



Tips for Involved Parents from Gwinnett County Public Schools

Be There is a national movement that inspires parents to become more involved in their children's education. Teachable moments are everywhere. Be your child's favorite teacher. Connect in meaningful ways and your simple actions will reap immense rewards at home, play, and school!

How to stay involved in your older student's education

You may be thinking, "Sure, it's easy to volunteer over at the elementary school, but my middle schooler ignores me when we're in the same room and my high school student is just like a toddler... 'I can do it myself!' How involved can I be with my older kids?"

Know that your involvement in your older student's education is as important as ever. In fact, parents have a key advisory role as their older student makes important decisions in planning for life after high school. Staying involved throughout the middle grades will make it easier to maintain that critical advisory role with your high school student.

While it can be a little more complicated to be involved with older students, it's worth it to be in tune with what's going on at your student's school, how your child is doing in the classroom, and ways he or she can get more involved at school. (Studies show that students who are



involved in activities feel more connected to the school and have a better attitude about their school experience.)

Check out these tips for staying engaged in your child's learning and being involved at school.

Staying involved with your student

There are many ways that you can show your middle school child that you are interested in academic success and that you are available to offer support and protection when there are problems. Some suggestions:

- **Talk with your child about what happens at school every day.** Ask often— in fact, daily—if there are messages from the school, upcoming deadlines that need to be on the calendar, forms to sign, etc. You may find a regular book bag cleaning helps, too. We've all had that last-minute scramble to handle those must-have school items at the breakfast table. It's not that your child is holding out on you, but school logistics just don't register when you're 13.
- **Spend some down time with your middle school child.** Share a meal or snack. Do something fun together. Does your child have a talent that he or she can teach you? Spend at least part of your time together talking. Let your child know what you like about him or her... *his quirky sense of humor and loyalty to his friends, her perseverance and curious nature.*
- **Listen to and share worries.** Ask your child what you can do to make things better. Sometimes, he or she just needs to talk. If the problem is school-related, talk it through. Is it a serious matter that requires a parent's intervention or is it something you can help your child work through himself?
- **Avoid scolding and arguing when your teenager brings bad news home.** Listen to their reasons and discuss options and solutions. It helps if your child knows that you believe he or she will be successful.
- **Value their education by encouraging homework and reading.** Help your child choose a good time and place to do assignments and special projects. Provide the necessary materials and give your student your unconditional support.

Continued



Getting involved at the school

- **Get to know each of your student's teachers**, not just the homeroom teacher. Don't wait for a problem to crop up before you talk to them. Attend curriculum nights and other opportunities to see your student's teachers face-to-face, but know that these events are not the best time to talk about a serious academic or behavior problem. Instead, schedule a conference or a time to visit on the phone about your concerns.
- **Request periodic meetings with the teachers**, especially if you have a concern. Time is set aside for parent-teacher conferences in November and February, but you can request a meeting at any time.
- **Keep informed about your child's grades and test results.** Parents receive grading reports periodically during the school year, but don't wait for a report card if you have a concern or your student has struggled in a particular subject in the past. Ask for regular grade reports in any subjects in which he or she has problems.
- **Ask for help if your student is struggling academically.** Your child's teachers generally will have set times for extra help or review sessions before or after school. In addition, the school may have opportunities for tutoring, peer help, or other academic support programs.
- **Read all information on school policies and curriculum carefully.** Schools send this information home at the beginning of the school year, but you also may find information on your school's web site and the school system web site (www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us). If your student is starting high school, make sure to review with your student "The Freshman Book" in spring of 8th grade and "The Choice Book" high school planner in fall of 9th grade. Both books contain information that your student needs to consider when making important decisions about classes to take and postsecondary planning.
- **Keep in touch with the counseling office.** A counselor has been assigned to your child's grade level and can keep you informed about your child's progress and behavior.
- **Learn about your school's Advisement Program.** Middle and high school students meet with their advisors at least twice a month. Grade-level advisement programs address areas of concern as students mature. Unique topics for each year are designed around building individual skills, the successful school experience, and planning for the future. Let these regular topics be conversation starters at home.
- **Get to know other parents and form support groups** to work on issues of mutual interest.
- **Review your child's school records each year.** It is your right, and you should know what information is in the file. GCPS' Parent Portal makes this even easier!
- **Attend events promoting school programs and opportunities at the beginning of the school year**, especially as your student transitions from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school. Often called "articulation" meetings, these transition programs will give you a wealth of information about what you can expect at the next level and also give you an opportunity to see how you can be involved.
- **Join the Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) and other school groups (such as booster clubs)** that support the activities in which your student will be involved. Join a committee or help with a fundraiser. Offer your business expertise.
- **Be there to support your child at his or her performances, academic competitions, and sporting events.** Your support is important to your child and encourages participation. Know that the opportunities for your child to be involved expand with middle school and explode with high school. While those activities and leadership opportunities can be strong additions to a high school record of achievement, more importantly, involved students are more satisfied with their school experience.



Together, we will be there for our students—
Gwinnett County Public Schools and YOU!

Make the ordinary extraordinary!

437 Old Peachtree Road, NW, Suwanee, GA 30024-2978 • 678-301-6000 • www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us

Tips submitted by Louise Radloff Middle and
GCPS' Office of Advisement and Counseling.