

# Welcome to Eighth Grade!

Eighth grade is a very important year. Students have tougher classes, a budding social life—and, of course, high school is just around the corner. With all that's going on, eighth graders need their parents' support and guidance.

Your child will learn a great deal this year, but eighth grade is about more than academics. In eighth grade, students are maturing mentally and emotionally—and preparing for the transition to high school.

In this guide you will find information that will help you help your child have a successful eighth grade year. Included in this guide are:

- ▶ Tips to help your child succeed in school.
- ▶ Ways to encourage safe, responsible technology use.
- ▶ Ways to boost your child's self-esteem.
- ▶ Tips on connecting and communicating with your eighth grader.

**Your involvement and support are key to your child's success!**



## Succeeding in the Eighth Grade

### Academic Success

**Here are some ways that you can help your eighth grader succeed in his/her classes.**

#### Improve Organization

- ▶ To help your child keep on top of everything that he/she needs to do, encourage your student to use a planner every day to record assignments, tests, etc.
- ▶ Most eighth graders have lots of papers (homework, handouts, etc.). Help your child set up a system for organizing his/her papers using folders and/or notebooks. Remind your student that papers should never be stuck loose in a book, locker, or backpack.

#### Monitor Progress

- ▶ Monitor early grades to ensure that your child gets off to a good start in his/her classes. Make sure you see all interim/midterm reports and report cards.
- ▶ Encourage your student to speak up if he/she has a question or needs help. If you see your child struggling in a class, contact the teacher. If your child is having a difficult time with several classes or with school in general, talk to your child's counselor.

#### Provide Support

- ▶ It's important for your child to be responsible for his/her own academic progress. Expect your child to complete assignments and study for tests on his/her own, but be available to help.
- ▶ To ensure that everything is going well, talk to your child about what's happening in school and with friends—and be a good listener. Pay attention not only to the words your child uses, but also to your child's body language, attitude, and mood.
- ▶ Provide encouragement and support, and show a genuine interest in what your child is learning.



### Using Technology

**Today's youth are often more tech-savvy than their parents. Young people, however, still need their parents to provide structure and set limits.**

#### Ways to Help at Home

- ▶ Discuss what information is appropriate for social networking sites, and what information is appropriate for your child to view and share online.
- ▶ Have an open dialogue about how much time your child can spend using technology (social media, online games, etc.). Be open to suggestions, but know that you have the final say.
- ▶ If you don't entirely trust your child to be transparent with you about his/her online habits, check out the parental control features on your computer's browser and your child's phone.
- ▶ Discuss the importance of being respectful and kind to others online, and make sure your child understands that when you send a message or photo, *you can never get it back.*
- ▶ 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.

#### Set Times to "Unplug"

Insist that all communication devices be turned off and put in a basket during dinner and other family times.

To ensure that your child gets a good night's sleep and isn't on his/her phone late at night, require that all phones be plugged in for recharging in a central location (e.g. your bedroom) an hour before bedtime each night.



## Growing Up: 8th Grade

**Communicating with middle school students can be difficult, but because it's so important, parents need to make the extra effort.**

### Timing is Important

Be available to listen when your child wants to talk. Also look for times when your child is more likely to be open to conversation (e.g., right after getting home from school, before going to bed).

### Don't Overreact

Middle schoolers often say things for shock value or to "test the waters." In these situations, it's best to just listen and stay calm. ("So, tell me why you want to dye your hair green.") If you consistently have a calm demeanor, your child will be more likely to approach you about more serious topics and concerns.

### Have One-On-One Time

Spend time together doing something you both enjoy, such as cooking, shopping, working on a car, watching a game, or going out for ice cream. These are great ways to spend quality time with your child, and they provide excellent opportunities for conversation.

*"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said." Peter Drucker*



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Support Your Child

# 8th Grade



Parent Involvement Guide

## Building Self-Esteem

**Students with a positive self-image are less influenced by peer pressure and media messages. Here are some ways you can help build your child's self-esteem.**

- ▶ Reassure your child that the physical changes he/she is going through are normal, and help choose clothes that are flattering and in style.
- ▶ Discuss the concept of self-esteem and how this isn't about "being full of yourself." It's liking who you are and not feeling the need to change for anyone else.
- ▶ Talk about how media images of attractiveness are often digitally altered, and how on social media, we often see only images of the joy and happiness in other people's lives—not the full texture of real life.
- ▶ Teach your child the importance of taking the time to step away from life's stresses and do something that brings happiness and calm: taking a jog or a hot bath, listening to music, working on a hobby, etc.
- ▶ Try to relate to your child's concerns and insecurities, even if they seem minor or exaggerated to you. Share how you've dealt with your own insecurities in the past.
- ▶ Help your child find something he/she is good at and enjoys: a musical instrument, sports, art, etc. Encourage your child to pursue his/her interests, and to develop his/her talents.