

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Be there

What's one of the best ways your child can keep up in middle school? Showing up every day! Tell him that attending school regularly and on time is his responsibility. To avoid a late start, make sure he uses an alarm (cell phone, clock radio), and help him set up a nightly routine (pack lunch, choose clothes).

Special siblings

A youngster with disabilities can require extra time and energy from parents. To help your other children feel important, too, try to give them some undivided attention each day. For example, you might play a board game in the evening or have a one-on-one talk before bed.

Spotlight on work

Consider taking your middle grader to your workplace on a day when she doesn't have school. Show her what you do on a typical day, and point out the skills you use in your job (math, communications). You'll give her a window into life beyond school.

Worth quoting

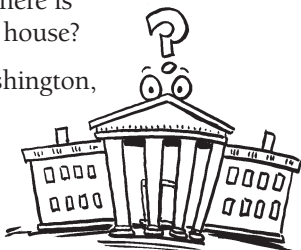
"Kind words are the music of the world."

Frederick William Faber

Just for fun

Q: There is a green house, a blue house, a red house, and a white house. Where is the white house?

A: In Washington, D.C.!



Textbook super sleuths

Like investigators on a case, good readers examine clues, raise questions, and fit pieces together. These steps can help your middle schooler understand the material, connect with what she's reading, and use the information in textbooks.

Look ahead. Before starting, your child should identify what the section is about. Checking the table of contents or end-of-chapter questions can provide valuable clues. She can also browse headings, diagrams, and illustrations. This will prepare her for the type of reading she'll be doing and help her zero in on key points.

Check understanding. After reading a sentence, paragraph, or chapter, your youngster can ask, "Did this make sense?" If not, she should try to pinpoint where she got lost and go back and reread the pages. To shed light on the meaning, she also might find definitions for words she doesn't recognize, make a chart of the information, or write a summary in her own words.



Put it in context. Once your middle grader is finished, she should think about how the material fits with what she knows. For example, how does the information build on another topic she has learned about? What was the writer's opinion, and does she agree with it? Making connections will help her master the material so she can discuss it in class and draw on it when doing homework. 👍

Listen up!

When your youngster wants to talk to you, being "all ears" has many benefits. Taking time to listen will keep your relationship strong, increase his self-esteem, and teach him to listen to others. Try these tips:

- Pay attention to signs that your child wants your attention. He might linger nearby or ask if you're busy.
- If possible, stop what you're doing to focus on him. That way, he'll know you're really listening. *Hint:* If you can't take a break, plan a specific time to talk later.
- Repeat what you think he is saying ("So you don't want to be in band next year?"). This will help him organize his thoughts and follow up with more information. Plus, he'll know that you heard his message. 👍



Social smarts

C.J. wasn't invited to a party given by someone he thought was his friend. Shamil's best buddy is hanging out with a new crowd.

These middle graders are dealing with social change. Although it's a normal part of life for young teens, sometimes it can feel confusing. Help your middle schooler cope with these ideas.

Offer perspective

Children can jump to conclusions, so encourage your child to get the facts. He may discover that his invitation is on the way



or that a friend's new "group" welcomes him, too.

Handle feelings

If your youngster *has* been left out, explain that everyone feels left out sometimes. Share an example from your own life. Let him know that friendships may change as people grow—it doesn't mean there's anything wrong with him.

Foster friendships

Help your child focus on other friendships. He might spend time with a different friend or get to know someone new. Suggest that he ask other friends to come over after school. Or he might join a new team or club to find kids who share his interests. 👍



Parent to Parent

Honest academics

One day my daughter mentioned that a classmate had been caught cheating. The student had texted herself answers and peeked at them during a test. When I asked Shelley how she felt about cheating, she agreed it was wrong, but she said most kids don't think it's a big deal.

I wanted her to know that it is a big deal. I asked her if she would want to go to a doctor who cheated in medical school or take our car to an auto mechanic who cheated on tests during his training. She realized she had never thought about it that way.

I also mentioned that cheating raises grading curves and affects grade point averages, which isn't fair to other students. Now if someone suggests cheating, I hope Shelley will remember these good reasons to say no. 👍



Be the teacher

You have a great deal to teach your middle grader—and your middle grader has a great deal to teach *you*! Explaining what she learns at school will boost her knowledge and make her comfortable with the material.

Ask her to pick a topic. It could be a subject she's struggling with or one she has down pat. Have her teach you what she has learned. Say she chooses "appositives" from her English class. She could define them and explain how they differ from adjective clauses. She might also give you examples and then ask you to think of some of your own.

Challenge her to explain the topic in another way ("So what's the easiest way to tell the difference between the two?"). This will help her think on her feet and clarify the information in her own mind. 👍



Q & A Conference know-how

Q Parent-teacher conferences are coming up at my son's school. How can I make the most of the time I'll have?

A Just a few minutes with teachers can help you build a bond that will help your child succeed. Think ahead about topics you want to cover, such as whether he participates in class or if there are family issues that may be affecting him.

Plan to arrive early so you don't lose valuable time. Then, bring up the most

important items first—perhaps whether your youngster is turning in assignments on time or is talking too much in class. It's also a good idea to take notes. That way, you can review them with your child at home.

If time runs out, arrange to meet later if you want to discuss something in more detail. Or ask if the teachers prefer that you call or e-mail them with additional questions. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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