

Parent Power Grades 6-8

A Major Ingredient in the Recipe for Education Success

Parents of sixth to eighth graders will find these to be easy and enjoyable ways to work with the school – using materials they have at home to build their children’s skills. These activities will also help adolescents and parents talk together about matters both care about, which improves family communication at this crucial time.

Reading Activities

Getting Around. Put reading skills to practical use. Gather bus and subway route maps and schedules to a special place in your area – the zoo, a museum, a football stadium. Let your child plan a trip for friends or family. Figure out the transportation available, the travel time required, the cost and the best time to make the trip.

Finding Needed Information. Introduce your child to the many kinds of information in the daily newspaper. Ask your child to find the pages containing news about government leaders, editor’s opinions, weather reports, car sales, house and apartment rentals and want ads. Discuss how this information is used. From time to time, have your child check the Internet for current events that impact your family.

Follow the News. Keep well informed. As a family, choose an important news event to follow for a day or two. Ask each person to find as much information on the topic as possible – read newspapers, listen to the radio, watch TV news or check the Internet. Then talk about what everyone learned in a special family get-together.

Writing Activities

Kind Words. Make someone happy. Write each family member’s name on separate sheets of paper. Add a note or a drawing to each sheet – for example, “I like the way you make breakfast,” or “It’s really great when you do the dishes.” Fold the sheets and put them in a bag and shake. Ask each person to choose a paper from the bag. Place the notes where they can be found by family members. At the end of the day, talk together about the notes.

Easy Essays. Play a writing game. Make a family game of discussing a special issue – for example, “Teenagers should be allowed to vote,” or “There should never be any homework.” Ask youngsters to think of all the reasons they can to support their views. Then, ask them to think of reasons against their views. First, ask for pros and cons orally. Then, ask youngsters to write their views on paper. Read these aloud, discussing and comparing them. Which views are most convincing? For variety, assign family members to teams and have teams prepare their arguments pro and con. The oral parts of this activity are great for long rides in the car.

Looking at Advertisements. Take a closer look. Help your children improve their thinking and writing skills by looking more carefully at newspaper, magazine and TV advertisements. What is the main point of the ad? What details does it use to communicate its message? For example, a strong, handsome man holding a soft drink in an expensive car with a beautiful girl at his side is telling us something about the soft drink.

Math Activities

Managing Money. Put math skills to work. Help your children understand living costs by discussing household expenses with them. For example, make a list of monthly bills – heat, electricity, telephone, cell phone, cable/satellite TV, groceries, mortgage or rent. Fold the paper to hide the costs and ask youngsters to guess the cost of each item. Unfold the paper. How do the estimates compare with the actual costs? Were they close?

Percentages and Decimals. Are they really necessary? Illustrate by asking your children to look through the newspaper to find and list as many percentages and decimal numbers as possible – advertised sale prices, sports scores, bank rates.

Living Within Your Means. Practice budgeting skills. Teach children who have allowances or regular spending money how to budget. Ask them to make a two-column list of expenses and income. List the allowance or spending money under income. Under expenses, list what they expect to spend for movies, lunches, charitable giving, etc. Then, have youngsters add all the expenses and subtract the total from the income. If their expenses are greater than their income, ask them to think of ways to reduce their spending to keep within their budget. If their income is more than their expenses, suggest a savings plan.

Social Studies Activities

Expanding Horizons. Help your child learn about people from different countries. Suggest talking to neighbors from foreign countries, reading library books about other cultures, watching TV specials, searching the Internet, and/or getting a pen pal.

Let Your Voice Be Heard. Promote good citizenship. Help your child write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper about an issue affecting children. For example, suggest that a bike path be built near the school or that a city event be planned for youngsters. Also discuss with your child other ways in which they can work to bring about the changes they’ve suggested.

Health Activities

Exercise for Good Health. Emphasize the value of exercise. Ask your child to do at least one kind of exercise every day. For example, run or walk briskly for 10 minutes. Walk, when possible, instead of riding for any distance less than a mile. Have your youngster make a practical, week-long exercise plan. Offer a reward for sticking to the plan. Repeat it for a second and third week.

Educating Our Children,
Engaging Our Parents, Empowering Our Schools

