

Helping Your Middle & High Schooler Learn More Deeply *(Based on the work of Karin K. Hess, Ed.D.)*

As students move through middle and high school, they face more complex ideas and higher expectations. Karin Hess emphasizes that success comes when students go beyond memorization and practice deeper thinking—analyzing, applying, and reflecting. Parents can play a big role in supporting these skills at home.

1. Ask Questions That Stretch Their Thinking

- Instead of only checking answers, ask:
- Can you explain your reasoning?
- What evidence supports your answer?
- How would you solve this a different way?

2. Connect Learning to Real-World Situations

- Current events → analyzing causes, solutions, perspectives.
- Household projects → planning, budgeting, and problem-solving.
- Sports, music, or clubs → leadership, teamwork, strategy.
- Jobs or volunteering → responsibility, communication, time management.

3. Encourage Transfer Across Subjects

Ask:

- How does what you learned in science apply to everyday life?
- Can you use math to understand this real-world issue?
- What connections do you see between history and current events?

4. Support Productive Struggle & Independence

- Allow your teen to attempt challenges before stepping in.
- Offer strategies or tools instead of giving answers.
- Encourage them to talk through their process before asking for help.
- Recognize persistence: “I like how you didn’t give up when it got tough”

Promote Reflection & Goal Setting

- Encourage journaling or quick check-ins:
 - What strategy worked best for you on this assignment?
 - What could you try differently for the next test or project?
 - What's one short-term goal for this week?
- Remember: In middle and high school, effort and problem-solving strategies matter as much as grades. By asking thoughtful questions, connecting learning to life, and supporting independence, you prepare your child for success in school and beyond.

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