

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



A new start

To get your middle graders off to a great start in the new year, suggest that they clean out their school lockers. Removing old papers and trash will make it easier for them to get organized and back into the swing of things after winter break.

DID YOU KNOW?

The longer your middle grader associates with a gang, the harder it will be for him to walk away. If you suspect he's involved in gang activity (always wearing red, blue, or black; using hand gestures with friends), talk with him about the dangers. For more information, contact the National Youth Gang Center at 850-385-0600 or www.iir.com/nygc.

The scoop on government

Does your middle grader know your state's official bird or motto? Or how a bill becomes a law? Steer her to Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids (www.bensguide.gpo.gov). She'll find interesting facts, along with fun games and links to other government and history sites.

Worth quoting

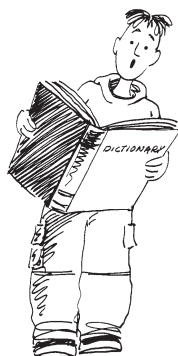
"A dream becomes a goal when you take action to achieve it."

Bo Bennett

Just for fun

Q: Which word in the dictionary is always spelled incorrectly?

A: Incorrectly!



Putting pen to paper

Book reports, essays, journals... Writing is a fact of life for middle graders. But getting kids to sit down and put their thoughts on paper can be challenging.

Share these tips with your child to help take the grief out of writing assignments.

Inspire with words

Sometimes the hardest part of writing is coming up with a topic. Suggest that your middle grader keep a notebook of writing prompts. While he's reading, involved in activities, or simply daydreaming, he can jot down what he sees, hears, and feels. He can use his notebook as a source of ideas for his next writing assignment.

Go with the flow

Once your child begins a writing project, encourage him to write for as long as he can. If he's unsure of spelling or punctuation, tell him to circle the word and keep going. Stopping in the middle can interrupt his thinking. He can edit his work after he has finished writing. The important thing is to get all his ideas down first.

Practice makes perfect

Keep your child's writing muscles active by helping him practice regularly. Try this: Cut out an article from a newspaper or magazine for



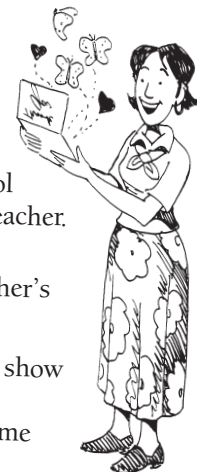
your middle grader to read. Challenge him to rewrite the story with a new character, setting, or ending. 🍷

"Thanks, teacher!"

Teachers work hard to help children succeed in school. Here are some ways to express your appreciation:

- Send a note to the principal or school board explaining how a teacher has helped your middle grader.
- Leave a brief message on a teacher's answering machine praising him for his hard work.
- Donate a book to the school library in honor of a special teacher.
- Write a letter to your local newspaper highlighting a teacher's dedication.

Note: Remind your child to show her gratitude for her teachers' efforts by getting to class on time and paying attention. 🍷



Encouraging responsibility

Most middle graders want more privileges. At the same time, they often forget that with privileges comes responsibility.

Helping your child develop personal responsibility will serve her well—both now and in the future. Try these suggestions:

■ When your middle grader says she will do something, ask her to be specific. Example: “I will clean my room by bedtime



on Friday.” Let her know that friends and family count on her to follow through with her promises.

■ Suggest that your child use a calendar to remember important dates such as a friend’s birthday party or a babysitting job. Keeping up with her own schedule helps her learn to manage her responsibilities.

■ Children need to see their parents being responsible, too. Arriving at work on time and attending school meetings, for example, shows your middle grader that you take your own responsibilities seriously. 🍷

Q & A Grade expectations

Q My middle grader wants to do better in school. How can I help him improve his grades?

A Start by having him figure out the areas in which he needs improvement. Suggest that he look over teachers’ comments on previous assignments. Has he turned assignments in late? Help him create a schedule so he will begin projects earlier. Are his test scores low because he didn’t prepare? He may need to sharpen his study skills.

Some kids find it hard to get motivated about doing schoolwork that isn’t assigned. Remind your son that working hard every day can improve his understanding—the real goal of learning. Even if your child has no homework, he could review his textbook or do practice worksheets.

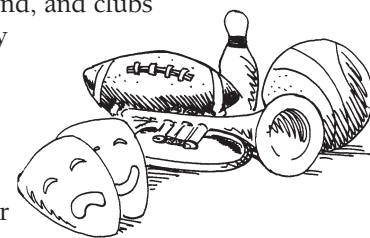
As your middle grader makes improvements, let him know you’re proud of his efforts. Pointing out his successes will give him confidence to keep trying. 🍷



Extra-special extracurriculars

Participating in after-school activities like sports, band, and clubs can have a good influence on middle graders. How? By boosting learning, fostering friendships, and teaching valuable life skills. Consider these ideas:

- Help your children choose activities that match their interests and schedules. Let them know that it’s better to be actively involved in one extracurricular than joining several that they might not participate in.
- Make sure your middle graders don’t have too many obligations. If they seem overly tired or stressed, no longer enjoy activities, or don’t have time or energy for homework and family, they may need to cut back on extracurriculars.
- Find time to attend your children’s games, performances, and club events. Sharing activities with your middle graders lets them know you’re enthusiastic about their interests and improves your relationship with them. 🍷



Parent to Parent Working out problems

My daughter Davina was upset after she hung up the phone one night. She and her friend Marcie had argued. She told me she liked being friends with her, but sometimes Marcie was bossy. When Davina asked me what she should do, I offered to help her figure out a way to solve the problem.

Together, we brainstormed possible options. Davina could stop being friends with Marcie. She could ignore the behavior and let Marcie boss her around. Or she could tell her friend how she feels.

The next night Davina called Marcie, and they talked for an hour. “What happened?” I asked. Davina and Marcie decided that from now on, they’d be honest with each other instead of holding their feelings inside and making things worse.

I think my daughter has learned a thing or two about friendship and solving problems. 🍷



OUR PURPOSE

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

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