

KEEPING YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ON A PATH TO GRADUATION

Middle school children are ready for more opportunities to build independence as they move towards graduation. The middle school years are the launching pad for a high school education that enables all children to obtain the schooling and/or career training they will need to become successful adults. Parents play an important role in the successful outcomes of middle school children.



What can you do to help your middle schooler stay on a path towards graduation?

- **Make sure your child attends school regularly** and is on time and in school every day.
- **Don't ignore misbehavior and poor conduct** as these may be signs that your child is disengaging from school.
- **Monitor grades and course performance.** If they are struggling, schedule a meeting with their teacher to explore ways to support their success. Set high expectations for your child and remember that some children may benefit from tutoring and extra academic assistance to help them.
- **Attend parent-teacher conferences** and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings; work with teachers to understand and support goals and expectations for your child.
- **Talk to your child about school.** Find out what they are doing in school and what they are learning on a daily basis.
- **Listen to your child** and teach them to advocate for themselves. Help them build the confidence to ask for help when they need it.
- **Stay involved with school.** This is the best way to know how and what your child is doing at school.
- **Encourage participation in extra-curricular activities.** Children who are involved in sports, clubs, camps, and other school activities are more likely to want to stay in school.
- **Look for signs of bullying, learning challenges, mental health or medical concerns** that may be reasons for your child's academic difficulties or dissatisfaction with school. Challenges such as bullying, learning differences, or mental and medical issues can affect their well-being and performance in school.
- **If your child has an individualized education program (IEP),** make sure they have access to the general curriculum. Their IEP goals should support progress toward a high school diploma and future opportunities. These opportunities can include dual enrollment, enrollment in Pathways, internships, apprenticeships, and receiving credentials through the technical college while still in high school.
- **Ensure your child has access to and is using** the accommodations and assistive technology written in their Section 504 plan or IEP to support their success in school.
- **Encourage your child to take medications as prescribed and to live a healthy lifestyle** that includes a healthy diet, exercise, and appropriate amounts of sleep.
- **Encourage your child to practice self-awareness** by helping them to understand how their disability impacts their learning and daily life. Encourage them to recognize their strengths and identify the supports needed to succeed.
- **Encourage your child to build self-advocacy skills** by helping them practice how to express their needs and ask for the support necessary to succeed.



Examples of Practical Ways to Support Your Child in Developing Independence

What can you do?	How can you do it?
Offer choices <i>with clear boundaries</i> .	• Choose classes, electives, or specials. • Choose extracurricular activities (camps, clubs, sports). • Help your child create a balanced daily schedule that includes time for homework, chores, and recreational activities.
Talk through the potential results of choices (positive and negative)	• When your child makes a choice, discuss the result of that choice and whether they should have done anything differently. Encourage your child to make choices in daily activities (items for snack, spending money, clothing choices).
Help your child understand what they need to keep their body safe.	• Teach your child about their personal medication names, doses, and frequency, and how to safely share medical information. • Support social media safety through close supervision of online activities.
Allow your child to attend and encourage their participation in IEP Team meetings and parent-teacher conferences.	• Before and during IEP Team meetings or parent-teacher conferences, ask your child questions related to their education. • Support your child to actively participate in the IEP discussion. Be sure your child discusses their strengths, preferences, and interests. • Review accommodations, goals, and progress with your child regularly. Have your child discuss the effectiveness of the supports and accommodations written in the IEP or 504 plan.

Where to go for more information:

Parent to Parent of Georgia 770-451-5484 or 800-229-2038 or www.p2pga.org

Georgia Department of Education, Division for Exceptional Children: <https://gadoe.org/special-education/>

Special Education Help Desk: 404-656-3963 or SPEDHelpdesk@doe.k12.ga.us

Graduation Requirements

<https://apps.gadoe.org/SBOE/SBOE%20Rules/160-4-2-.48.pdf#search=graduation>

Career, Technical and Agricultural Education: <https://gadoe.org/ctae>

Additional resources: Contact the Special Education Director for your school system.

Credits:

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), PACER Center, US Department of Education (Ed.gov)

