

**How to Get the Most  
Out of  
Middle School**



**By Linda O'Brien**

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Dear Students,

In order to get the most out of middle school, you need to do more than just get good grades. You also need to be involved in activities, have friends, get along with your parents, and know how to make good choices and decisions.

This booklet will explain the ten things that you need to do to get the most out of middle school. It will also give you lots of great tips and suggestions.

Linda O'Brien

*Throughout this book you will find quotes from a number of different students.  
We want to thank these students for their valuable input.  
We know that you'll find their ideas and advice helpful.*

**About the author.** Linda O'Brien was a high school guidance counselor for over twenty years. She also served as a board member for the Ohio School Counselor's Association. Ms. O'Brien received a B.S. in Education from Miami University and a Master's degree in Guidance and Counseling from Xavier University. Linda O'Brien is also the author of seven other "how to" booklets.

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## **Introduction**

Middle school is a wonderful, exciting adventure. Everything is new and different, bigger, and better. As a middle school student, you will have more freedom, more independence, and more fun. You will have a locker, a lunch period, different classrooms, and more teachers. You'll also have more homework, more responsibility, and new students to get to know.

During these middle school years, you will grow and change in many ways, physically and emotionally. You will become more independent, and being with your friends will become more important to you. All of these changes are just part of being a middle school student.

Middle school is a new and different world, but it's a great one.

*To have a great middle school experience, just follow the ten steps outlined in this book.*

## Step One

### Learn About Your School

Every middle school has its own calendar of events, attendance and tardy policies, rules, and people to go to for help.

#### **School Calendar** <sup>(1)</sup>

Your school probably puts out a calendar that shows when each grading period begins and ends, when midterm reports and report cards come out, and when your school will be closed for holidays and vacations. This calendar will also show the dates of other important events (school wide testing, parent-teacher conferences, etc.).

Put all of these dates on your calendar at home, and write them in your assignment notebook or student planner.

#### **Attendance and Tardy Policies** <sup>(2)</sup>

Your school has specific things that you need to do if you are absent or tardy. Find out what these are so that you'll know what to do if you're late, or if you have to miss school because you're ill. Does a parent need to call the school? Do you need to bring in a note? If you're late, do you need to report to the office first? Know the answers to these questions before you are ever absent or tardy.

You are expected to be in school every day, unless you are ill. You are also expected to be at school on time each day. If you have a medical condition or an illness that's going to cause you to miss a lot of school, have a parent call the office and explain the situation.

If you're absent for more than a couple of days, try to get some work to do at home. Call friends or classmates to find out what you've missed <sup>(3)</sup>, or have a parent call the office and ask for your assignments.

#### **School Rules** <sup>(2)</sup>

In order to have a safe, inviting place for students to come and learn, schools need to have rules. Most students understand that rules are necessary, and they follow them. For the students who don't follow the rules, there are consequences.

Consequences, or punishments, can range anywhere from detention to expulsion. In most cases, the punishment will depend on the seriousness of the offense and the past history of the student(s) involved. While rules vary from school to school, no school will allow weapons, drugs, violence, smoking, alcohol, or bullying.

All students need to take an active role in making their school a safe place where students want to come to learn. If you ever feel threatened, or if you become aware of a situation that may put you or someone else at risk, please tell a teacher, principal, counselor, or other adult immediately.

Principals and teachers make rules so that their school will run smoothly. The students, however, are the ones who make their school a great place to be!

“Most school rules are just common sense.” Marisa

“Some of the rules may seem ridiculous when you first hear them, but later on you'll see how important they are.”  
Anthony

“School rules are no big deal. Just follow them.” John

(1) LTSD calendar(s) available at [www.ltsd.k12.pa.us](http://www.ltsd.k12.pa.us)

(2) Please review the LTMS Handbook for complete details.

(3) Homework available at [www.ltsd.k12.pa.us](http://www.ltsd.k12.pa.us) - select Middle School/Departments/Grade Team/Homework Assignments.

## **People to Go to for Help**

If you look around your school, you'll find teachers, principals, counselors, librarians, tutors, and secretaries. All of these people are there to help you have the best middle school experience possible.

At some point during middle school, you're probably going to have a question or a problem concerning your locker, a class, another student, or a teacher. In most cases, you can get your question answered, or your problem taken care of, just by going to the office or by talking to the right person.

If you don't know who to talk to, see your counselor. Your counselor can help you with any question or problem that you may have.

"Many of my teachers have offered their own time to help me with my schoolwork. If you just ask, teachers are usually happy to help you." Jennifer

"I was having a problem with a boy who was bothering me, so I asked a teacher I liked how to hand it. She helped me figure out what to do." Ashley

"If I have a problem with a class or teacher, or if I have a questions about something, I see my counselor. He's really helped me out a lot." Carlos

*The person who can help you the most with any problem or concern is a parent. If you have a problem with a subject, teacher, class, or with another student, tell your parent(s) immediately. A parent can help you deal with any situation or problem.*

Step Two  
**Be in School Every Day**

*To do well in school, you must have good attendance!*

When you miss school you miss lectures, notes, class discussions, homework explanations, assignments, quizzes, and tests. It doesn't matter how good you are about making up your work, you can never make up everything you miss, even if you're out of school for only one day. In order to get good grades, you need to be in school every day.

If you must be absent from school, remember that you are responsible for finding out what you missed and for getting all of the work made up. You are, of course, also responsible for arranging to make up any quizzes or tests that you may have missed.

Since teachers usually do not have time to talk to students during class, see each teacher before or after class to find out what you have missed. Once you find out what you need to do, get everything made up as soon as possible. <sup>(1)</sup>

“I try never to miss school. It's just such a pain to make things up.” Tyrone

“When I come back after I've missed a couple of days, I feel like I don't understand what's going on at all.”  
Katie

“One of the smartest guys I know is getting Ds because he misses so much school.” Nicholas

“When you're absent, you have so much work to make up. It's a lot easier to just come to school.” Jessica

*Good attendance will not guarantee you good grades.  
You are, however, pretty much guaranteed to get bad grades if you have bad attendance.*

(1) See Make Up Procedures section of the LTMS Handbook.

Step Three  
**Know How to Get Good Grades**

*In order to get good grades, you need to be organized, listen in class, take good notes, and study.*

In middle school, the courses are more difficult, there's more homework, and students are expected to be able to do more work on their own.

Middle school may be harder, but if you come to school every day and do the following, you are certain to get good grades.

**Be Organized**

- Use a student planner or an assignment notebook
- Have a separate folder for each class
- Have phone numbers for classmates in case you have a question
- Keep your locker and backpack neat
- Get everything organized for the next day before you go to bed

“I use an assignment notebook. It helps me stay on track and get things done on time.” James

**Manage Your Time Well**

- Use any extra time in school to get started on homework
- Create a study plan that works for you
- Break large assignments down into smaller parts

“I make a list for myself each day and I check things off when they're done.” Jennifer

**Be Successful in the Classroom**

- Learn how to get along with different types of teachers
- Learn each teacher's class rules and what they expect of you
- Be in school, on time, every day
- Have everything you need with you when you go to class
- Always do your homework

## Step Four Set Goals

*It's important for people of all ages to have goals.*

Goals give you direction and focus. They help you figure out what you want to accomplish, and they help you decide where you want to go in life. If you're not in the habit of setting goals for yourself, now is the time to start.

### **Set Short-Term and Long-Term Goals**

Short-term goals are goals that you can achieve within days or weeks. Examples are: Get a B on my next history test. Get all of my chores done by Friday. Practice my soccer drills three times a week.

Long-term goals are goals that will take weeks, months, or even years to achieve. Examples are: Get all As and Bs on my report card this quarter. Make the basketball team next year. Go to college and become a lawyer.

### **Set Goals that are Specific, Realistic, and Measurable**

Not specific – Do better in math.

**Specific** – Get a B in math this semester.

Not realistic – Even though I usually get all Cs, this semester I will get straight As.

**Realistic** - I usually get all Cs, but this semester I'm going to get Bs in at least two classes.

Not measurable – I won't be so shy in class.

**Measurable** – I will raise my hand at least three times today.

### **Set both School and Personal Goals**

At the beginning of each grading period, look over the courses you're taking and set academic goals for yourself. Figure out what grade you think you can get in each class, and then work hard to get those grades.

At the end of the grading period, congratulate yourself if you were able to meet your goals. If you didn't achieve your goals, try to figure out why. Then set new goals for the next grading period.

Also set personal goals for yourself. Perhaps you want to get in better shape, improve your athletic skills, or earn some money. Come up with two or three things that you want to accomplish that don't involve grades, and make those your personal goals.

### **Write It Down**

Once you've set a goal for yourself, write it down. Then write down the specific things that you need to do to achieve your goal. Here's an example:

My goal is to have enough money to buy an iPod before the end of next month. To help me reach my goal, I will: 1) Find out where I can get the best price, and then figure out how much money I need to save. 2) Ask mom if she has any jobs that I can do to earn some money. 3) Save all of my birthday money. 4) Baby-sit for any aunt, and save the money I earn.
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Successful people set goals and then work hard to achieve them. Having goals will help you become the person you want to be.

“For every class I take, I set a goal based on what grade I think I can get. This gives me something to work for.” Jennifer

## Step Five Get Involved

*Students who are involved in activities get better grades, and they enjoy school more.*

### **Eight Reasons to Participate in School Activities**

1. Spend time with friends and meet new people.  
Band is so much fun. We are all friends and we have a great time together.” Tasha
2. Enjoy school more.  
“I didn’t like school last year, but this year I’m on the track team. I know more people now, and school’s more fun.” Justin
3. Provide a valuable service.  
“I work in the office one period a day. I like working there, and I feel like I am doing something useful.” Carlos
4. Try something new.  
“One of my teachers told me that I should try out for the school play. I’d never been in a play before, but I ended up getting one of the leads. It turned out to be a lot of fun.” Michael
5. Become a leader.  
“Being a class representative has helped me gain confidence. It’s also helped me develop leadership skills.” James
6. Relieve stress.  
“Soccer practice helps me get rid of a lot of stress. It’s great to be with friends and forget about school for a while.” Katie
7. Develop your skills and talents.  
“I play the violin in orchestra and although I’m not the best musician, I’m getting better – and I have a good time.” Jennifer
8. Have fun.  
“For me, school activities are half the fun of school.” Marisa

All middle schools have some, if not all, of the following: athletic teams, leadership organizations, special interest clubs, and music programs. Students can also usually work as office aides or teacher assistants.

Find out what activities are available at your school and become involved in two or three. You’ll make new friends, gain new skills, and you’ll also have a lot of fun.

If you don’t know what activities are available, or if you need additional information, go to the office or talk to your counselor.

### **Get Involved in Activities Outside of School**

There are lots of wonderful programs outside of school for middle school students (community sports programs, YMCA programs, scouting, church activities, etc.). Middle school students can also do community service work. Volunteering at a nursing home or animal shelter, for example, is a great way to have fun and to also do something that’s important and worthwhile.

While friends and group activities are important, it’s also important to have things that you enjoy doing by yourself. During the next few years, take time to develop some personal skills and hobbies.

Here are just a few things that middle school students can do on their own.

- Start a collection (comic books, rocks, coins, etc.), cook, read, play chess, camp, juggle, knit, fish, dance, shoot hoops, make jewelry, build something (a kite, a model, etc.), take pictures, write stories, play an instrument, sew, draw, hike, garden, exercise, decorate your room, listen to music, take care of a pet, make a WebPage, help an elderly relative or neighbor.

## Step Six

### **Make Good Choices and Decisions**

When you make good choices and decisions, you get the rewards. When you make poor choices and decision, you have to accept the consequences.

Now that you are in middle school, you're going to have more freedom and independence than you've ever had before. Of course, with greater freedom comes greater responsibility. Remember, you are responsible for your actions and for the choices that you make.

#### **The Decision-Making Process**

You will be making lots of decisions during middle school. It is, therefore, important that you have good decision-making skills. When you're faced with a difficult decision, try using the steps below:

1. Figure out what your choices are.
2. Write down the positive and negative things about each choice.
3. Make sure that you have all of the information you need.
4. Consider your choices, and make your decision.

We asked some students about the decisions that middle school students have to make. Here are a few of their responses.

"You have to decide what activities to get involved in. There were a couple of things that I decided not to do at the beginning of the year. But now I hear my friends talking about them, and I wish I would have signed up too." Tyrone

"It's important that you decide to hang out with the right people, and to not give in to peer pressure." Lacy

"If you have a problem you have to decide what to do about it. I was having a problem with math, so I decided to get some help after school. Now I'm getting a B in the class." Anne

#### **Making Good Choices**

During the next few years, you will hear a lot about smoking, drinking, drugs, and sex. Everyone knows that it's harmful and illegal for students in middle school to drink or smoke. Everyone also knows that taking drugs are not only illegal, it's dangerous. As for relationships, middle school students should be very careful about getting into any kind of physical relationship with a member of the opposite sex.

Of course, there are middle school students who drink and smoke. There are also middle school students who do drugs, and some who are sexually active. The students who are involved in these activities have made a choice, and they will have to deal with the consequences. At some point, you may have to decide whether or not you're going to participate in one or more of these activities.

Take time to think about what activities you will, and will not, get involved in. Also, think about what you'll say and do, before you're in a situation where you have to make a quick choice or decision. For example, you should decide that smoking is something that you are not going to do, before someone offers you a cigarette.

Too often young people do things they normally wouldn't do just to go along with the crowd. Many of these students later regret their actions. That's why it's so important for you to think about who you are and who you want to be, before you find yourself in a situation where you're encouraged to do something that you're not sure about.

Don't ever do something that doesn't feel right to you, and don't ever feel that you need to explain yourself. If someone is asking you to do something that you don't want to do, say "No thanks," "No, I don't think so," or "No, I'm not interested." If that doesn't work, tell your friends that you'll see them later, and leave.

Step Seven  
**Deal with Stress, Anger, and Bullies**

Some students feel like they have more stress in middle school, and some feel like they get angry more often. Other students are, unfortunately, faced with students who act like bullies. This section will help you deal with all of these.

**Dealing with Stress**

Whenever you're under a lot of stress, make sure that you get enough sleep, eat right, and get plenty of exercise. (Physical activity can actually reduce stress.) Try to spend time with your family and friends, and talk to them about why you're feeling stressed. Talking is good because it helps you sort things out. Also, try to keep a sense of humor, and take time for those things that have helped you feel calms and relaxed in the past (listening to music, taking a hot bath, reading a good book, etc.)

When you're feeling stressed, try one of the relaxation techniques below:

- 1) Take a deep breath, hold it, and then slowly release it. Do this until you feel your body relax.
- 2) Starting at the top of your head, flex and then relax each part of your body.
- 3) Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being in that place.

**Dealing with Anger**

We all get angry sometimes. However, some people find that they get angry a lot. Other people sometimes get so angry that they think they're going to burst. If you every get so angry that you don't know what to do, try one of the following:

- 1) Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and slowly count to 10 (or 20 or 30).
- 2) Do something physical (take a walk, shoot baskets, kick a soccer ball, lift weights, etc.).
- 3) Talk to a friend, parent, or counselor about why you're angry.

**Dealing with Bullies**

In middle school, you will probably run into a few students who act like jerks. You may also see a few students who are more than jerks – they are bullies.

The best way to deal with a bully is to stay away from him/her. A bully is looking for a reaction, so if you're ever the target of a bully, ignore him/her, or give this person a look that says, "This is really stupid," then walk away.

If you're having a problem with a bully, let your friend know what's going on and ask for their support. You should also tell a parent, counselor, or teacher if a bully ever threatens you, or causes you a problem. If a bully is causing you problems, chances are he/she is also causing problems for other students. If you tell someone what's happening, you are not only taking action to protect yourself, you are making your school a better, safer place for everyone.

Bullies want power. They also like to have an audience. Since bullies are influenced by how other people react, bystanders can help discourage a student from being a bully. Bystanders need to let bullies know that their behavior is "not cool," and that it is not acceptable. Bystanders are the key to stopping students from being bullies.

"Everyone gets teased every once in a while. If you ignore it, it will probably stop." Samantha

"If you're having a problem with a bully, the best way to handle it is to talk to a teacher." James

## Step Eight

### Get Along With Your Parent

*Getting along with your parents will make your middle school years a lot easier and a lot more fun.*

In middle school, you're going to have all sorts of new experiences and challenges. You parents, of course, also face a new challenge. They are now the parents of a middle school student.

During your middle school years, you and your parents will go through different stages, and sometimes you will disagree. For example, you may want more time to hang out with your friends, more freedom, or more privacy than your parents want to give you.

While you may not always agree with your parents, if you do the ten things listed below, you and your parents will probably get along fine these next few years:

1. Understand that your parents love you, and that sometimes when you're out with your friends, they worry about you.
2. Talk to your parents about what's happening in school and about what you and your friends are doing. If you let them in on what's going on in your life, they are less likely to feel like you're hiding things from them. Telling them even little simple things like, "The pizza we had a lunch today was terrible" or "I got a B on my math quiz" can make a big difference.
3. Bring your friends home so that your parents can meet them.
4. Never be disrespectful to your parents.
5. Do well in school.
6. Do chores without complaining.
7. Always tell your parents where you're going and when you'll be home. Check in with them often.
8. If you have done something wrong, don't like about it. Admit what you have done, and accept the consequences. Your parents will probably be a lot more understanding if you tell them the truth.
9. When you and your parents disagree, first try to understand why they feel the way they do. Then, if you believe that what you want is truly reasonable, try to work things out by compromising.
10. Communicate. If there is something that you want or need, or if you have a problem, tell your parents. They aren't mind readers. You have to help them understand what you need or want them to do.

**Hint:** *If you do well in school, your parents are likely to be more understanding about a lot of other things. Studying hard and getting good grades pays off in lots of ways!*

**Hint:** *When you're talking to your parents, try using "I" statements. For example, rather than "You don't trust me," say, "I feel like you don't trust me."*

"When you disagree, try to explain yourself without getting upset or angry." Tyrone

"Treat your parents with respect and listen to their advice – they are usually right." Katie

"Include your parents in what you do and introduce them to your friends." Sarah

"When you go someplace, tell your parents where you are going. If you go someplace different, let them know." James

Step Nine  
**Understand the Social Scene**

*Friends become much more important in middle school.*

As a whole, middle school students are a lot more interested and involved in social activities than elementary students. During these years, there are parties, dances, cliques, boyfriends and girlfriends, and a lot more gossip. Two students may be best friends one day and not speaking the next. Students care about what other students do and wear, and everyone is worried about how they look.

The middle school social scene can be exciting, crazy, and sometimes difficult to deal with.

“Find friends that you have things in common with and who like you for who you are.” Michael

“Go out of your way to be friendly. Talk to people – even to people you doesn’t know.” Carlos

“Don’t do something that isn’t you just to be cool.” Justin

“Be careful about what you say. Once I accused a friend of something. I was wrong and I ended up losing a good friend.” Tasha

“Don’t worry about being ‘popular,’ and don’t get caught up in the drama and dumb fights.” Jennifer

“It’s a lot easier to make friends when you’re in sports or band or something.” Nicholas

“Don’t take people too seriously, and let stuff go.” Erika

“Having a few close friends is better than having lots of friends who don’t really care about you.” Marisa

## Step Ten

### Plan and Prepare for Your Future

Middle school is the perfect time to start thinking about what kind of career you want to have. Of course, before you can begin to choose a career that will be right for you, there are many things that you need to think about. You need to think about what you're good at (abilities), and what you like to do (interests), and what you have a natural talent for (aptitudes). You also need to think about what's important to you (values).

Middle school is a time to discover who you are. Get involved in lots of different activities, develop your skills and abilities, and try new things!

During middle school, also take some time to learn about a variety of careers. Talk to several adults and ask them what they do, what they like about their career, and what they don't like about it, how they got into their career, how they prepared for it, etc. If you find a career that you'd like to learn more about, go to [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco). You'll find information on over 250 of the most popular careers.

Don't worry about finding the perfect career now. Just try to identify one or two career areas that might be a good match for you, and then learn what you can about them. Below are seven career areas, with examples, for you to consider.

**Business** – business manager, salesperson, secretary  
**Health Care** – nurse, doctor, physical therapist  
**High Tech/Computer** – engineer, computer programmer  
**The Arts** – musician, artist, actor  
**Education** – teacher, professor  
**Human Services** – social worker, firefighter  
**Skilled Trades** – auto mechanic, plumber, carpenter

#### Three Fast Growing Career Fields

- 1) **Health Care** – As our population gets older, we need more people working in health care. New technology will also create new careers in the medical field.
- 2) **Education** – As our population grows and we have more school-age children, we need more new teachers.
- 3) **Computers/Technology** – Computers continue to become more and more important in almost every career field.

#### Preparing for a Career

Even though graduation from high school is several years away, it is not too early to start thinking about what you want to do after high school. Most careers today require some sort of education beyond a general high school diploma, so plan to get some additional education after you graduate.

Maybe you already know that you want to go to a four-year college. Maybe you don't have any idea of what you want to do after high school. Even though this isn't a decision that you need to make now, it's a good idea for you to at least know what your choices are.

Below are six different ways that you can prepare for a great career:

1. **High School Career and Technology Programs.** Most high schools offer Career and Technology programs in several different career fields (business, carpentry, automotive, etc.) Students in these programs spend much of their time “learning by doing.” To find out about the programs available in your school district, talk to your counselor.
2. **Four-Year Colleges.** Students who go to a four-year college study a variety of subjects. They also choose one subject (their major) to study in-depth. Students who want to go to a four-year college need to take college prep course, and they need to get very good grades.

3. Community Colleges. Community colleges offer one and two year programs in many different areas (business, nursing, computers, law enforcement, etc.). Students can also start at a community college, and then transfer to a four-year college after a year or two.
4. Career and Trade Schools. Career and trade schools offer short-term training in a wide variety of career fields (cosmetology, electronics, auto mechanics, photography, etc.). While some programs last only a few weeks, others take up to two years to complete.
5. Military. The military trains young men and women so that they can serve and protect our country. The military offers high school graduates free job training in over 2,000 jobs. They also have a number of programs to help students pay for college.
6. Apprenticeships. Apprentices learn their trade through a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training. Apprenticeship programs are considered by many to be the best way to get training in the skilled trades (plumbing, carpentry, electrical, etc.).

*As a middle school student, you are not only preparing for high school,  
you are preparing for your future!*

## **Tips for Students from Students**

“Try to be nice to everyone. If you do this, then you will have a ton of friends.” Alex

“Take your grades seriously, but don’t let your life revolve around an A.” Justin

“Focus on your schoolwork, and if you don’t understand something, ask for help.” Lacy

“Always do your best and set goals for yourself.” Carlos

“Don’t follow the crowd - people will like you better if you’re not afraid to be you.” Tyrone

“Keep up on all of your assignments. If you do this, then you probably get decent grades.” John

“Be organized. You’ll save lots of time, and you won’t always be stressed out because your forgot something.” Katie

“Don’t worry about how popular someone is. If you like them, then hang out with them.” Samantha

“Concentrate on doing well in your classes, and don’t get caught yup in the school drama.” Jennifer

“Do your homework, participate in class, ask questions, and use your time in study hall to study.” Tasha

“Get involved in activities, even if you don’t think you’re that good. You don’t have to be good at something to have fun.” Justin

“Don’t be too hard on yourself. Everyone does stupid things in middle school – just forget about it and move on.” Marisa

“Have fun – middle school goes really fast.” James

## Tips for Parents

Middle school is a time of change. Most middle school students go through several stages and lots of ups and downs. Your child needs your support and guidance during these years.

The tips below will help you guide and advise your child as he/she goes through middle school.

1. At the beginning of each grading period, sit down with your son or daughter, and together set realistic academic goals for each class.
2. Encourage your child to be involved in extracurricular activities, and show your support by attending performances, games, etc.
3. Make sure that your child understands that he/she is expected to be in school, on time, every day.
4. Attend all open houses and parent conferences.
5. Write down the dates that interim/midterm reports and report cards come out, and expect your child to bring them home. If you don't see one, call the school and request a copy.
6. One of the biggest challenges for middle school students is being organized. Make sure that your child has a system for recording assignments, taking notes, keeping his/her backpack organized, etc.
7. Realize that it is your child's responsibility to get homework done, to prepare for tests, and to follow the rules.
8. Work together with the school. Teachers, counselors, and principals are there to help your child get the best education possible.
9. Make sure that your child is not spending too much time on the phone, playing computer games, or watching TV. Set limits.
10. Look for opportunities to praise good grades and extra effort.
11. Make sure that your child is taking the appropriate courses. If you have a question about a course, talk to your child's counselor.
12. Talk to your child about what's happening in school, and be a good listener. If your son or daughter says something about school that concerns you, please remember that what you are hearing is from your child's perspective. If you have a question or concern, don't hesitate to call the school.
13. At the beginning of middle school, explain to your child that he/she will have limited freedoms, and that you will be checking on where he/she is going and with whom. If your son or daughter knows that you are checking, your child will be less likely to do something that you would disapprove of.
14. If you suspect that your child is drinking or using drugs, talk to your son or daughter immediately. If you need help or advice, talk to your child's counselor or to your family doctor.
15. When appropriate, encourage your child to take care of things on his/her own. By doing this, your child will learn independence and gain confidence.
16. If you are trying to change a behavior, first make sure that your child knows exactly what your expectations are. You can then offer reward if your expectations are met, or consequences if they're not. Never take away a positive activity (e.g. sports, choir, scouting) as a consequence.
17. Monitor your child's Internet activity.
18. Make school a top priority. Nothing is more important to your child's future than his/her education.

*If you're concerned about your child's academic performance, talk to your child's counselor.  
A school counselor is an excellent resource for parents, as well as for students.*

## **Tips for Parents from Students**

“Listen, ask questions, and let your children know that they can talk to you.” Jennifer

“Don’t be overprotective, but do ask where your kids are going, and what they are doing.” Carlos

“Make sure that you know how your kids are doing in school, but don’t pressure them too much, and don’t nag.” Katie

“These years are hard, so cut your kids some breaks. Don’t let them be disrespectful though.” Tyrone

“Make sure they do their homework and that their attendance is good – they’ll appreciate it later.” Marisa

“Understand that there is a lot of pressure being put on us in school and that sometimes we make mistakes.” Sarah

“Encourage your kids to get involved in sports, clubs, or something. They’ll like school a lot more.” Justin

“Allow your children to go out and have fun with their friends, but tell them when to be home, and make them check in.” Anne

“Go to your child’s games or concerts or whatever. Sometimes we ask like we don’t care if you go, but we do.” Min

“Middle school is a new experience for your children. Give them a chance to figure things out for themselves.” Chelsi

“Let your kids know that you are there for them.” Nicholas