

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Taking stock

Now that your child is midway through the school year, he may be low on supplies. Have him write down what he needs (index cards, highlighters), and store the list in the car. Next time you're out together, you'll be ready to pick them up. *Tip:* Look for discounted supplies at dollar or warehouse stores or on clearance racks at office supply stores.

Getting along

Recognizing how you and your middle grader are alike or different can help your days go more smoothly. For example, your child may need more time than you do to move from one activity to another. You could give advance notice so she can adjust ("We'll be leaving in 30 minutes").

Healthy new year

Encourage your youngster to choose a New Year's resolution that fosters good health. He might commit to drinking more water and limiting soda. Suggest that he track his intake for three weeks to get a good start.

Worth quoting

"A smile is the curve that sets everything straight."
Phyllis Diller

Just for fun

Q: What is an archaeologist?

A: Someone whose career is in ruins!



Study secrets

Suzanne can discuss topics in depth when called on in class. She can also remember information when taking tests and quizzes. What's her secret? Strong study skills that help her learn more.

Suggest that your child adopt simple techniques like these.

Set priorities. Many students tend to put extra effort into classes they naturally do well in. Your middle grader will get more mileage out of her study time if she focuses first on more difficult work. Ask her to list priorities, putting the day's hardest subject first. That way, she'll be alert and won't run out of steam when she needs it the most. When she's through with each subject, she can mark it off.

Write about it. Creating and answering questions will help your child see what she understands and where she needs more review. For example, she might pose a science question about the differences between physical and chemical changes. She can write an answer and then check her notes and textbook to



see if she was correct. If not, she can go over the material and answer the question again. *Idea:* Suggest that she make up a whole test—and take it!

Find a buddy. Having a study partner adds variety and can fill gaps in your middle schooler's learning. Another student might shed light on a puzzling formula or explain an important date in history. Study partners can quiz each other on concepts and vocabulary words, too. Encourage your child to choose a partner she gets along with and who does well in class. 👍

Off to school!

Bed made? Check. Backpack? Check.

Checklists can help your middle grader streamline his time when he's getting ready for school. That way, he'll begin the day calm and prepared. Try these suggestions for nighttime and morning checklists. *Tip:* Hang them where he can spot them, like over his bed and on the refrigerator.

At night:

- Have papers signed.
- Put signed papers, folders, and books in backpack.
- Place backpack, instrument, and gym bag by door.
- Make lunch or pack lunch money.
- Pick out clothes.
- Set alarm.

In the morning:

- Make bed.
- Eat breakfast.
- Brush teeth.
- Get lunch from refrigerator.
- Take backpack, instrument, and gym bag.

Have a great day! 👍



Still involved

As your youngster reaches higher grades, there are still plenty of easy ways you can stay involved in his school. Let your middle grader know his education matters to you by staying connected.

After-school activities

Whether you can volunteer regularly or on occasion, after-school clubs and activities often need help. The chess club might need drivers for competitions, or the baseball coach might appreciate your making phone calls to organize a fund-raiser. Or the environmental club may need extra hands for service projects.



Class programs

Teachers can use parents' help inside or outside of class time. Contact your child's teachers to find out what they need. You could gather supplies for an upcoming art project or offer expertise or hands-on help for a program such as Spanish Culture Day or Field Day. If you have technical skills, you might update a class Web site.

Parent groups

Check with your school's PTA or PTO about volunteering for teacher-appreciation events. For instance, you could take bagels to a teachers' breakfast or collect gently used books and put them in gift bags for teachers. 👍

Hooked on news

From the latest sports scores to scientific discoveries, there are many current events that will interest your middle schooler. Encourage her to stay informed with these ideas:

- Studies show that more young people are following the news because they can read it online. Suggest that your child save online news sites on her list of favorite sites and then visit them often. Or she could make one of the sites her home page. She might try major media outlets like www.CNN.com or sites of local newspapers.



- Following a hot topic together gives your middle grader a reason to stay aware. Keep an eye out for news about her interests (endangered wildlife, local politics). Casually share what you hear or read, and ask your youngster for her opinions. *Idea:* Open a magazine or newspaper to an interesting article, and leave it at her place at the kitchen table or by her bed. 👍



Q & A Dealing with back talk

Q My middle grader has been talking back. When I get upset, we end up yelling. What's the best way to handle this?

A You can start by having a conversation with your child to set ground rules. Explain what you consider back talk (challenging you in a disrespectful way). Tell him you will not listen and will walk away if he argues or debates with you in that way.

Then, follow through. Simply refusing to participate in the discussion will let him know you mean it—and will keep you calm. Plus, your youngster will be less likely to talk back if he sees it won't get him what he wants.

Finally, consider setting a consequence for the behavior if it continues. He might lose computer time or miss an outing with friends, for example. 👍



Parent to Parent Brain games

I've heard that people can keep their minds sharp by playing games that "exercise" the brain. I asked around and found some easy ones that our whole family can play.

We've tried naming the months of the year in alphabetical order and then backward. Sometimes we take turns adding the numbers in our birthdates (1 + 19 + 1997 = 2,017).

My middle schooler and I also made our own game. We marked the outside of empty spools with

letters: one with S, L, R, G, F, another with N, T, D, P, B, and a third with vowels (A, E, I, O, U). Then, we placed the three spools on a pencil so they could rotate. To play, we set a timer and see who can make the most words in a minute by turning the spools so that letters line up to form three-letter words.

These fun activities don't take much time, but they keep us—and our minds—busy! 👍



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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