

# Upper Elementary Parent Guidebook

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Transition to the Upper Elementary Grades ..... | 2  |
| School Basics .....                                 | 3  |
| Help Your Child Succeed .....                       | 7  |
| Work with Your School .....                         | 14 |
| Facts and Tips for Parents .....                    | 17 |
| Tips for the Parents of Athletes .....              | 27 |
| Career Exploration .....                            | 28 |
| Looking Ahead to Middle School .....                | 30 |

*“It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings.” Ann Landers*

For preview purposes only

## School Websites

Most school districts have websites with links to the schools in their district. School websites contain calendar information, school news, and classroom web pages. Many of these sites also provide teacher contact information.

Some classroom web pages provide links where you can check grades, confirm homework assignments, and obtain information on classroom projects. Visiting your school's website is a great way to keep up with what's going on at your school.

## Activities

In the upper elementary grades, schools often have clubs, organizations, and special groups that students can join. For example, students may be able to be in chorus, band or orchestra, play a sport, or be a member of the safety patrol or student council. Community centers and local organizations also offer music and sports programs, outdoor activities, art classes, and educational programs.



Studies have shown that students who are involved in extracurricular activities enjoy school more and do better academically. Encourage your child to participate in one or two activities. Your child will make new friends, gain new skills, and have fun in the process.

*It's good for students to be involved in activities; however, sometimes I see students who have too many scheduled activities. These students are often stressed out and they're not enjoying school or their activities as much as they should. Quality is much more important than quantity."*

*Kathi Miller, counselor*

*While group activities are important, it's also important for children to have activities that they enjoy doing by themselves. During the next few years, encourage your child to develop some personal hobbies. Help your child learn how to cook, play an instrument, juggle, make jewelry, take pictures, garden, knit, build something, or make a web page.*

- ▶ Students must learn to be responsible for keeping track of their own assignments, completing their assignments accurately, and turning their assignments in on time. *Parents need to make homework their child's responsibility.*
- ▶ If homework assignments seems excessive, or if your child consistently struggles with homework, contact your child's teacher and express your concerns. Work with the teacher to ensure that homework doesn't become a problem.
- ▶ If your child is not completing his/her homework, first make sure that the homework isn't too difficult or that there isn't some problem with the class. Then come up with a plan in which the completion of homework becomes your child's responsibility, and if it's not completed, your child's problem.
- ▶ In the upper elementary grades, students are often required to do group projects. While these projects are usually fun, if some group members don't do their part, students sometimes get frustrated. If your child expresses frustration over a group project, explain how important it is to be able to work as part of a group. Give examples of how you must work as part of a group at your job, in your church, community, and family.
- ▶ Encourage your child to use any "free time" during the school day to get started on homework. Students who use class time wisely have much less work to do at home.
- ▶ If your child has a tendency to rush through homework in order to get it done, insist that you look over all completed homework.



*Try to always be positive and encouraging about school and homework!*

## **Encourage independent problem solving**

Parents need to know what's going on at school, and they need to monitor their child's academic progress. It is, however, important for students to learn how to solve their own problems and take care of their own affairs.

Being able to get their questions answered and their problems resolved helps students gain confidence and become more independent. It also gives them a sense of empowerment. In the upper elementary grades, most problems can be resolved and most questions answered just by going to the right office or by talking to the right person. Whenever your child has a question or problem, try to help your child figure out how to take care of it on his/her own.

You want your child to become more independent; however, it's very important for your child to know that you are available to help whenever you're needed.



## **Promote active learning**

Many of your child's early school experiences involved quiet learning activities such as reading, writing, and doing homework. Although quiet learning is still a large part of your child's day, in the upper elementary grades, your child will be encouraged to become a more active learner.

Active learning involves problem solving, exploring personal interests, and asking and answering questions. Participating in team sports and clubs, visiting museums, and playing a musical instrument are all activities that support active learning.

There are many ways that you can promote active learning at home. Spend time listening to and talking with your child. Discuss current events, movies, music, and TV shows. Involve your child in family discussions and ask for your child's input. Play games such as Scrabble, checkers, and chess. Turn daily activities such as meal preparation into learning experiences, and involve your child in family projects.

Active learning pursuits will help your child grow and develop intellectually. These activities will also help your child be more successful in school.

## SUMMARY

# Help Your Child Succeed

- ▶ Provide school supplies and a place to study
- ▶ Help set academic goals
- ▶ Insist on daily attendance
- ▶ Attend all parent programs
- ▶ Participate in parent-teacher groups
- ▶ Use rewards and consequences to encourage change
- ▶ Encourage a healthy lifestyle
- ▶ Help improve organizational skills
- ▶ Monitor homework
- ▶ Encourage independent problem solving
- ▶ Promote active learning



*“Studies have shown that when families eat dinner together, children do better in school and are less likely to get in trouble. Turn the TV off during dinner and talk about your day. It’s a great time for families to reconnect.” Bob Arnette, counselor*

## Parent-Teacher Conference Discussion Topics and Questions

- ▶ **Homework** - Is my child's homework completed thoroughly, accurately, and on time?
- ▶ **Class Participation** - Does my child ask questions, volunteer answers, and participate in discussions?
- ▶ **Organization** - Does my child seem organized?  
Does my child come to class prepared?
- ▶ **Academic Success** - How is my child doing? Is my child working up to his/her potential? Does my child have the ability to succeed in all his/her classes?
- ▶ **Classroom Time Management** - Does my child use class time wisely?
- ▶ **Attitude** - Does my child have a positive approach to learning? Does he/she appear to be confident? What type of attitude does my child display in class? Does my child ever seem uncertain or anxious?
- ▶ **Focus** - Does my child pay attention in class?
- ▶ **Social Adjustment** - Is my child respectful and courteous to teachers and classmates? Does my child appear to get along well with the other students?
- ▶ **Strengths and Weaknesses** - What are my child's strengths? Which skills need more work?
- ▶ **Additional Comments** - Do you have any advice or suggestions for me or my child? What is the best way for me to contact you if I have a question or concern in the future?



## Facts and Tips for Parents

*These facts and tips will help you guide and support your child through the upper elementary grades.*

### Understanding the changes

Students in the upper elementary grades can sometimes challenge and frustrate even the most patient and caring parents. However, when parents take a look at the changes their children are going through, it's much easier to understand why they act the way they do.

### Physical Changes

Students in the upper elementary grades are on the edge of puberty. Because students mature at different rates, students between the ages of 9 and 12 come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Students who start to go through puberty before they leave elementary school often feel self-conscious or embarrassed by the changes in their bodies. They may find that different parts of their bodies are changing and growing at different times and at different rates. A young person's arms or legs, for example, may suddenly seem out of proportion. Students who are growing and maturing at a slower rate than their peers may experience similar insecurities. *Every child is an individual who will grow and develop at his/her own rate.*

Regardless of the rate of development, parents can expect that the physical changes and the emergence of hormones will sometimes leave their child feeling tired, achy, and just plain cranky.

Parents can help their children develop a positive self-image by teaching them about personal hygiene, helping them choose clothes that are stylish and flattering, and by reassuring them that all of the changes they're going through are normal.

Most importantly, parents need to reassure their children that they look great.

## Intellectual Changes

Students in the upper elementary grades are ready to explore the world and learn about life. They are also beginning to think more abstractly. Students this age have a strong sense of what's fair and they can handle more complex intellectual tasks.

Parents can help their children develop intellectually by discussing serious topics with them, by giving them opportunities to express their opinions, and by showing respect for their ideas.

Students this age are better able to process information and make judgements. This is therefore a good time to help children develop their decision-making skills. Parents can help their children learn how to make good decisions and choices by giving them increasing opportunities to make their own decisions (when to do homework, what clothes to wear, what sport to play, etc.). Parents should encourage their children to look at the pros and cons of each choice, and to also consider the consequences of their choices and decisions.

By allowing children to make small “safe” decisions, parents are helping their children develop the skills they will need to make the bigger, more important decisions later.



*“There are two great things that you can give your children: one is roots, the other is wings.” Hodding Carter, author*

## Be aware and be informed

Extracurricular and social activities generally increase for students in the upper elementary grades. A whole new world opens up as your child ventures out to attend school functions, sleepovers, and birthday parties. With more exposure to the outside world, it's important for you to be aware of what effect these outside influences may have on your child's development.

- ▶ Friends greatly influence your child's choices. It is, therefore, important that you know who your child is spending time with. Invite your child's friends into your home and get to know them. Also, be available to drive them to various activities. You'll learn a great deal just by listening to them talk.
- ▶ Before giving permission for your child to attend a sleepover, birthday party, or play date, talk with the host parent. Find out who will be there and what kind of activities are planned.
- ▶ Know what kinds of music your child is listening to, what videos and TV shows your child is watching, and which video games he/she is playing. Also know where your child is going online. Students need a certain amount of freedom; however, they still need their parents to provide guidelines and limits.
- ▶ It is never too early to talk to your child about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, and smoking. *Make sure that your child knows where you stand on these issues.*

