



Utah Parent Center
Special needs, extraordinary potential

Information Sheet

Parents with High Expectations

You and Your Middle School-aged Child

The middle school years build upon and deepen the skills learned in elementary school. They also prepare your child for high school and for life after graduation. You can help your child succeed by being involved with his or her education. Your child is changing, but he or she still needs your involvement.

Support Your Child's Path to Success

Before the school year begins, find out about the school your child will attend. Visit the school and obtain a copy of the schools' parent involvement plan, if available. Discover what extracurricular opportunities or programs may be available to students, and ask your child what interests him or her.

At the beginning of the year, ask the principal:

- Does the school place my child according to his or her ability in core subject areas?
- Does the school begin to prepare my child for high school success by teaching needed skills such as effective approaches to studying or managing long-term assignments?
- What tests does the school use to measure children's progress?
- How do parents know if the teachers are highly qualified to teach?
- Can I attend middle-school orientation with my child?
- Is there a family center at the school?
- Is the school meeting the academic and learning goals set by the state?

Ask the principal for a district or school report card to see if students are making progress. You can also visit <https://utahschoolgrades.schools.utah.gov/> for more information about your school.

If the school to which your child would normally be assigned is not meeting the state's academic goals, your child may qualify to transfer to another public school, including a public charter school. Also, if the school is not meeting the state's goals, your child may be eligible to receive free tutoring and other supportive services. Contact your school district to find out more about these opportunities.

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Communicate with school staff

In school, teachers are your partners in helping your child grow. They would be helpful and willing to meet with you.

Things to tell teachers or principals:

- Explain your child's needs so staff better understand and are able to help meet them.
- Share any problems at home which may affect your child's school performance, such as divorce or illness.
- Ask the school to arrange for someone who is bilingual to help you when you meeting with your child's teacher if English is not your first language.
- Have the school provide materials in your native language, if possible.

It is your responsibility to be actively involved in your child's education; the more you are involved at school, the more likely your child will succeed.

Support Your Child in Middle School

You can do many things to support your child's progress in the middle grades.

What you can do at home to support your child:

- Provide your child with reading materials. Let your child see you reading for pleasure, encourage this habit in your child.
- Use the local library and the internet as sources for literacy activities, homework support and opportunities to pursue outside interests.
- Make sure your child does his or her homework. Give your child the chance to be responsible and to work on his or her own. Encourage those efforts.
- Continue to provide steady guidance. While your child is beginning to show more independence, her or she still needs you.
- Pay attention to how much your child watches TV, uses the computer, or plays video games. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests no more than one to two hours of viewing per day. Create your own Family Media Use Plan and get more information on the AAP recommendations at <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/Media-and-Children.aspx>.
- Listen carefully to what your child says and talk with him or her often. Research shows that children who talk with the adults in their lives are not only more successful students, but also healthier and happier people.



Advocate for Your Child, Partner with Teachers

In middle school, students typically are taught by individual teachers in core subjects. In addition, they may have one teacher, advisor, or counselor as their central contact. While the student may meet with this adult for only a brief period daily, this adult is intended to be "home base" for your child, and your key contact.

Ways to advocate include:

- Contact the key adult immediately if you notice a negative change in your child's behavior or school work, so you can identify and address problems at school before they become worse.
- Request a meeting with a teacher if you have concerns about your child.

- Help your child to check teachers' web sites where they post class notes and homework assignments if your child is struggling to handle assignments.
- Attend school open houses or parent nights to meet your child's teachers.
- Contact teachers if your child regularly doesn't understand homework or needs extra help, or feels uncomfortable with any situation. Many teachers will give you their email address so you may contact them easily if you have access to a computer and email.
- Attend scheduled school conferences; be prepared to listen and talk. You may find it helpful to write out questions beforehand. The teachers should be very specific about your child's work and progress. Think about what the teachers tell you and check back with them to see how things are going as the year progresses.

Look Ahead to High School

Even though it may seem early to think about the future, middle school is an important step toward attaining a postsecondary education or training.

- Communicate your expectations for academic success to your child.
- Help your child see that the academic skills strengthened in middle school will support success in high school.

Questions?

Do you have questions about the transition from elementary to middle-school or working with your child's middle-school staff? You can call to speak with one of the Utah Parent Center Parent Consultants at 801-272-1051.

This information sheet was adapted with permission from "Parents with High Expectations, You and Your Elementary School-aged Child," PACER Center and "You and Your Elementary School-Aged Child," U.S. Department of Education