

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Learning help

Want to motivate your youngster to learn? Show excitement when she discovers something new or understands a concept for the first time. Your enthusiasm may rub off on her and encourage her to work harder in school.

DID YOU KNOW?

A recent study found that one in five teens have sex before 15—some as young as 12. Talk to your child about the risks of underage sex, including pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and emotional distress. *Source: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2003*

Pimple problems

Pimples are a normal part of growing up. But to middle graders, getting even one can seem like a tragedy. To minimize acne, suggest that your child wash his face daily with a mild soap. And remind him that his friends get pimples, too.

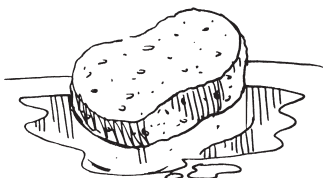
Worth quoting

“You can’t have a better tomorrow if you are thinking about yesterday all the time.” *Charles F. Kettering*

Just for fun

Q: What’s full of holes but can still hold water?

A: A sponge!



Go for the goal!

Getting a better grade in math. Earning money for a new bike. Winning a part in the school play. Whatever your middle grader’s goals, he can take specific steps to achieve them. You’ll help your child succeed by passing along these tips.

Explore the why’s

To achieve a goal, it must be important. “Passing English class” is good, but “earning an A so I can go to college” is better. Why? Because the motivation is clearer. Talk with your middle grader about his goals. If he understands the why’s behind them, he will be more apt to try harder.

Anticipate obstacles

Runners study a course before they begin a marathon. Likewise, your middle grader should think about the hurdles she will face on the way to success. For example, are video games an irresistible distraction? Keep them out of sight. Is she tired after dinner? She could do homework as soon as she gets home from school.

Seek advice

Have your child look for school or community groups with similar goals, and encourage him to join one. Or suggest that he ask for advice from someone



who has accomplished what he wants. Surrounding himself with other motivated kids and cheering friends will inspire him. 👍

Using consequences

Teaching your child about consequences helps her be more responsible. Here’s how:

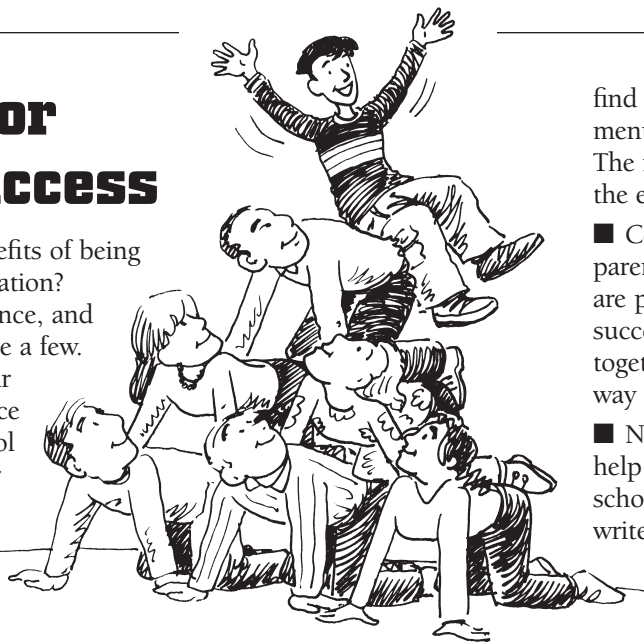
- Use relevant consequences. *Example:* Your middle grader breaks her phone in anger. Have her do without until she pays for a new one. Replacing it yourself will only encourage further outbursts.
- Deliver on promised consequences. For example, if the rule is “Clothes that aren’t in the hamper won’t get washed,” resist the temptation to pick up your child’s dirty laundry. He will know you’re serious.
- Let your middle grader solve her own problems. *Example:* She loses a CD and expects you to look for it. Challenge her to find a solution. “I know you’re upset about misplacing your new CD. I’m sure you’ll figure out what happened.” 👍



Parenting for learning success

What are some of the benefits of being involved in your child's education? Higher grades, better attendance, and increased motivation, to name a few. Active parents also boost their middle graders' self-confidence and decrease drug and alcohol use. Try these suggestions for getting involved:

- Attend school functions whenever possible. Also, read the school newsletter and visit its Web site. You'll



find a wealth of information, from daily lunch menus to what's happening in the classroom. The more you know about your child's day, the easier it is to support his learning.

- Consider starting a support group with parents in your child's school. Other parents are probably facing similar challenges and successes with their middle graders. Getting together to brainstorm solutions is a great way to solve problems.

- No time to volunteer in school? You can help in other ways. Try participating in school board elections. Or take a moment to write a note to one of your child's teachers.

Becoming involved in ways like these sends a strong message to your middle grader about the importance of learning. 👍

Keeping track of homework

Letting your middle grader be responsible for homework is a great testing ground for her independence—but you still need to know the work is getting done.

Here are ways you can keep track of your middle grader's homework without interfering too much:

- Allow your child to choose a time for homework. When she finishes, look everything over. Then, if her grades slip, you decide when she studies.
- Ask your middle grader to give you the important papers that are stuffed in his backpack each day. *Examples:* progress reports, school event information.

- Encourage your child to clean out her locker and bring home old quizzes, tests, and class notes so you can read teacher comments. 👍



Parent to Parent Family respect

I remarried several years after my wife died. My daughter, Kristina, was happy at the wedding, but things went downhill from there. She became increasingly disrespectful to her stepmother, Anne.

One day Kristina yelled, "Quit telling me what to do. You're not my mother!" Both Anne and I were stunned. A few days later, I told my wife's sister about the incident. She quickly reminded me that Kristina's mother and I had always raised our daughter to be respectful. She said I should remind Kristina of this the next time things get out of hand.

I talked with Kristina, and she apologized to Anne soon afterward. They've had their ups and downs, but they're steadily becoming closer. We've all come to realize that respect is the glue that holds a family together. 👍

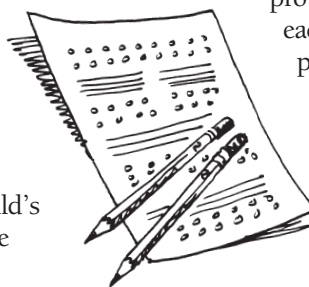


Q & A Standardized test results

Q Standardized tests are being given at my son's school. How do schools use standardized test results?

A Many schools use standardized test results to compare how students' skills in one school compare to students elsewhere. Some teachers may also use test scores to determine which students need more help in the classroom. Ask your child's principal how test scores are utilized at his school.

According to the National Education Association, parents shouldn't read too much into their children's scores. Standardized tests show whether content is being taught effectively, but they don't provide *all* the information on each child's needs. An overall picture of your middle grader's progress should include the teacher's review of daily class work, as well as observations on his cooperation and his understanding of the material. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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