

# Parents Still Make the Difference!



## Teach your middle schooler to bounce back from failure

No parent ever wants to see his child fail. But failure is a part of a life, and many students first begin to realize this during the middle school years. Now classes are more challenging. More study is needed. And a lack of organization can really set a child back.

You can't always prevent your child from falling. But you can do something even more important: Encourage her to get back up and try again. To do this:

- Be a role model. Adults do not succeed at everything they try either, especially the first time. Every day, show your child you are trying, whether it is to get a new job, learn a new skill or get organized at home. Say things like, "Sometimes I get discouraged, too, but I know I will make this happen if I keep at it."
- Emphasize effort. Children often think that ability is the only key to success. If they fail a math test, they may say: "I just stink at math." The way not to "stink" at something is to keep practicing it. Praise your child's efforts and not just results.
- Encourage interests. Your child is just like any other person--she is more willing to stick with an activity she enjoys. And by sticking with it--whether it is reading, sports or piano--she will get better. This helps her overall self-concept. With a boost in confidence, she may be more willing to tackle less desirable and more difficult activities, because she believes she can eventually prevail.

### Help your child figure out how to connect with classmates

Your child just uttered those dreaded words: "I don't fit in at school!" What should you do? First, don't overreact. Instead, take a deep breath and get the facts.

If you discover your child is being bullied, you must intervene and tell the school. Bullying is too serious a problem to be chalked up to "kids being kids."

On the other hand, if he feels like an outsider simply because he doesn't know how to jump in and participate with his peers, here's how you can help him overcome this:

- Explore his likes and dislikes. Your child is maturing, and his interests are surely expanding. Maybe there's an activity or sport that appeals to him now, even if it wasn't on his radar screen before.
- Find out what's available. Once you've discussed his interests, see what school clubs or teams might be a good fit. "You love graphic design and working on the yearbook could be a way to meet other kids who like it, too."
- Look beyond the school. Volunteer organizations, community theaters and county recreation leagues are excellent places to meet other kids and make friends. If your child finds his niche in one of them, he may feel more confident and less like the "odd man out" in school.

### Boost your child's online reading skills

In today's world, your child cannot be a complete reader unless she is also proficient at reading online. You may think surfing the Internet is a waste of time. (Sometimes it is!) But many of the jobs your child will prepare for as a student will require good online reading skills.

When reading online, your child should use:

- Thinking skills. When your child does an Internet search, her search will bring up a variety of websites. She should ask herself: "Is this site relevant to the schoolwork I am doing? How relevant? Do I know who created this site? Is the author trustworthy?"
- Learning styles. Visual learners can see photos, charts and graphs to illustrate the written text. But the multimedia nature of websites is good for other learning styles, too. Your child may be able to click on an audio file to supplement the text. And since using the Internet requires using eyes and hands together, it is good for engaging hands-on learners.
- Predicting skills. Most sites include links to other sites of relevance and interest. But your child shouldn't just click without thinking. She should ask, "Why am I being asked to click to this other site? What information will it give me? Will it help?"