



October 2008

Welcome to the Northfield Area Parent Communication Network's monthly e-newsletter! You are a member of a network of unbelievable parents that do make a difference and help create a healthier and safer community for all our youth.

Teen Brains

It's a mystery parents have pondered for years...what triggers the mood swings in teens? Is it music, hormones, stress?

In "Inside the Teenage Brain," FRONTLINE/PBS chronicles how scientists are exploring the recesses of the brain and finding some new explanations for why adolescents behave the way they do. These discoveries could change the way we parent, teach, or perhaps even understand our teenagers.

Researchers have pinpointed two pivotal times of change and organization within the brain. The initial phase of brain development takes place the first 18 months of life and then the brain undergoes a second wave of development during the ages of 10-13. Remarkable brain growth takes place during puberty which may help explain the moods and changes during the middle school years.

The reaction to this discovery by counselors and educators might be to take advantage of these development times to build "bigger and better brains". But some social scientist remind us that research shows that it is relationships and connections with people who make the greatest difference in children's lives and their development.

Despite all the new scientific research, "Inside the Teenage Brain" suggests that there is a consensus among experts that the most beneficial thing for teenagers is good relationships with their parents and perhaps the best advice come from grandmother's generation...spend quality time with our children.

To view the FRONTLINE program or read more about "Inside the Teenage Brain" go to:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/>.

Middle School Parents

Many parents who are actively involved in the education of their children at the elementary school level become less involved when their children reach middle school.

Parent involvement in a child's education during the middle school years (ages 10 to 14) is just as vital in a child's success at school as it is in earlier grades. It is important that parents take the initiative to continue their involvement and collaboration in their children's school.

When parents become involved, both students and school benefit:

- Grades and test results are higher;
- Students' attitudes and behavior are more positive;
- Academic programs are more successful; and
- The schools, as a whole, are more effective

Stay involved by attending parent/teacher conferences, using the Family Access tool on the Northfield Public School website or volunteering in the Middle School building. To volunteer, contact Amy Lunderby, Volunteer Program Coordinator, 663-0696 or amy.lunderby@nfld.k12.mn.us.

The Northfield Area Parent Communication Network's mission is to foster communication between parents, to help parents develop good parenting skills and to help prevent risky situations for our children