

APPLETON VILLAGE SCHOOL

Wildcat News



Third Grade
Page 7



Student Leaders
Page 6

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

- 3/6 Grades 3 and 5 to MRC
- 3/6 Wildcat Ambassadors, 5:30-6:30
- 3/11 P/T Conf. sign-up link activated at noon
- 3/13 Grades 3 and 5 to MRC
- 3/14 Grades 3-5 to the Strand
- 3/15 Workshop Day, NO SCHOOL
- 3/18 School Committee Meeting, 5pm
- 3/21 P/T Conf., early release 11:30

PLEASE NOTE:

No students are to be dropped off before 8:10, unless prior arrangements have been made.

It's that time...8th Grade "Baby" Photos Needed!

It's hard to believe yet this current 8th grade class is marching toward their final AVS performance, their Promotion Night. In an attempt to get a head start on the final celebratory slideshow, I am putting out an all-call to 8th-grade families for "Baby" photos. Ideally, each student in the 8th grade would submit 5-6 photos of themselves. As the goal is to showcase each student's unique personality, photos ranging from toddler age to the present day are the best.

Have group photos of members of the class throughout the years? Feel free to share those photos, too!

Photos can be brought in and scanned or submitted via email to holly.billings@fivetowns.net. All photos should be submitted by **Friday, April 14th** at the latest.

Looking forward to seeing each cherished memory.

Holly Billings
Yearbook Coordinator

Health Spotlight: Lice

Head lice can be a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

Who is at risk for getting head lice?

Head lice are found worldwide. In the United States, infestation with head lice is most common among pre-school children attending child care, elementary school children, and the household members of infested children.

Head lice move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly. Head lice are spread by direct contact with the hair of an infested person. Anyone who comes in head-to-head contact with someone who already has head lice is at greatest risk. Spread by contact with clothing (such as hats, scarves, coats) or other personal items (such as combs, brushes, or towels) used by an infested person is uncommon. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

What do head lice look like?

Head lice have three forms: the egg (also called a nit), the nymph, and the adult.



Actual size of the three lice forms compared to a penny. (CDC Photo)

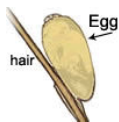


Illustration of egg on a hair shaft. (CDC Photo)

Egg/Nit: Nits are lice eggs laid by the adult female head louse at the base of the hair shaft nearest the scalp. Nits are firmly attached to the hair shaft and are oval-shaped and very small (about the size of a knot in thread) and hard to see. Nits often appear yellow or white although live nits sometimes appear to be the same color as the hair of the infested person. Nits are often confused with dandruff, scabs, or hair spray droplets. Head lice nits usually take about 7-9 days to hatch. Eggs that are likely to hatch are usually located no more than ¼ inch from the base of the hair shaft. Nits located further than ¼ inch from the base of hair shaft may very well be already hatched, non-viable nits, or empty nits or casings. This is difficult to distinguish with the naked eye.

cont. on next page...



Nymph form. (CDC Photo)

Nymph: A nymph is an immature louse that hatches from the nit. A nymph looks like an adult head louse, but is smaller. To live, a nymph must feed on blood. Nymphs mature into adults about 7–12 days after hatching from the nit.



Adult louse. (CDC Photo)

Adult: The fully grown and developed adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has six legs, and is tan to grayish-white in color. Adult head lice may look darker in persons with dark hair than in persons with light hair. To survive, adult head lice must feed on blood. An adult head louse can live about 30 days on a person's head but will die within one or two days if it falls off a person. Adult female head lice are usually larger than males and can lay about six eggs each day.

What are the signs and symptoms of head lice infestation?

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites of the head louse. Especially around the neck.
- Irritability and difficulty sleeping; head lice are most active in the dark.
- Sores on the head caused by scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected with bacteria found on the person's skin.

Treat the infested person(s): Requires using an Over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medication. RID or NIX can be purchased OTC at any pharmacy. It is important to follow the directions provided in each kit.

Children can return to school after appropriate treatment has begun. Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill crawling lice. Continued crawling lice might require a prescription shampoo.

For more information visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/parents.html>

If your child has lice and you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. ~
Nurse Sandy

Dear Appleton Community,
February 5, 2024

At the School Committee meeting held on Tuesday, January 23rd, Principal Susan Stilwell shared her plan to retire at the end of this school year. With gratitude, the School Committee accepted her resignation. After 10 years at the helm, Susan will be sorely missed by the AVS community. The good news is, we still have months to celebrate before her departure becomes a reality.

By telling us early, Susan has given us the opportunity to begin the process right away. This will allow us to advertise for the next 4 weeks, and hopefully have the process completed by early April (see tentative schedule below). The process will include the following:

Visioning Meeting: All AVS community members and Appleton residents are invited to attend a meeting at Appleton Village School on **February, 28 2024 at 5:00 pm** to collaborate and create a list of attributes the community is seeking in our new principal. This list of attributes will help to guide the search committee in deciding which potential candidates to interview.

Search Committee: The Search Committee will be no more than 5 people, consisting of a wide range of stakeholders, for example: a School Committee member, a staff member, a parent, an SU 69 administrator and another interested community member. If you are interested in serving on the Search Committee, please contact Kate Clark at kate.clark@fivetowns.net or 763-3818. If we have too many interested parties, members of the committee will be randomly selected from the categories listed above. *All Search Committee members must attend the Candidate Review and all interviews.*

Candidate Review: The Search Committee will review all of the potential candidates and decide on 4-5 candidates to interview. **March 6, 2024, 3:30-5 pm** at AVS.

Interviews: All interviews will be held between **9 am and 5 pm on Friday, March 15th.**

Finalists: The Search Committee will recommend at least two finalists to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will then check references, hold further interviews and recommend a final candidate to the School Committee.

Appointment: The goal is to have a final candidate approved at the April 29th School Committee meeting.

Principal Search Activity Schedule *(these dates are aspirational and subject to change given extenuating circumstances).*

Date	Activity	Who is Involved	Next Step
January 30, 2024	Job is posted in Serving Schools	Central Office	
February 15, 2024	Job is posted in Village Soup	Central Office	Posting closes on February 26, 2024
Ongoing	Search Committee is formed	Kate Clark	Visioning Meeting
February 28, 2024 5 pm @ AVS	Visioning Meeting	All interested AVS community members, families, staff, stakeholders are welcome to attend.	Orientation; Candidate Reviews
March 6, 2024 3:30-5 pm	Orientation and Candidate Reviews	Search Committee Kate Clark	Interviews
March 7-13	Interviews set	Central Office	
March 15, 9am-5pm	Interviews and recommendation decisions	Search Committee Kate Clark	Recommendations
March 18-29	Final interviews, reference checks, focus groups, contract negotiations	Kate Clark	Final Recommendation to School Committee
April 29, 2024	Appointment at School Committee Meeting	Kate Clark School Committee	New Principal is introduced to the community!

Keep in mind that throughout this process, we will need to be flexible and open minded. Susan is irreplaceable, so we will not be searching for her replacement, but rather a new school leader! A leader who will honor the values and accomplishments of the AVS community in the past and share his/her knowledge and expertise with us to foster continued excellence, collaboration, and community spirit which has served the Appleton community so well for so long.

I am looking forward to hearing from you,

Kate

Student Leaders Show Kindness to The AVS Staff

The week of Valentine's Day, student leaders baked cookies for the entire staff. They also made valentines and handed them out along with the cookies. We heard from several staff members that the cookies were delicious! Thank you to Mr. Pat and Mr. Seth for helping with the baking. Also, thank you to those who sent in chocolate chips or other ingredients for the cookies. What a fun day!



Wanted: Incoming Pre-K and Kindergarten Students for This Fall

If you have a child who will be **four years old** on or before October 15, 2024, they are eligible to join our **Pre-K class**. Please note, the Pre-K class is limited in size. Reserve your spot.

If you have a child who will be **five years old** on or before October 15, 2024, and is not currently enrolled in our Pre-K, they are eligible to join our **Kindergarten class**.

Please contact the school at 785-4504 to place your child's name on our lists. We need full name, date of birth, parent names, address, phone, email, and any special concerns – health or otherwise.

Registration papers will be mailed out in the spring. Thank you for helping spread the word throughout Appleton.

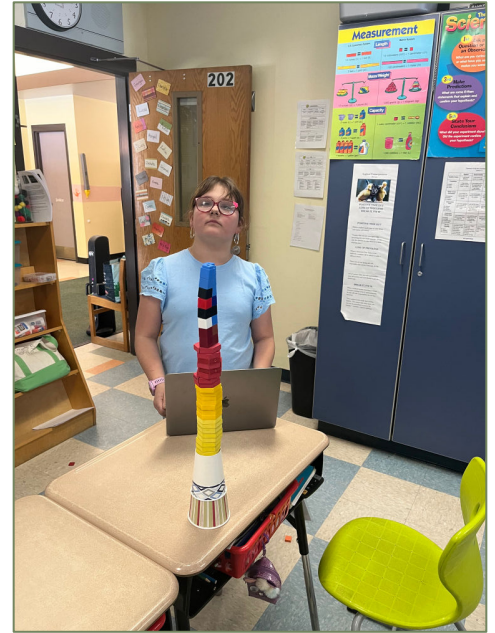
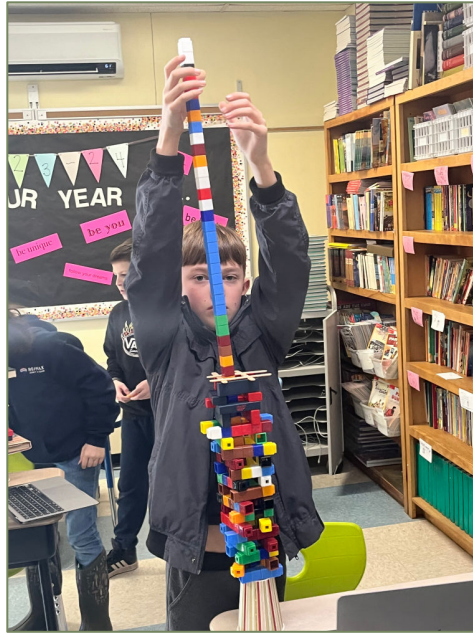
Spring Picture Day

Strawbridge Studios will be here on Wednesday morning, April 3 for Spring Photo Day. All students will be photographed. A proof or portrait package will be sent home for ordering purposes shortly after Picture Day.



Fifth Grade

As part of our engineering unit, fifth graders built towers. Check out the photos! It was so much fun! The Price Is Right in math class was a huge success, before break. Our next unit is fractions!



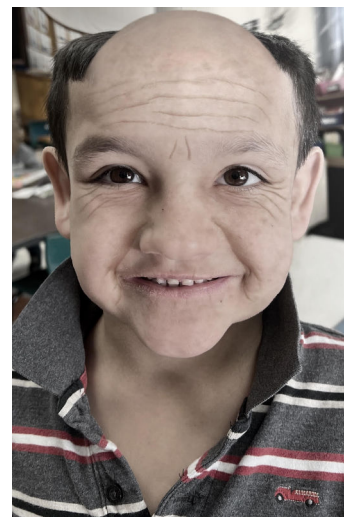
Third Grade News "Weather or Not"

During the second trimester in third grade, we study more about weather and what makes for "extreme weather!" This is also in preparation for our annual third grade Weather Fair, which we will host in March. Third graders get very excited about this opportunity to create and share their knowledge about extreme weather topics like blizzards, hurricanes, and tornadoes!



Kindergarten

Kindergarten had so much fun celebrating the 100th day of school. We made crowns, did math activities, and best of all, we pretended to turn 100 years old with these silly pictures.



Sunrise / Ms. Scott

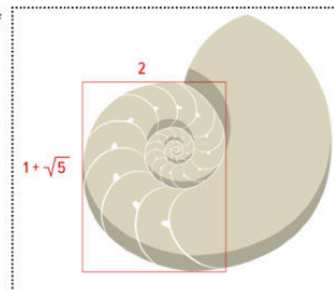
It is so great when children can have their questions answered.

How absolutely wonderful is it when the curiosity of the younger students can be explained to them by the lessons of the older students. The story goes, the third grade class wondered if there were any mathematical implications held within a nautilus shell.



With a picture in hand, a small group approached me to see whether this mystery could be explained. Sure enough, it could and the lesson was to be taught the very next day. Here's the lesson straight from the pages of Module 5, the concept was estimating irrational numbers.

The *golden rectangle* can be seen in the structure of a nautilus shell. The ratio of the longer side length to the shorter side is equal to $\frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2}$. Estimate this value.



Appleton Village School and the Owls Head Transportation Museum want to invite students in grades 3-5 to participate in a free, four-week after school program that will be both engaging and fun!

OHTM will be offering four STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math) activities every Thursday between March 7-28, and on April 4th from 3:00-4:00 p.m. These activities will include Lego Derby Track building, 2D 3D Electricity projects, Drone Delivery, and Parachutes!

The program can host up to 30 participants per week, so please sign up in advance for priority placement in these fantastic programs! FMI please contact your child's homeroom teacher!

SIMPLY SECOND

"100 DAYS SPRINKLED WITH LEARNING AND FUN"!

The second graders celebrated the 100th day of school on February 9th!

We worked together as a classroom family to build a 100 cup structure. We created the structure with each student carefully adding cups in COMPLETE SILENCE! We made sure to focus on each cup and slowly placing each cup to the structure. WAY TO GO SIMPLY SECOND!!!



Parent-Teacher Spring Conferences

Students will be dismissed at 11:30 on March 21st for Parent-Teacher Conferences. Conferences will be done remotely via Zoom. Middle school families: Choose your child's homeroom teacher when scheduling conferences. Our Art, Music, Spanish, G/T, Title I teachers and School Counselor are available for conferences as well. Homeroom teachers are offering only one meeting per student. Teachers will send the ZOOM link to both parents if requested. The sign-up link below will be activated at noon on March 11th. Please use it to sign up for an appointment. On the day of your conference, your teacher will send you a ZOOM link.

https://ptcfast.com/schools/Appleton_Village_School

4th Grade

Fourth graders visited the Camden Snow Bowl once in January and twice in February for the Learn to Ski/Snowboard program. The weather and conditions were wonderful. Lots of learning, progress, and smiles. This is always a great opportunity with free lessons and equipment. Our class also enjoyed celebrating our friendships on Valentine's Day. We have returned from break with positive attitudes and readiness to learn. We will be busy in the coming weeks!!



Middle School

Literary Connections:

6th Grade: Stories, Dialogue & Book Reports

Students in the 6th Grade will be learning how to incorporate dialogue into their Superhero/Supervillain stories. From there they will be moving into the revision and editing stage of the writing process.

Students will also be working on an interactive Book Report for their Choice Reading book to showcase their understanding and connections to various literary elements.

7th Grade: Myths of Old & the Holocaust

Students in the 7th Grade will be moving into the revision and editing stage of the writing process with their Myths of Old Rewrites. Much like the 6th grade, they will be looking for ideal locations to incorporate dialogue that allows the reader to better understand the character actions or moves the plot forward.

Along with this, 7th grade will begin their study into the actions and consequences of hate as they focus on the Holocaust of World War II. This is one of the heaviest topics students will study this year. All materials and discussions are centered around lessons developed by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Students will be learning about this time period with an eye toward all the people who stood up against a bully to protect those who were being persecuted.

For more information on the Holocaust check out the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website at: ushmm.org.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this unit and the materials studied, please reach out to me, Holly Billings at holly.billings@fivetowns.net anytime.

8th Grade: Shakespeare & the Civil Rights Movement

Students in the 8th grade focused on the words of Shakespeare before the break, analyzing one of his well-known sonnets, "*Sonnet 18*". Their analysis helped them determine whether the poem was one of enduring love or if it was a more egotistical approach. This week, students will be using conversation hearts to respond to the bard based on their analysis. From the rough drafts already discussed, these will be fun to read!

From there, 8th grade will be moving forward in determining what lengths people might go to fight for their rights. We will be using this historical time period to explore the various leaders and activists who spoke up and took action. Students will look to these leaders as they gear up for their Leaders of Change speeches in the Spring where the leaders of yesterday inspired the leaders of tomorrow.

Wildcat Scratch and Student Recognition**Goals for PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies):**

- Acknowledges behaviors that align with communicated school-wide CORE values of Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, and Kindness
- Acknowledges established and communicated classroom expectations
- Encourages a positive and supportive learning environment
- Builds and supports positive social interactions among students and staff

As a PBIS school, AVS strives to recognize students from PK up through to 8th grade for positive behavior reflecting the words and actions of a community filled with engaged learners. In the middle school, students earn Wildcat Scratch. Wildcat Scratch is a means to tangibly recognize student behavior and actions in and out of the classroom. Behaviors coinciding with the goals above are recognized with one or more Wildcat Scratch. Students then have the opportunity to “purchase” items with their Wildcat Scratch earnings. Options are generated via student suggestions and interests and vary from trimester to trimester. Options move from individual purchases to collaborative, encouraging students to work together toward a common goal.

Wildcat Scratch for the Win!

Students in the 7th grade triumphantly pooled their Wildcat Scratch in the minutes before dismissal on Friday the 16th to earn the biggest incentive of all to date, the Community Chest prize of a class choice movie. Students collaboratively came together, counting up their individual stashes of Wildcat Scratch, contributing their Wildcat Scratch to earn an incentive for their entire class. There were smiles all around the group as they realized they had attained what they had been working so hard to earn. This week, students will discuss and determine a movie that meets the following pre-discussed criteria: 1. It must be school appropriate via CommonSense Media ratings and 2. Allow students to demonstrate their ELA skills in a follow-up activity.

Way to go, 7th Grade!

New Red Cross Babysitter Training Class Begins March 14

Five Town CSD Adult Education is offering a new babysitting class for youths ages 11-15. The primary purpose of the Babysitter’s Training course is to provide youth who are planning to babysit with the knowledge and skills necessary to give care safely and responsibly for children and infants, such as diapering, bottle- and spoon-feeding, age-appropriate games, activities, and dealing with uncooperative children. This training will help participants to develop leadership skills and become better babysitters. They will learn how to build a babysitting business, keep themselves and others safe, and learn about basic childcare and basic first aid. The course meets at Camden Hills Regional High School from 4:00-7:00 PM on March 14, 21, and 28. Sig up online here: <https://fivetowns.coursestorm.com/course/babysitter-training-american-red-cross?search=babysitting> or call the office at 236-7803.

APPLETON VILLAGE SCHOOL



**BASKETBALL
FUNDRAISER**

AVS Staff

VS

8th Grade

WED. MARCH 27, 2024

**CONCESSIONS - 50/50 RAFFLE
\$1 FOR ONE POINT EITHER TEAM**

DOORS OPEN 5PM - TIPOFF AT 5:30

All money raised will go to the 8th grade class trip

FOR MORE INFORMATION - jessica.davis@fivetowns.net

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children's
MUSEUM + THEATRE
 of maine

March 16 at 11am

Live on stage!

Ages 5 and up

Based on E. B. White's Newbery Honor Book,
 this play is a tender story of friendship,
 love, life, and loss.



Strand Family Series

Pay-What-You-Can Tickets: \$0-20

207.594.0070
 RocklandStrand.com





10 Tips for Adults

DATES: Thursdays, March 14 and 21
TIME: 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Rockland Public Library
COST: FREE



Join Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators from Knox County for this 2-week class that will focus on the following themes: healthy eating; increasing consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein; food resource management; and providing strategies for participants to stretch their food dollars. **Taste tests and lots of freebies will be provided at each class!**

REGISTER BY: Tuesday, March 12 at penbayandwaldo.coursestorm.com or 301-3950

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. Maine SNAP-Ed is funded by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which is administered by the Office for Family Independence (OFI) at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and implemented statewide by the University of New England (UNE) through contracts with local community organizations. Maine SNAP-Ed educates families experiencing low income on low-cost healthy eating and active lifestyles. Contact mainesnap-ed@une.edu or 207-221-4560 for more information.



Pen Bay Medical Center
MaineHealth



10 Tips for Adults

DATES: Tuesdays, March 19 - April 9
TIME: 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Belfast Area High School
COST: FREE

Join Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators from Waldo County for this 4-week class that will focus on the following themes: healthy eating; increasing consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein; food resource management; and providing strategies for participants to stretch their food dollars. **Taste tests and giveaways will be provided at each class!**

REGISTER BY: Tuesday, March 12 at penbayandwaldo.coursestorm.com or 301-3950

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. Maine SNAP-Ed is funded by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which is administered by the Office for Family Independence (OFI) at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and implemented statewide by the University of New England (UNE) through contracts with local community organizations. Maine SNAP-Ed educates families experiencing low income on low-cost healthy eating and active lifestyles. Contact mainesnap-ed@une.edu or 207-221-4560 for more information.



Waldo County General Hospital
MaineHealth



Happy Wanderers Guided Hikes

Join the Community Health team partnering with Coastal Mountains Land Trust to get outdoors and stay active with guided hikes this year. This hike is 2 miles and the level is easy. All levels are welcome; however, please leave pets at home. This group meets at trailheads throughout Knox and Waldo counties on the first Thursday of each month.

DATE: Thursday, March 7

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION:
Ducktrap Preserve, Lincolnville

COST: Free

Register online at penbayandwaldo.coursestorm.com or call 301-3950



Tai Chi for Wellness

Tai Chi is a low-impact exercise that is easy on the joints and good for your whole body. Join instructor Adrienne Gallant, certified in Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention, for this six-session beginner-level class to increase your strength, flexibility, balance and overall sense of well-being. No previous Tai Chi experience required. Registration is required.

LOCATION:
Rockland Public Library,
Community Room

DATES: Tuesdays,
March 12 - April 16

TIME: 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

COST: FREE

REGISTRATION:
penbayandwaldo.coursestorm.com or
call 301-3950





Five Town Little League 2024 Registration is NOW OPEN!



Five Town Little League registration for the 2024 season is now open for all players ages 5 – 12!

Please visit the FTLL website today to sign up for the season, as well as the below indoor clinics and baseball/softball major evaluations at The Pitch in Warren.

Please note that signing up for the clinics or evaluations will NOT register your player for the season, that must be done separately.

REGISTER FOR INDOOR CLINICS, EVALUATIONS AND THE 2024 SEASON TODAY AT:

www.fivetownlittleleague.org

TUESDAY CLINICS (6-7pm for 7-9 year olds and 7-8pm for 10-12 year olds):

2/27 - Baseball
3/5 - Softball
3/12 - Baseball
3/19 - Softball
3/26 - Baseball

SATURDAY CLINICS (12:30-1:30pm for 7-9 year olds and 1:30-2:30pm for 10-12 year olds):

3/2 - Softball
3/9 - Baseball
3/16 - Softball
3/23 - Baseball
3/30 - Softball

EVALUATIONS (returning Major players do NOT need to attend, this is for NEW players only)

4/6 - 12:30-2:00pm - Softball
4/6 - 2:00-3:30pm - Baseball

Please email mainefivetownlittleleague@gmail.com with any questions.
You can also follow us on Facebook at Five Town Little League. Let's play ball!

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School
 Appleton Village School



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

February 2024

Self-regulation skills help your child stay focused and achieve

Research shows that learning to control impulses and work toward goals improves children's success in school. With family support, even young children can learn these key self-regulation skills.

To improve your elementary schooler's ability to self-regulate:

- **Help your child set goals** that are tough but achievable, like reading a whole chapter book or learning to jump rope. Ask your child to picture what it will be like to reach the goal. Then, have your child imagine possible obstacles and ways to overcome them. Your child might ask for help with unfamiliar words in the book or practice jumping rope on grass so tripping and falling won't hurt.
- **Coach your child before heading into situations** where self-control may be a challenge. Say things like, "We have to run errands today. What can you do if you feel frustrated?" Together, brainstorm solutions, like playing I Spy in the grocery store or stacking coins at the laundromat.
- **Praise your child for showing self-control.** Be specific so your student can repeat the behavior in the future. You might say, "I know you really wanted pizza, but you ate your chicken without complaining," or "I noticed you practiced your addition facts every day this week—way to go!"



Source: University of Zurich, "Early self-regulation boosts children's educational success," ScienceDaily.



Take steps to ensure safety online

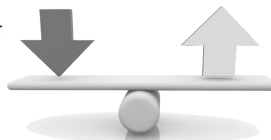
Students' digital safety is a growing concern for elementary school teachers and families. Fortunately, adults can protect children by supervising their online activities and teaching them to make positive choices. At home, you can:

- **Filter out** inappropriate content. Keep devices where you can see them, and use parental controls. Talk with your child regularly about what is and isn't allowed.
- **Keep young children** off social media. More than a quarter of teens report using social media before meeting network age requirements. Insist on waiting until at least the minimum age.
- **Monitor online gaming.** Cyberbullying is on the rise among gamers. Playing only with people your child knows and trusts in real life reduces the risk. Tell your child to report cyberbullying to you.
- **Discuss online privacy.** Teach your child never to share full names, passwords, etc.

Source: F. Martin and others, "Teacher and School Concerns and Actions on Elementary School Children Digital Safety," TechTrends, AECT.

Discuss the pros and cons

Children's experiences with the world are limited, so it's hard for them to imagine the possible results of their actions. So even if your child knows whether an action is right or wrong, consider the pros and cons together. What could happen in the short and long term? After your talk, your child will understand *why* the right choice is right.



Set expectations that fit

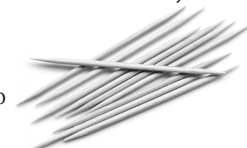
High family expectations for students are linked to high outcomes. But to be motivating, your expectations for your child also need to be realistic. Consider these questions when setting expectations:

- **Are they geared to my child?** Take your child's development, personality and maturity into account.
- **Are they important?** Choose a few expectations that focus on school success behaviors you want your child to develop, such as effort and responsibility.
- **Are they easy to understand?** State your expectations in clear terms.

Source: M. Pinquart & M. Ebeling, M., "Parental educational expectations and academic achievement in children and adolescents—A meta-analysis," Educational Psychology Review.

Play a math strategy game

A box of toothpicks is all you need to play a game that helps your child practice math reasoning. To play Last One Wins, lay 12 toothpicks on the table. Take turns with your child to remove one or two toothpicks. The player who takes the last toothpick wins. (A winning strategy is to try to leave three toothpicks on the table to guarantee a win on your next turn.)



Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

February 2024

Q&A How can I stop my child from turning into a bully?

Q: Last year, my child was picked on by a group of kids in school and was miserable. So I was shocked when the teacher told me that my fifth grader is now part of a group who is being mean to another child. How can I stop this?



A: Watching your child be mean can be just as painful as watching your child be a target of nastiness. Unfortunately, your situation is not uncommon, particularly among families of girls at this age. And you are right, it's essential to take action.

Here are some things to do:

- **Make things clear to your child.** Say that you can appreciate that it feels good to be part of a group. However, just as it was wrong for others to be mean to your child last year, it is wrong for your student to do it now. Remind your child how it felt to be teased—and that it is important to take a stand against such behavior.
- **Find out the school's policies** about bullying and review them with your child. Your student may face consequences if this behavior continues.
- **Talk with the teacher.** Ask what the classroom rules are about teasing and exclusion. Explain what you are doing at home, and work together to redirect your child's focus onto learning—and away from mean behavior.

Parent Quiz

Are you positive about math?

Research shows that family attitudes can affect how well students do in math. Kids do better when their families show that math is useful, interesting and fun. Is your math attitude helping your child? Answer yes or no below:

1. **Do you express** confidence that your child can do well in math?
2. **Do you avoid** saying things like "Math is so hard. I hated it, too"? Instead, say, "This is a challenge, but I know you can figure it out."
3. **Do you play** math games with your child?
4. **Do you talk** with your child about the ways you use math in your daily life?
5. **Do you create** opportunities for your child to use math,

such as looking for bargains at the grocery store?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are showing that you think math is worth learning. For each no, try that idea.

"Math is like going to the gym for your brain. It sharpens your mind."

—Danica McCellar

Reinforce responsibility

So many student success factors—effort, timeliness, diligence, etc.—are tied to responsibility. To raise a responsible student:

- **Assign meaningful tasks**, such as getting up to an alarm, caring for pets or plants, seeing jobs through by tidying up afterwards, etc.
- **Let your child make decisions** and learn from consequences of poor choices.
- **Teach your child about budgeting** and saving, as well as spending.
- **Adjust rules and limits** as your child shows more responsibility.

Encourage practice tests

Studies show that when students practice recalling information, it helps them remember it better. That's why taking practice tests is an effective way to study. Your child can take advantage of this study strategy:

- **In class.** Taking quizzes is an opportunity to practice recalling the material.
- **In groups.** Your child might invite a friend or two over to study and quiz one another. Or you can call out questions.
- **Independently.** Help your child look over notes, reading and handouts and create questions the teacher might ask. Then, your child can answer them.

Send a confidence boost

Give your child's self-confidence a boost this Valentine's Day by sending a valentine fan letter. Praise your student's efforts in school in a note, poem or silly riddle. Then, send it through the post office or tuck it somewhere your child will be sure to find it. Sign it, "From your biggest fan."



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Helping Students Learn[®]

MIDDLE SCHOOL

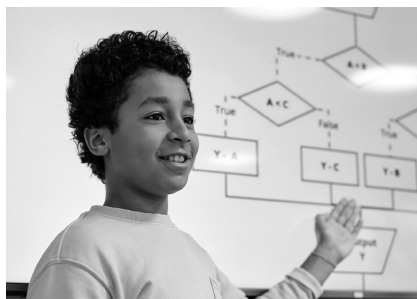
Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School
 Appleton Village School



February 2024

Teach your child that learning is what really counts in school

Grades matter. But ultimately, it's the learning students do that prepares them for higher-level classes—and life. To help your child understand that the real goal of education is learning, have conversations together about school that go far beyond the grade on the most recent assignment.



Ask your child about:

- **Non-grade accomplishments.** How did your middle schooler handle the challenging question on the science assignment? What was it like to give a presentation in front of the whole class?
- **Ideas and experiences** that have changed your child's way of thinking. Share experiences from your life that have had a similar effect on you.
- **Materials your student is reading.** What questions do the books, articles and texts raise? Can your child relate to the fictional characters? Does any current reading remind your child of previous reading?
- **A recent test.** Did it seem like an effective way to measure what your child has learned about the topic? What else does your student wish had been covered?

Questions like these show that you care what your middle schooler is thinking and learning about, and that education is about much more than test scores and grades.



Revive your child's drive to learn

It's easy for students to lose momentum when they feel like they have been doing the same things forever and summer is still months away. To help your middle schooler get over a mid-year slump:

- **Think short-term.** The last thing your child wants to hear is "It will be June before you know it." Instead, try, "It's Thursday. Just one more quiz and you can relax on the weekend."
- **Remind your child** of previous successes. Say things like, "Yes, this is a demanding class. But you did so well on the last test because of all the study time you put in."
- **Make an ordinary day** special. "I got the ingredients for your favorite dinner. Finish your schoolwork and then come help me make it."
- **Suggest helping others.** Could your child tutor another student, or set up a study group and recruit several classmates?

I know you can do that again on the next one."

Encourage daily exercise

Studies show that students who get regular exercise perform better in school than those who don't. Daily exercise can:

- **Help** your child stay alert.
- **Increase** your child's stamina.
- **Support** your child's well-being.
- **Reinforce** school success skills, such as diligence, self-control and practice.



Source: A. Barbosa and others, "Physical Activity and Academic Achievement: An Umbrella Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Think about what works

Middle schoolers often admire others who seem to succeed without effort. So being praised for working hard may feel like a put down to them. Instead, help your child notice improvement and think about specific things that have led to it. If something goes wrong, help your child brainstorm what can be learned from it.



Rule out substance abuse

To help prevent substance abuse, make it unmistakably clear that it is not OK for your child to use drugs or alcohol. Provide answers to questions kids often have, like:

- **If drinking is so bad,** why do adults do it? Adults can safely consume limited amounts of alcohol. There is no safe amount for a growing brain.
- **Can trying it once** really hurt? Studies show that young brains are especially vulnerable to addiction. And some drugs, like fentanyl, can kill in tiny amounts.
- **Why is it a big deal** as long as no one is driving? Alcohol and drug use is illegal for middle schoolers. Use can lead to an arrest record, suspension or expulsion.

Helping Students Learn[®]

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

February 2024

Q&A How can I help with math that I'm not good at?

Q: I never got very far with math when I was in school. Now my middle schooler is struggling with math assignments I don't really understand. How can I help?

A: There are several effective ways to support your child's efforts with math homework—even if you don't know how to solve the problems. Here's are just a few:



- **Model a positive attitude.** Studies show that parents' attitudes about math have a direct effect on their children's achievement in the subject. So instead of saying things like, "I didn't like math, either," try, "That looks tough, but I bet you can figure it out. Then it'll get easier."
- **Ask your child to explain** the steps for solving a type of problem that's proving difficult. While talking, kids often realize they forgot a step.
- **Suggest that your child write** down each step next to the problem (subtracted 3 from both sides of the equation, etc.). Then your child can show the work to the teacher. If the final answer is wrong, the teacher will be able to see and explain where your student went off track.
- **Discuss all the ways you use math** during your day. Whether you are managing your finances, doubling a recipe or doing math on the job, help your child see how necessary math is to life beyond school.

Parent Quiz **Q** Are you encouraging concentration?

Is your child easily distracted when doing schoolwork? Maintaining concentration can be a challenge for middle schoolers. Are you helping your child stay focused? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you say *no*** to multitasking? Have your child turn off or put away devices and items not needed for schoolwork.
2. **Do you recommend** that your child set goals for each study session?
4. **Do you suggest** that your child jot down distracting thoughts and save them to think about after schoolwork is complete?
5. **Do you avoid** interrupting when your child is working?
5. **Do you praise** your child for persisting and seeing tasks through?

How well are you doing?
More yes answers mean you are helping your student concentrate on learning. For each no, try that idea.

*"Focus is a matter of deciding what things you're not going to do."
 —John Carmack*

Foster teamwork skills at family meetings

Family meetings are an effective way to help your child learn to communicate, listen, cooperate and solve problems with others. For productive meetings:

- **Meet at the same time** every week and keep meetings brief.
- **Set ground rules**, such as "no devices" and "everyone gets a chance to talk."
- **Highlight family members'** accomplishments and positive news.
- **Brainstorm solutions** to family members' concerns.
- **Discuss expectations** and weekly goals.

After a few meetings, have family members take turns being the meeting leader.

Instill smart digital habits

Adopting several habits will help your child keep the digital world and the real world in balance. Encourage your middle schooler to:

- **Talk to friends** and family face to face.
- **Try to find answers** independently before asking a digital assistant.
- **Wait 24 hours** before responding to a text or post that makes your child mad.
- **Face boring situations** without reaching for a phone.

Source: L. Kolb, "6 Ways to Help Students Manage Their Smartphones," ISTE.

Let yourself be wowed

When learning seems exciting, students are motivated to do more of it. So when your child tells you about what is going on in a class, respond with interest. A fact or concept may not be new to you, but if it's new to your child, be enthusiastic. "Your science teacher froze a rose in liquid nitrogen and then shattered it? How cool!"



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