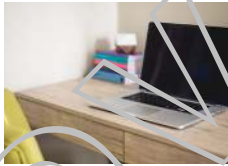


EIGHTH GRADE

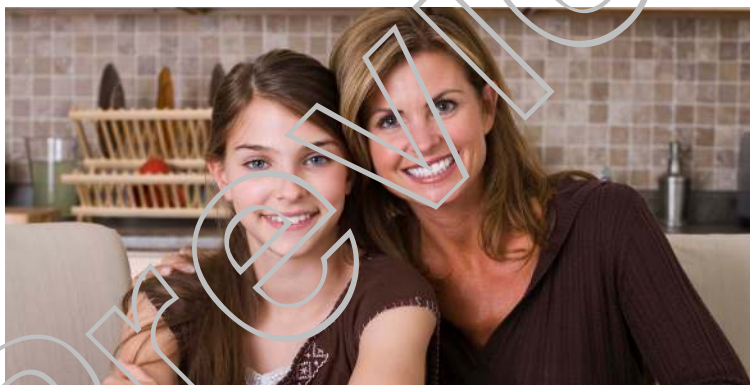
Parent Guidebook



Dear Parent

Welcome to the eighth grade! This is an exciting time for your child. Your eighth grader is becoming more independent and self-sufficient every day; however, your support and guidance continue to be very important.

This book provides the information you need to help your child not only succeed academically, but to also thrive and grow. With your involvement and support, your child is sure to have a great eighth grade year!



We know that many children are being raised by grandparents or guardians. For the sake of simplicity, the term "parent" refers to any primary caregiver.

Eighth Grade Parent Guidebook

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School Success

Eighth graders need their parents to help them develop and improve their study skills and habits.

Improve organizational skills

To succeed in their classes, eighth graders need good organizational skills. *This is one area in which parents can really make a difference!* Use these tips and suggestions to help your child get organized.

- ▶ Encourage your child to use a student planner to keep track of assignments, tests, quizzes, appointments, practices, and anything else he/she needs to remember.
- ▶ Show your child how to organize and prioritize homework. Ask your child to explain what needs to be done, and then help him/her make a plan.
- ▶ See that your child has a folder, binder, or notebook that's clearly labeled for each class. Create a file at home for the returned papers, quizzes, and tests your child wants to keep.
- ▶ Large assignments can seem overwhelming. Show your child how to break large assignments and projects into smaller, more manageable tasks.

Work with your school

To stay informed, regularly check your school's website and participate in school events and activities.

If there's ever a situation (e.g., health problem, divorce) that might adversely affect your child's attitude or school performance, contact your child's counselor or principal.

Create habits for success

Developing good study habits in eighth grade will set your child up for success in ninth grade, and beyond.

Require daily attendance

Your student needs to be in school on time every day unless he/she is ill. Attendance is the #1 school success factor!

Monitor homework

Eighth graders must learn to be responsible for keeping track of their assignments, completing their assignments accurately, and turning them in on time. As a parent, you want to be supportive and encouraging; however, the completion of homework needs to be your child's responsibility.

Develop routines

Good morning and nighttime routines make the day run much smoother. Help your child establish routines that include going to bed early enough to get 8-9 hours of sleep, and getting up early enough to eat a nourishing breakfast and get to school on time.

Set goals

Help your child set realistic goals for each grading period. Goals like making the honor roll or having all homework done each night by 8:00 give your student something positive to work toward.

Monitor progress

It's important that your child be successful in all of his/her classes. See all midterm reports and report cards, and if your child's grades are available online, check them regularly.

If you don't see a midterm report or report card, contact the school and request a copy. Do not just assume that someone will contact you if there's a problem.

If you have concerns about your child's progress, or if your child is having any difficulties with school, arrange to speak with a teacher or your child's counselor.

Growing Up: Eighth Grade

Middle school students can challenge even the most patient parents. It is, however, easier to be understanding and supportive when you consider the many changes middle school students are experiencing.

Physical growth

Students experience many physical changes during middle school. Because they mature at such different rates, eighth graders come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes.

With growing bodies and emerging hormones, middle schoolers sometimes feel tired and just plain cranky. The onset of puberty can also make students feel self-conscious or embarrassed about their appearance. Discuss physical changes and differences with your child, and emphasize that everyone grows and matures at their own pace.

To support your eighth grader through this time of change, look for ways to help your child feel good about him/herself.

Help develop a positive self-image

- ▶ Reassure your child that the changes he/she is experiencing are normal.
- ▶ Teach your child about personal hygiene and monitor grooming habits.
- ▶ Help your child choose clothes that are flattering and in style. If your tastes and your child's tastes differ, perhaps "pick your battles" and let your child have more control over his/her appearance—within reason.



Emotional growth

Eighth graders are often moody. Their shifts in mood are the normal result of the changes in their bodies, and of their need to figure out who they are and how they fit into this middle school world.

To support your child emotionally, make time for fun family activities, and keep a sense of humor. Be patient with your child, even when emotions are running high. And most importantly, give your child lots of encouragement, love, and support.

Intellectual growth

Middle schoolers are able to think more abstractly, and they can handle more complex intellectual tasks. Parents can help their children develop intellectually by discussing serious topics with them, and by giving them opportunities to express their opinions.

Ask your child what he/she thinks about some of the complex topics seen on TV or online. Always show respect for your eighth grader's opinions and ideas (even when you disagree).

Promote independence

If your eighth grader has a question or problem, help your child figure out how to take care of it on his/her own. Being able to get their questions answered and their problems solved helps students gain confidence, and it gives them sense of empowerment.



The Social Scene

Friends are very important to eighth graders; however, dealing with the middle school social scene isn't always easy.

Here's how you can help your child navigate this important aspect of middle school.

Be supportive

A strong support system is the key to helping your child cope with the middle school social scene.

- ▶ Spend one-on-one time with your child, plan family outings, and eat dinner as a family as often as possible. During dinner, turn off the TV, silence all phones, and talk about your day.
- ▶ Discuss the concept of self-esteem and how it isn't about "being full of yourself." It's liking who you are and not feeling the need to change for anyone else.
- ▶ Try to relate to your child's concerns and insecurities, even if they seem minor or exaggerated to you.
- ▶ Help your child find something he/she is good at and enjoys: a musical instrument, sports, art, etc. Encourage your child to pursue existing interests and talents, and to develop new ones.

Discuss tough issues

Help your child deal with difficult social situations.

Peer pressure. Eighth graders are trying to find their own identity, yet most don't want to be different. Because "fitting in" can be so important, middle school students are often susceptible to peer pressure.

Talk to your child about peer pressure and make sure your child knows that he/she doesn't need to change to be liked. Also, devise a plan and have a phrase your child can use to navigate out of difficult situations.

Drugs and alcohol. Be informed about what's happening in your school and community. Look for teachable moments to talk to your child about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, smoking, and vaping. Make sure your child knows where you stand on these issues, and that there will be consequences for the use of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. *One discussion is not enough.*

Set limits

Eighth graders need clear rules and limits regarding social activities.

- ▶ When your child leaves the house, know who he/she will be with, where they are going, and what they'll be doing. Require your child to check in often.
- ▶ Base the amount of freedom your child is given on how responsible he/she is. Young people need to understand that they will be held accountable for their actions and behavior.



Help keep your child "on track"

Even though teens often complain about parental rules and restrictions, knowing that they have a parent who cares enough to make sure they "stay on track" gives adolescents a much needed sense of security.

Communicating with Your Child

Communicating with students this age can be challenging at times. But because it's so important, parents need to make the extra effort.

Ask open-ended questions that require more than one word answers. Instead of asking "How was school?" say, "Tell me about your day," or ask, "What's that book about?"

Timing is important. Be available to listen when your child wants to talk. Also look for times when your teen is most likely to be open to conversation (after getting home from school, before going to bed). A particularly good time to talk is while driving in the car; it's quiet, no one can leave, and you're spending the time together anyway.

Tell your child what you want done (instead of what you don't want done). For example, instead of saying, "Don't leave your backpack on the floor" say, "Please put your backpack in your room."

Don't feel that you need to fix every problem. Young people often just want someone to listen – not solve their problems for them. Remember, this is a time when students need to develop their problem solving skills.

Recognize your child's concerns. Something that may seem like a small thing to you could be a big deal to your eighth grader. If your teen has a concern or problem, listen attentively, and help him/her figure out how to deal with it and move forward.

Know that your child hears you. Eighth graders may act like they don't hear what their parents say, but they do listen.



Nonverbal communication

Make time for one-on-one activities. It's often easier to talk to your child when you're doing something you both enjoy, such as cooking, watching a game, or going out for ice cream.

Make it easy for your teen to talk to you, but know that just because your child doesn't say anything doesn't mean that he/she has nothing to say.

Children aren't always able to put into words what they need you to know. Nonverbal communication is therefore often just as important as what's said.

- ▶ Be aware of your child's eating and sleeping patterns. Too much or too little of either may indicate that your child is troubled by something.
- ▶ Pay attention to your child's body language and moods. These can be good indicators of how things are going at school and with friends.

Listen to your instincts. If you think something is wrong, talk to your child about your concerns—or try sending your child a text message expressing your support and openness to talking.

Be available

Always be available to talk to your eighth grader, and make sure your child knows that he/she can talk to you about anything, anytime, without fear of punishment or judgment.



Technology

The explosion of technology and social media opens many wonderful doors, but it also presents new challenges.

The following tips will help your child enjoy the benefits of technology, while minimizing the risks.

Monitor use

- ▶ Pay attention to the kinds of music, videos, and TV shows your child is listening to and watching. For reviews and age ratings on movies, games, and more, visit commonsensemedia.org.
- ▶ If you're checking up on your child, it's best to be honest about it. Explain that you're not trying to "destroy their fun," but because there's a lot of stuff on the internet that can sneakily do harm, you're just trying to keep them safe.
- ▶ Ask questions, such as, "What sorts of things do you post online?" "Are you using privacy settings?" and "Can you show me the apps you use?"
- ▶ Consider creating a technology/internet contract that spells out how you expect your child to use the internet and cell phone. You can find sample contracts online or create your own.

For additional information on internet safety, visit netsmartz.org and commonsensemedia.org.

Discuss appropriate uses

- ▶ Make sure your child understands that when a message is sent or a photo is posted, *it becomes permanent*. This means that somebody will always have access to what you send or post—and it can always be recovered.
- ▶ Discuss what information is appropriate (and inappropriate) for your eighth grader to view and share on social media sites.
- ▶ Remind your child that people online may not be who they say they are, and to never share personal information online (e.g., phone number, address, school, favorite hangout).
- ▶ Discuss the importance of being respectful and kind to others online. Remind your child that others can't see your facial expression or hear your tone of voice online, so messages can easily be misunderstood.

Provide structure and set limits

As children get older, it becomes more difficult to monitor their music, TV, video games, and online activities. Eighth graders nevertheless need their parents to provide guidelines and limits—and to help them make good choices.

- ▶ If left on their own, many young people will spend hours online and with their tech toys. Have an open dialogue about how much time your child can spend using technology and how much time he/she feels is fair—but be comfortable knowing that you have the final say.
- ▶ Require that all devices be silenced and put away during dinner and family times. To ensure that your child isn't on the phone late at night, consider requiring that all phones be plugged in for recharging in a central location (e.g., your bedroom) each night.
- ▶ Make sure your child knows that tech toys and online games are a privilege that can be enjoyed only if he/she meets your standards and follows your rules at home and at school.
- ▶ Be a good role model. We adults give up the right to lecture if we don't exhibit the same self-control that we're expecting of our children.

Bullying

Students, parents, and schools need to work together to help make their school bully-free.

What you can do

- ▶ Teach your child to respect others and to be tolerant of those with different opinions, beliefs, and backgrounds.
- ▶ If your child witnesses bullying at school, encourage him/her to report the incident to a teacher, counselor, or principal.
- ▶ Bullies often target students who are passive or quiet. Encourage your child to stand tall, walk confidently, look people in the eye, and use body language that shows self-confidence.
- ▶ If your child tells you he/she is being harassed or bullied, have him/her explain what has happened, who was involved, and when, where, and how often it occurred. Make printouts of anything that's been sent or posted online.
- ▶ Be aware. If you notice any of the following, ask your child if someone is causing problems for him/her at school or online.
 - ▶ suddenly more anxious, quiet, insecure, or withdrawn
 - ▶ drop in grades
 - ▶ not wanting to go to school
 - ▶ loss of appetite or complaints of illness
- ▶ If you learn that your child has been harassing others, take it seriously and don't make excuses. (Even good kids sometimes behave badly.) Discuss the possible effects of his/her behavior, and hold your child accountable.

Be there for your child

When children are bullied in school or online, it's critical that parents listen to them, believe them, and empower them.

Next Step: High School



To help your student make a smooth transition to high school, be involved and informed.

Create a high school plan. Your child will likely register for 9th grade classes in the spring. This is a good time to start talking about career and education goals, and to make a four-year high school plan.

To make a high school plan, go over the courses that are required each year and the electives that are offered. Then put together a list of the courses your child plans to take each year. Having a high school plan will help ensure that your child takes the courses required for graduation, and those needed to achieve career and college goals. A high school plan also helps ensure that your student is able to fit in the electives he/she wants to take.

Learn about the school. Visit the website of the high school your child will be attending, noting the school calendar, school rules and policies, which extracurricular activities are offered, and if/when high school orientations occur.



In Closing

Helping your child have a successful year doesn't require doing extraordinary things. It's the little things you do every day that provide the guidance and support your child needs.

With your encouragement, love, and support, your child is sure to be successful this year, and in the years to come.

EIGHTH GRADE

Parent Guidebook

**Information, tips, and advice
for parents of eighth grade students.**

Linda O'Brien, MEd • Krystal Chenault, MA



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