# BACKPACK NEWS TEENS

## 5 ways to get your 5 a day

The recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables is 5, or about 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups. Here are a few ideas to help you get into the 5-a-day habit:

### 1. Start with the first meal of the day

- Plan to eat one or two servings of fruit for breakfast daily and try different fruit daily or weekly to mix it up. Try a half a grapefruit, an apple, or a handful of berries.
- For lunch and dinner, aim for 2 servings of vegetables at each.

### 2. Get extra energy from fruit or vegetable snacks

- Did you know that fruits and vegetables contain carbohydrates, which are super sources of energy. By combining a fruit/vegetable serving with a protein, you'll stay fuller, longer.

### 3. Double up on fruit and veggie servings

- A serving of fruit or veggies is relatively small—don't be afraid to double the size of the serving for an extra boost!

### 4. Use fruit and vegetables as ingredients

- Use applesauce instead of oil in your baked goods; chop up veggies for stir fry, pasta, or chili; use fruit in smoothies or on cereal or yogurt. These are great ways to include the nutrition sneakily.

### 5. Try a new fruit, vegetable or recipe each week

- Variety is the spice of life—and by trying new produce, you may find a new favorite or spice up your snacks/meals/recipes.

Source:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/veggies-tips.html?ref=search>

## Bad Weather Driving

The best strategy for driving in bad weather is to avoid it. If you must go out, follow these safe driving tips:

- Make sure your headlights are on.
- Increase your following distance.
- Slow down—braking takes longer on slick roads. The slower you go, the easier it will be to recognize potential hazards.
- Make sure your car is prepared for conditions (check your battery, washer fluid, tires, headlights, etc.).
- Use caution near intersections.
- Stay in one lane as much as possible and avoid frequent lane changes.
- Keep 2 hands on the wheel, and 2 eyes on the road **always**.

## Creating a Vision Board

Creating a vision board can boost motivation, and help you stay inspired with your dreams and goals.

Use a wall/poster board/door and get creative with using colors, photos, magazines, and quotes to fill each section about you.

### Section Ideas:

- My top 3 strengths
- What I want to learn this year
  - Someone I admire
  - In 5 years I want to be
  - I am most proud of
  - I am grateful for
- What friendship feels like to me
- Something I do to be healthy
  - What do I like about me

Source: Kohl'sHealthyAtHome.org  
"Student Vision Board"

## Fiber

Fiber is a nutrient that doesn't get a lot of credit but is an important part of a healthy diet.

### What is Fiber?

Fiber is a carbohydrate that the body cannot digest, and found in fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes.

### What are the health benefits?

Fiber can help lower cholesterol, improve blood sugar, lower your chances of getting some types of cancer, and help with digestive issues, such as constipation.

Fiber can also help you to feel full, which can be beneficial with weight control.

### How much fiber do I need?

Teen girls (14-18) should get 25 grams of fiber a day and teen guys (14-18) should get 31 grams of fiber per day.

\*Add fiber to your diet slowly—adding too much, too fast can cause bloating, gas or cramps. Also, drink plenty of water!

### How do I make fiber part of my diet?

#### Breakfast

Oatmeal, whole-grain cereals/waffles/pancakes/bagels instead of 'white' products; fruits such as apples, oranges, berries or raisins.

#### Lunch/Dinner

Whole-grain pasta, rice, or breads; lentils or beans; sweet potatoes with skins; salads with nuts, beans or fruit.

#### Snacks

Use bran in baked goods; popcorn/whole-grain crackers or fruits.  
Source: KidsHealth.org  
"Fiber"



# BACKPACK NEWS

## TEENS

(NOTICIAS DE MOCHILA) (ADOLESCENTES)

### 5 formas de obtener tus 5 al día

Las porciones diarias recomendadas de frutas y vegetales son 5, o aproximadamente 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  tazas. Aquí hay algunas ideas que le ayudarán a adquirir el hábito de 5 por día:

#### 1. Comience con la primera comida del día.

- Planee comer una o dos porciones de fruta para el desayuno todos los días y pruebe diferentes frutas diariamente o semanalmente para mezclarlas. Pruebe con media toronja/pomelo, una manzana o un puñado de bayas.
- Para el almuerzo y la cena, intente consumir 2 porciones de vegetales en cada una.

#### 2. Obtenga energía adicional de las meriendas de frutas o vegetales

- ¿Sabías que las frutas y vegetales contienen carbohidratos, que son súper fuentes de energía? Al combinar una porción de fruta / vegetal con una proteína, permanecerá más lleno por más tiempo.

#### 3. Duplique las porciones de frutas y vegetales

- Una porción de frutas o vegetales es relativamente pequeña, ¡no tenga miedo de duplicar el tamaño de la porción para un impulso adicional!

#### 4. Utilice frutas y vegetales como ingredientes

- Use puré de manzana en lugar de aceite en sus productos horneados; pique vegetales para platos salteados, pasta o chili; use frutas en batidos, cereales o yogur. Estas son excelentes formas de incluir la nutrición a escondidas.

#### 5. Pruebe una nueva fruta, vegetal o receta cada semana

- La variedad es el condimento de la vida, y al probar nuevos productos, puede encontrar un nuevo favorito o condimentar sus meriendas / comidas / recetas.

Fuente:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/veggie-s-tips.html?ref=search>

### Conducir en Mal Clima

La mejor estrategia para conducir con mal tiempo es evitarlo. Si debe salir, siga estos consejos de conducción segura:

- Asegúrese de que sus faros estén encendidos.
- Aumente su distancia de seguimiento.
- Reduzca la velocidad: el frenado lleva más tiempo en carreteras resbaladizas. Cuanto más lento vaya, más fácil será reconocer los peligros potenciales.
- Asegúrese de que su automóvil esté preparado para las condiciones (revise su batería, líquido lavaparabrisas, neumáticos, faros, etc.).
- Tenga cuidado cerca de las intersecciones.
- Manténgase en un carril tanto como sea posible y evite los cambios frecuentes de carril.
- Mantenga las dos manos en el volante y los dos ojos **siempre** en la carretera.

### La Creación de un Tablero de Visión

Crear un tablero de visión puede aumentar la motivación y ayudarlo a mantenerse inspirado con sus sueños y metas.

Use una pared / cartulina / puerta y sea creativo usando colores, fotos, revistas y dichos para llenar cada sección sobre usted.

#### Ideas para las Secciones:

- Mis 3 principales fortalezas
- Lo que quiero aprender este año
  - Alguien a quien admiro
  - En 5 años quiero ser
  - Estoy muy orgulloso de
  - Estoy agradecido por
- Como se siente la amistad para mí
- Algo que hago para estar sano
  - Que me gusta de mí

Fuente: Kohl'sHealthyAtHome.org  
"Student Vision Board"

### La Fibra

La fibra es un nutriente que no recibe mucho crédito, pero es una parte importante de una dieta saludable.

#### ¿Qué es la fibra?

La fibra es un carbohidrato que el cuerpo no puede digerir y se encuentra en frutas, vegetales, granos y legumbres.

#### ¿Cuales son los beneficios para la salud?

La fibra puede ayudar a reducir el colesterol, mejorar el nivel de azúcar en la sangre, reducir las probabilidades de contraer algunos tipos de cáncer y ayudar con problemas digestivos, como el estreñimiento.

La fibra también puede ayudarlo a sentirse lleno, lo que puede ser beneficioso para controlar el peso.

#### ¿Cuánta fibra necesito?

Las niñas adolescentes (14-18) deben consumir 25 gramos de fibra al día y los niños adolescentes (14-18) deben consumir 31 gramos de fibra al día.

\* Agregue fibra a su dieta lentamente; agregar demasiada, demasiado rápido puede causar hinchazón, gases o calambres. Además, ¡beba mucha agua!

#### ¿Cómo hago que la fibra forme parte de mi dieta?

##### Desayuno

Avena, cereales integrales / waffles / panqueques / bagels en lugar de productos "blancos"; frutas como manzanas, naranjas, bayas o pasas.

##### Almuerzo / Cena

Pastas, arroz o panes integrales; lentejas o frijoles; batatas con piel; ensaladas con nueces, frijoles o frutas.

##### Meriendas

Use salvado en productos horneados; palomitas de maíz / galletas integrales o frutas.

Fuente: KidsHealth.org  
"Fiber"



# Daily Learning Planner

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

Fort Atkinson Middle School



THE  
**PARENT**  
INSTITUTE®

March • April • May 2021

## March 2021

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

- ☐ 1. Tell your child a story about a positive way you resolved a conflict.
- ☐ 2. Make up trivia questions about your family. Quiz one another at the dinner table.
- ☐ 3. It's Women's History Month. Help your child find a biography and learn more about a woman he admires.
- ☐ 4. Suggest that your child keep a TV/video log. Have her keep a record of the shows she watches and what she thinks of them.
- ☐ 5. Ask your child to describe the best dream he has ever had. Share yours with him.
- ☐ 6. Admit when you are wrong and apologize to your child.
- ☐ 7. Talk with your child about how rights come with responsibilities.
- ☐ 8. Explore another culture with your child. Try a recipe, or read a first-person account of life.
- ☐ 9. Help your child consider consequences before she makes a decision.
- ☐ 10. Ask your child to compare nutrition labels for different brands of a packaged food, such as cereal. Which has the most vitamins?
- ☐ 11. Patiently explain the reason for a rule your child doesn't like.
- ☐ 12. Have your child start an emotions diary. He can write down when and why he feels strong emotions and how he handles them.
- ☐ 13. Ask your child questions about her classes to get an idea about what she is learning.
- ☐ 14. Have your child solve silly math problems, such as "How many hours until the Fourth of July?"
- ☐ 15. Today, talk to your child as you would to a friend or co-worker. How does your child respond?
- ☐ 16. Ask your child who his role models are and why. You may learn something new about him.
- ☐ 17. Let your child overhear you bragging about her.
- ☐ 18. Don't violate your child's privacy. By providing privacy, parents demonstrate respect.
- ☐ 19. Talk about your family's ethnic background with your child.
- ☐ 20. Enjoy some outdoor physical activity as a family today.
- ☐ 21. Challenge your child to create a recipe and write it down.
- ☐ 22. Avoid giving in to your child's demands once you have made a decision about something.
- ☐ 23. Ask your child which he prefers: being alone or being with other people.
- ☐ 24. Emphasize the importance of attending every class. Point out that attendance is also important in the working world.
- ☐ 25. Ask your child: "Do you think honesty is always the best policy? Why or why not?"
- ☐ 26. Have a Stay-Up-Late Night. Let your child stay up as late as she wants, as long as she's reading.
- ☐ 27. Suggest that your child create a practice test when he's studying.
- ☐ 28. Ask your child to teach you something she's learned recently.
- ☐ 29. Tell your child that you truly believe he can achieve in school.
- ☐ 30. Middle schoolers can be moody. Pick your battles, but don't tolerate disrespect.
- ☐ 31. With your child, learn a new skill, such as calligraphy.

# Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Fort Atkinson Middle School



MIDDLE SCHOOL

March 2021

## Share strategies that will help your child take more useful notes

Learning to take effective notes gives your child an edge in his classes. Even if his teachers provide handouts on the material, adding his own notes can help your child remember the teacher's explanations and emphasis. And at test time, reviewing detailed class notes is a great way to study.

To boost the value of your child's notes, teach him to:

- **Figure out what's important.** Rather than writing down every word the teacher says, he should listen for names, dates, times of events and other key facts. If the teacher writes something down, your child should, too.
- **Write with a pen or pencil.** Studies show this helps students remember more than typing notes on a keyboard.
- **Reread and clarify** each day's notes after school while the material is fresh in his mind. This reinforces it in his memory. He should make sure his notes are neat and complete enough that he'll understand them when he studies later.
- **Buddy up.** Comparing notes with a classmate can help him pick up details he missed.
- **Stay organized.** Remind him to date his notes and file them in his binder (or binder section) for that class so he can find them easily.



## Find ways to make reading a daily event

Many things are in competition for your middle schooler's attention. If she has no reading assignment, reading may drop on her list of priorities.

But reading every day is one of the best things your child can do to ensure academic success. To provide some motivation:

- **Read at the same time.** Your child is less likely to be distracted if you are doing the same thing she is. Pick a time each day when you can both sit down for at least 20 minutes and read.
- **Include audiobooks.** Listening to these recordings is a proven way to build reading skills like fluency. A celebrity reader may grab your child's interest, and she can listen while she exercises or completes a chore.
- **Plan family activities** that require reading. Build something together that requires reading instructions, for example.
- **Read aloud.** After you get to the good part, your child may be more willing to continue on her own.

## Connect new ideas to old

Linking new material to things they already know helps students retain new concepts. Have your child ask himself:

- **Where** have I seen part of this before?
- **What** does this remind me of?
- **How** does this relate to what I am learning in my other classes?



## Avoid clashing over math

As math gets more abstract, kids who have missed basic concepts along the way can find it hard to keep up. They may be anxious and defensive. To avoid a battle:

- **Acknowledge** your child's feelings. Help her figure out what she *does* understand and pinpoint where things get confusing.
- **Urge** her to ask the teacher or another student for help with the confusing parts.
- **Ask** the teacher about your child's progress. Are her struggles common? What will help?



## Open communication helps keep your child safe

Protecting students—from COVID-19 and much more—is critically important. Discuss safety issues with your child. Give him the reasons for the rules. Talk about:

- **The school's health,** safety and security procedures, both in school and online.
- **Social media** and online safety.
- **Strategies for solving** problems and diffusing tense situations.
- **Concerns about students** who may be dangerous to themselves or others.
- **The importance of telling you,** a teacher or another trusted adult if he sees something that doesn't seem right.





## Is it necessary to let my child make the wrong choice?

**Q: I know I should let my child make more decisions for herself. But how can I help her learn to make good choices without letting her make poor ones?**

**A:** Making bad decisions—and learning from them—is a key way children learn to make better decisions. If your child makes a poor choice, you're not "letting" her fail. You're allowing her to figure out what good decision-making is. Of course, she still needs you to make big decisions for her—about health, safety and school attendance, for example. But she can learn from making decisions about things like:

- **Her study routine.** Doing assignments is non-negotiable. But you can be flexible about when and where your child does them. Her grades will give both of you an idea whether her choices are working.
- **Bedtime.** If your child wants to stay up later, ask her what she thinks is an appropriate bedtime. If it allows her to get at least nine hours of sleep each night and still be ready for school in the morning, let her try it. If she's too tired to function during the day, have her rethink her decision.
- **Her room.** Your middle schooler may decide she's OK with a messy room. As long as it is sanitary, don't argue. If she can't find her calculator or the worksheet she needs, she'll learn from the consequences.



## Are you making it easier to concentrate?

Focusing and tuning out distractions is challenging for middle schoolers. Pandemic learning conditions can add to the challenge. Are you helping your child strengthen his powers of concentration? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you discourage** multi-tasking? If your child is doing something else, he isn't giving schoolwork his full attention.
2. **Do you suggest** that your child set goals for classes and study sessions? What does he want to learn?
3. **Do you avoid** interrupting your child when he is doing schoolwork?
4. **Do you encourage** your child to do a focus-building activity he enjoys—like reading or practicing a sports skill?

5. **Do you tell** your child to jot down distracting thoughts and save them for later?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your child stay focused on learning. For each no, try that idea.*

*"We are not born focusing. It's an acquired skill that requires initial effort and constant upgrading."*  
—Robert Genn

## Share a study system for chapter or unit tests

Help your child take an organized approach to studying for big tests that cover an entire book chapter or subject unit. Have her:

- **Review the chapter** or unit section by section and write questions she thinks the teacher might ask on index cards.
- **Write answers** to the questions on the back of the cards.
- **Make more cards** for new terms or vocabulary words and put their definitions on the back.
- **Study the cards.** Offer to quiz your child on them when she's ready.

## Get set to manage time

Most middle schoolers lack a good sense of time. On a study break, they might surf videos online for an hour and think it has been only five minutes. Then they're amazed that they don't have enough time to complete assignments.



When your child takes a study break, set a time limit—say 10 minutes. Have him set it on a kitchen timer. You won't have to nag him when his time is up—the timer will do it for you!

## Talk about your struggles at your child's age

Do you remember being 13 and going through difficult times? You may have felt lonely, clumsy, nervous or misunderstood.

Talk about those experiences with your middle schooler. The feelings may have been painful, but thinking and talking about them can help you find common ground with your child. It's likely you will be more understanding when she's upset, and she may be more willing to open up if she thinks you can relate to what she's saying.

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Fort Atkinson Middle School

***still make the difference!***



## Maximize the power of your middle schooler's brain

**D**oes your child seem to be more concerned with his friends than he is with what he's learning? Is he acting silly one minute and feeling overwhelmed the next?

If so, your child is a typical middle schooler. Brain research sheds some light on the behaviors that worry parents (or drive them crazy). Your child acts this way because, like all adolescents, his emotional brain develops faster than his rational brain.

Over the next few years, you will witness swings in your child's emotions. However, if you engage his emotional brain, you will also be able to maximize his ability to learn. Here's how:

- **Use humor.** Middle schoolers love to laugh and make jokes. Encourage your child to find funny cartoons,

GIFs or videos about what he's learning. They can satisfy his desire to laugh and help him learn at the same time.

- **Make learning personal.** Middle schoolers tend to think the world revolves around them. So, link what your child is learning to his life. If he is studying the Revolutionary War, ask him to think about a time he felt like revolting against authority.
- **Promote imagination.** Help your child put his imagination to work when he is studying. Ask him questions like, "What would it have felt like to be there with George Washington at Valley Forge?"

Source: T. Armstrong, Ph.D. *The Power of the Adolescent Brain: Strategies for Teaching Middle and High School Students*, ASCD.

## Nutrition affects your child's ability to learn



It's no surprise that a healthy diet can help your middle schooler stay alert during class and retain the information she learns.

Unfortunately, simply stocking your home with nutritious foods doesn't necessarily mean your child will eat them—especially if you aren't home during the day to offer them.

So what's the solution? Help your child become an informed eater who knows how to make responsible food choices on her own. Here's how:

- **Expose your child** to a variety of foods. Plan your weekly meals together and set a goal of trying one new healthy food each week.
- **Remove temptations.** Get rid of soda and junk food. Instead, fill your fridge with easy-to-grab washed, cut veggies and fruit.
- **Make it easy for your child** to drink plenty of water. Hydration is key to brain function. Give her a large water bottle to drink from throughout the day.
- **Insist on breakfast.** Offer foods high in fiber and low in added sugar. A whole-grain bagel and a banana is a fast and easy breakfast option.



## Prior knowledge helps kids understand and relate to text



Research shows that your child's ability to understand and relate to what she reads is linked to what she knows before she opens the book. This is called *prior knowledge*.

Having some knowledge before reading means your child will not have to try to figure out the text only from the information in front of her. Prior knowledge of a topic may also keep her more engaged in what she's reading.

To increase your child's knowledge:

- **Encourage her to read news articles.** They will expose her to topics and themes that she will likely encounter in her schoolwork.

- **Expand her world.** Watch educational programs and visit historic sites. Your child's experiences may help her make a connection to something she'll read in the future.
- **Share your experiences.** Talk with your child about places you have been or jobs you have had.

Source: K. Allan and M. Miller, *Literacy and Learning: Strategies for Middle and Secondary School Teachers*, Houghton Mifflin.

**"Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow."**

—Anthony J. D'Angelo

## Three ways you can support your middle schooler's education



When your child was younger, you may have volunteered in his class, hovered as he did his homework each night and forged close ties with his school. But now that he's growing and changing, your approach to school involvement needs to change, too.

Studies show that middle schoolers benefit from parents being involved in their schooling. But, during the middle school years, some things parents do at home are twice as effective at supporting their children's schooling as, say, chaperoning a class trip or volunteering in the classroom.

Research shows three things families can do are especially effective:

1. **Communicate your expectations.** Simply telling your child that you expect him to work hard and know he will go far in school can be a powerful motivator.

2. **Expand on what's being taught.** Talk to your child about the concepts he is learning every day. Then, brainstorm together about related activities. Encouraging your child to take what he's learning in school (such as math) and apply it to his everyday life (such as sticking to a shopping budget) can help him see why education matters.
3. **Talk about the future.** Does your child want to be an architect, a mechanic or a fashion designer? Help him investigate the education and training necessary to prepare for careers that interest him. Encourage him to find schools that offer the training he'll need. Remind your middle schooler that, while his plans may change, a solid education is his ticket to achieving any goal.

Source: D. Viadero, "Scholars: Parent-School Ties Should Shift in Teen Years," *Education Week*.

## Do you encourage your child to spend time reading?



Reading for pleasure helps students build valuable comprehension and vocabulary skills. But many middle schoolers say they just don't have time to read.

Are you encouraging your child to make time for reading? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

1. **Do you keep** all types of reading material around the house? Include magazines, newspapers, books, manuals, catalogs—anything with words!
2. **Do you visit** your local library in person or online? Many have created "grab and go" options in response to the pandemic.
3. **Do you link** reading to your child's interests by sharing books and articles on topics that are important to him?
4. **Do you set** a good example by reading in front of your child and talking about the things you read?
5. **Do you have** a regular time for family reading?

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are strongly encouraging your middle schooler to read. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

**Middle School Parents**  
*still make the difference!*

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## Tutoring might be the answer to ongoing academic struggles



Adjusting to the new normal of learning has been challenging for today's students. If your child is struggling in one or more of her classes, she may need some one-on-one learning support.

Getting a tutor could be the answer to your middle schooler's academic problems—especially if:

- **Schoolwork** has become a daily battle.
- **Your child's grades** are slipping more by the day.
- **The entire family** is feeling the stress of her school difficulties.

Ask your child's school counselor to recommend tutoring resources. She may even be able to connect you with local high school students who tutor.

Then, to help your middle schooler get the most from tutoring sessions:

- **Stand back.** Whether sessions are virtual or in-person, don't pitch in. Give the tutor space to do the job.
- **Provide a distraction-free setting.** Be sure there is a quiet, well-lit place for your child and the tutor to work.
- **Set reachable goals.** Don't expect your middle schooler to earn straight A's right after she begins tutoring sessions. Instead, set smaller goals, such as raising her English grade a few percentage points per month. Meeting these goals may be your best indicator as to whether the tutoring is working.
- **Don't be afraid to make a change.** Not every tutor-student relationship works out. If your child isn't meeting her goals after a few months, it may be time to try something new.

**Source:** J. Schumm, Ph.D., *How to Help Your Child with Homework*, Free Spirit Publishing.

**Q:** For safety's sake, we won't be traveling over spring break and my child is disappointed. I have taken the week off from work, but we're staying home. How can we make the most of our week off without breaking the bank?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** Due to COVID-19, chances are that most families won't be traveling. However, they might as well be—at least in your child's mind. And while you don't need to provide expensive activities when it comes to spring break, it is wise to plan a few entertaining things to do together during your week off.

Here are some low-cost yet fun ideas to get you started:

- **Be tourists at home.** What draws visitors to your region? Is there an historic battleground or natural wonder? A beautiful state park? Whatever it is, you probably don't spend enough time enjoying it. During spring break, try seeing your hometown with fresh eyes. Grab your child and explore your area's attractions together.
- **Shadow a professional.** Does your child love animals? See if you can arrange a day where she can volunteer or observe at a nearby veterinary clinic.
- **Make one day a "vacation day."** For 24 hours, give your child a break from chores and rules (within reason). Let her sleep in, stay up late or watch a bunch of age-appropriate movies.
- **Visit a nearby college.** No need to schedule a formal tour, just walk around campus. If local colleges are closed to visitors, you can tour them online together.

## Start talking to your child about the transition to high school



A big transition is ahead for many middle schoolers and their parents. High school is a mere six months away! You and your child may be nervous—especially with the uncertainty that the pandemic has brought to learning environments.

Most middle schoolers:

- **Feel excitement** about the opportunities high school offers. These include new friendships and more freedom. High school also lets students pursue new interests through a broader range of classes.
- **Feel nervous.** High school standards for academics, behavior and independence are far beyond what most middle schoolers are used to. There will likely be more students, too.

To ease your child's anxiety:

- **Tap available resources.** Encourage your child to talk to his school counselor and ask any questions he may have. He should also talk to neighbors or friends who are already in high school and ask about their experiences. Be sure to attend orientation sessions offered by the high school.
- **Talk to your child.** Share some of your own positive high school memories. Discuss the classes your child wants to take and how he will manage his schedule.
- **Encourage your child.** Starting high school is a huge milestone. Your child is growing up. Let him know you are proud of him and are looking forward to this new stage.



# It Matters: Test Success

## Preparation is the key to better results



Tests in middle school are often more frequent, challenging and abstract than they were in elementary

school. To help your child improve his test performance, share these preparation strategies:

- **Schedule plenty of study time.** Teachers usually provide advance notice, sometimes up to a week, of when they plan to give a test. Your child should start studying the day the test is announced.
- **Experiment** with different methods when studying. He can read material aloud and then explain it to you. He could create a diagram, poster or model.
- **Try “chunking.”** Most students learn best when material is broken down or “chunked” into smaller pieces. Your child can make note cards with only one relevant fact on each card.
- **Think like a teacher.** Your child should ask himself several questions: *What are the most important pieces of information in this unit? What are the concepts this unit is presenting? What parts of this unit will help me understand material that is coming up in the next unit and beyond?*
- **Create a list** of the important facts and concepts. He can use it to make up practice tests for himself.
- **Save the last day** of studying for review. He should not try to learn new concepts on the last day. This is cramming, and crammed material is typically forgotten as quickly as it is learned.

## Teach your middle schooler strategies to use during tests

Tests certainly aren't the only measure of learning, but they are a useful way to check students' progress. And, your child will earn higher grades if she can do well on them.

Encourage your child to:

1. **Read the directions carefully** and underline direction words, such as *compare, list, describe, define* and *summarize*.
2. **Skim the whole test quickly.** She should think about how much time she has and decide how much time to spend on each question.
3. **Start working.** She should answer the questions she knows first and place check marks next to questions she needs to come back to.
4. **Go back to the checked questions** and answer each to the best of her ability.



5. **Double-check her answers** before she submits them. She should make sure her answers make sense and that she has not made careless mistakes.

## Encourage your child to create a test-prep checklist



Talk to your middle schooler about being organized and he probably thinks about keeping his room neat.

But organization is also a building block for his academic success.

It will be hard for him to do well on a test if he doesn't know when the test is, what to study or what materials he needs.

In middle school, your child is expected to keep track of all this information—multiplied by the number of classes he is taking.

Few people can do this in their heads. He needs to create a test-prep checklist and refer to it often.

For upcoming tests, your child should write down the answers to these questions:

- **What is the class?**
- **When is the test?**
- **What is the test format?**
- **What topics will be covered?**
- **What are the relevant pages in the textbook?**
- **What materials do I need to study—textbook, notes, past assignments and quizzes?**