



*A parent is a child's first and most important teacher, which is why the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 recognizes parents' vital role in education.*

—Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings



# helping your child through early adolescence

**NoChild**  
LeftBehind  
U.S. Department of Education



Early adolescence can be a **difficult** time for children and parents alike. While adolescents are feeling **insecure** in their identity and abilities, parents often feel **unprepared** for the challenges that arise as their children **mature**, and they may view the early adolescent years from ages 10 through 14 as a time just “to get through.” However, parents should know that they have an important **influence** on their children at this stage of **development**.

Of course, it's not easy to raise an adolescent. Exhaustion, **anxiety**, a lack of support, and limited **resources** may make it hard for some parents to be all that they want to be for their children. Additionally, there are outside **influences** that distract children and complicate parents' nurturing efforts. Whatever the **challenges**, parents share one aim: to do the best possible job raising their children.

At the heart of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the national **effort** to improve education, is the **belief** that parents should be empowered to make choices about their children's **education** and that a family's income or zip code should not determine the **quality** of that education. This brochure is based on the larger *Helping Your Child* series of publications for parents and families, designed to **provide** parents with the latest research and **practical** information to help them support their children and ensure their children's **SUCCESS** in school and in life.



Learning as much as you can about the world of early adolescence is an important step toward helping your child—and you—through the fascinating, confusing, and wonderful years from ages 10 through 14.

## tips for parents

As children enter the middle grades, parents often become less involved in their lives. However, adolescents need as much attention and love from their parents as they did when they were younger—possibly more!

Here are some tips to help your child through early adolescence:

- ★ Stay involved in your child's life, both inside and outside of school;
- ★ Provide both unconditional love and appropriate limits to help your child thrive and feel safe;
- ★ Learn as much as you can about early adolescence;
- ★ Talk with your child often about what is most important to him or her;
- ★ Hold your child to high, but realistic, standards;
- ★ Show that you value education;
- ★ Provide opportunities for your teenager to succeed;
- ★ Monitor your child's friendships;
- ★ Work with your child to become more aware of the media and how to use the media appropriately;
- ★ Model good behavior;
- ★ Be alert to major problems; and
- ★ Hang in there when times are tough.

*We all know that mothers and fathers are the most important influences in a child's life. Children whose parents show them love and support and stay active in their lives have an enormous advantage growing up.*

—Mrs. Laura Bush

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## encouraging learning and school participation

Education works best when teachers and parents work closely with one another. Research shows that when parents stay informed about their child's school activities and life in general, the child does better in school.

Be a part of your child's school life by: setting ground rules for your child at the beginning of the academic year; knowing the school policies for homework; helping your child get organized; providing an environment at home that encourages learning; and staying involved in your child's school. The more visible you are, the more educators will be able to communicate openly with you.

It is during the middle grades that adolescents build the foundation for lifelong reading habits. Below are some tips for helping your child be a successful reader:

- ★ Make sure your home has lots of reading materials that are appropriate for your child;
- ★ Encourage your child to use the library;
- ★ Be a positive role model for reading;
- ★ Find out from your child's teachers how they encourage or teach reading;
- ★ Find out how to help your child if his or her first language is not English; and
- ★ Get help for your child if he or she has a reading problem.

Your encouragement and support can help your child develop a stronger sense of self and build confidence.



## resources

This brochure was drawn from the larger booklet in the *Helping Your Child* series, “Helping Your Child Through Early Adolescence.” Based on the latest research in adolescent development and learning, this booklet addresses parents' questions, provides suggestions, and tackles issues that parents of young adolescents (ages 10 through 14) generally find most challenging. For more information on helping your child during adolescence and other topics, please visit the *Helping Your Child* series Web site at [www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html).

**For more information on how you can help your young teenager, take a look at the following resources from the U.S. Department of Education and other organizations:**

**U.S. Department of Education:** [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or 1-800-USA-LEARN

**The Parents Portal:** [www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml](http://www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml)

**Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools:**  
[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html)

**Parental Information and Resource Centers:**  
[www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html)

**National Institute of Child Health and Human Development:**  
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov>

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