

## Common Seventh- and Eighth-Grade Milestones

Upper middle-schoolers—students in Grades 7 and 8—are at a critical point in their education. Your middle-schooler’s skills as a reader, writer, and thinker are beginning to take on more mature form and substance, just as your child is gaining social and emotional skills and self-awareness as a global citizen. By fostering your child’s literacy, you also give him or her vital tools for developing empathy and resilience, indispensable tools for career and citizenship.

### Middle-School Literacy Matters

Supporting your child’s literacy development can have a powerful impact on academics, and is also critical for wellness during times of stress.

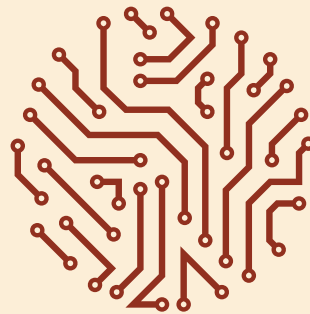
**LITERACY AND GOOD HEALTH ARE CONNECTED** Be sure your child eats balanced meals and gets plenty of sleep, both of which promote healthy brain function.

**READING BROADENS** Encourage your child to read for pleasure in all kinds of mediums. By reading on topics that interest him or her—in print or digital form, magazines, even comic books—your child will absorb the richness of language across a broad range of modes of expression.



**READING SUPPORTS MINDFULNESS** Kids who read are more likely to think before acting impulsively and are more open to constructive self-examination.

**READING HAS PURPOSE** Reading offers your child an opportunity to compare his or her own experiences with those of others, to see parallels or differences, and to reflect on situations both familiar and unfamiliar.



**READING IS BRAIN FOOD!** Reading has been shown to stimulate new pathways of thought in the brain.

**READING BUILDS, AND BUILDS ON, KNOWLEDGE** Reading builds on background knowledge—and builds fresh background knowledge for future readings.



**READING SUPPORTS HIGHER-ORDER THINKING** Kids who read regularly and with focus are more likely to think things through before making decisions, one indicator of a maturing mind.

# Ten Literacy Builders

Daily encouragement helps children grow as learners and helps make this a fruitful time in their lives. Take time every day to celebrate your child as a reader and thinker!

1

## **JOIN IN YOUR CHILD'S READING EXPERIENCE.**

Reading opens doors to the world and can spark broad-based conversations even if you haven't read the book he or she is currently reading. Ask for a rundown of a story's high points—its theme, characters, language, or plot line. For a nonfiction text, have your child give you the gist of topic, ideas, important facts, historical or scientific context, and so on. Remember, many book-related questions are one-size-fits-all!

2

## **KEEP LOTS OF READING MATERIALS ON HAND.**

Books, magazines, flyers, newspapers, packaging, labels, advertisements, and even instructional manuals can help your child broaden his or her understanding of how language opens the door to knowledge and vice versa! Set an example by modeling daily reading habits.

3

## **SHARE STORIES, PLAY, AND BE GOOFY TOGETHER.**

Middle schoolers may not admit it, but they draw comfort from playful moments with you now more than ever. Share music and stories, play word games, solve crossword puzzles, make up tongue twisters, draw, make books, and tell jokes. Most importantly, talk with and listen to your child!

4

## **BE A CHEERLEADER FOR YOUR CHILD AS A LEARNER.**

Invite your child to read aloud to you, encourage his or her interests by finding books on the topics that excite him or her, read together every day—yes, even at middle school!—and praise your child's reading and writing skills.

5

**BE ACTIVELY MULTILINGUAL.** If your family speaks more than one language, devote some daily time to both conversation and reading in each language, if possible. When it is available, use closed-captioning when watching shows or movies. Fluency in more than one language will broaden and sharpen your child's thinking skills.

6

**FOSTER EMPATHY THROUGH READING.** Reading, especially fiction, promotes compassion, resilience, empathy, and problem-solving. After all, most story characters also face real-life challenges and conflicts and demonstrate ways to resolve these situations and strengthen relationships in the process.

7

**INVITE CONVERSATION.** Frequently ask your child to share what he or she is thinking and feeling, whether it be about a book or about his or her own life. Thinking about the world and articulating thoughts and ideas of all kinds are literacy skills that also promote higher-order thinking in general.

8

**BE CRITICS TOGETHER.** View an online movie or show with your child and discuss it afterward. If the show has an interesting subject or absorbing story, your child will be excited to continue thinking and talking about it. Analyzing an experience and articulating a response will help your child hone literacy skills and social awareness.

9

**TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DIGITAL RESOURCES.** While screen time may not always be productive, the internet is a great source for all kinds of reading and learning materials, from encyclopedias to audiobooks to distance-learning classes. Take advantage of opportunities to respond to your child's areas of interest (while monitoring for online safety!).

10

**ENLIST YOUR CHILD'S HELP.** Involve your child in making shopping lists, ordering food or supplies, or maintaining household routines. Ask for his or her advice in routines or give them responsibility for additional tasks. This will call on him or her to be more aware of both family and community concerns.