

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops

### Mellow mornings

Are your middle grader's mornings frantic? Ease the morning rush by having him wake up a little earlier. A few extra minutes will give him the time he needs to dress, eat breakfast, collect his books, and catch the bus without rushing. And slowing down will improve his entire day.

### Recognize respect

When you see your child showing respect to others, point it out to her. If she opens a door for someone or waits patiently in line, say, "I appreciate your manners." Respect is learned—you'll encourage your middle grader to continue being considerate.

### "What if?"

Children need to develop good thinking skills to do well in school and in life. One way you can help sharpen your middle grader's mind is by asking "What if?" questions. *Example:* "What if automobiles had never been invented?"

### Worth quoting

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."  
*Les Brown*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What runs but never walks?

**A:** Water!



## Get involved!

Wondering how to help your child succeed during the middle school years? Being involved in her education is as important now as it was when she was in kindergarten. Here are several ways you can support your youngster's learning and make a big difference in her school success.


### Ask questions

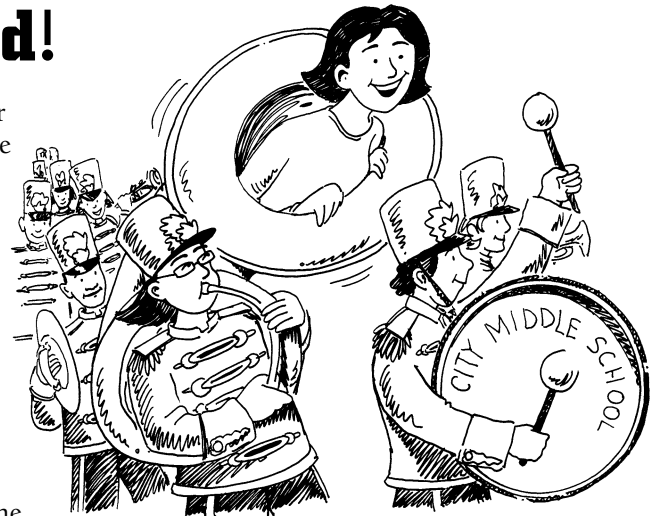
If you want to know what's going on at school, take the time to ask your child. If she says, "Nothing," follow up with a specific question. *Example:* "What chapter are you discussing in science class?" Talking about school helps your middle grader see how important it is. Plus, the two of you get a chance to chat.

### Expect success

Tell your child what you expect from him at school—such as hard work, perfect attendance, and consistent study. Challenge him to set goals in his classes. Or suggest that he tackle a difficult topic on his term paper. The important thing is for him to learn, so don't overemphasize grades. Students achieve more when their efforts are encouraged.

### Work together

If something goes wrong at school, take a deep breath before you contact the teacher. Keep in mind that the teacher wants your child to learn as much as you do. Together, find solutions to the problem. Working calmly through problems will put your middle grader back on the path to learning. 



### Reading tip


Many kids struggle with comprehension. If your child has trouble understanding what he reads, share the "SQ3R" method with him.

**S**urvey. Look over the material or chapter. Skim the introduction, questions, and summaries. Pay attention to titles, sub-headings, key words, and diagrams.

**Q**uestion. Turn headings into questions. *Example:* "The history of the cotton gin" could become "Who invented the cotton gin?"

**R**ead. Find the answers to your questions. Try to identify the main point in each paragraph or section. Take notes as you read.

**R**ecite. Look away from the text. State the main ideas in your own words, either silently or out loud.

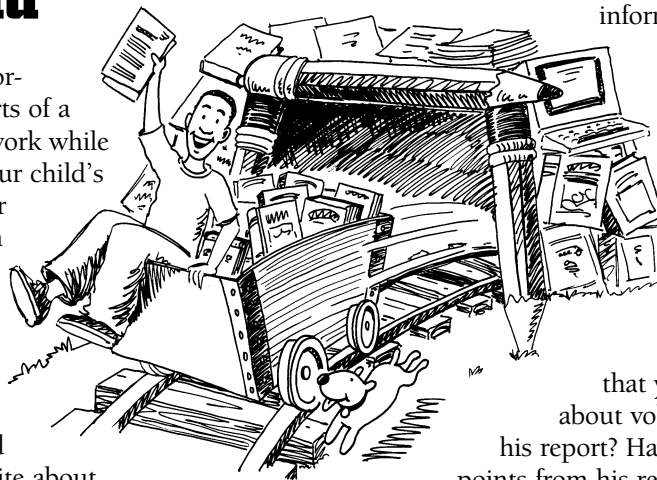
**R**evise. Skim the chapter again. See if you can still answer the questions. If you have trouble, re-read. 



## Research gold

For some kids, looking for information is one of the toughest parts of a writing assignment. Some extra work while researching a subject can turn your child's effort into a gold mine. Help your middle grader dig for information with these tips.

**Focus the topic.** The first step in writing a paper is to have a specific purpose in mind. For example, instead of choosing "volcanoes" as a topic, your child could decide that he wants to write about famous volcanoes around the world. Narrowing the focus in this way will help direct his search for information, save time, and produce a better report.



**Select resources.** Finding the right information depends on where your middle grader looks. Library books can provide great background information on volcanoes. Internet searches or magazine articles might reveal news about recent volcanic activity. Choosing appropriate sources can give your child a better chance of finding the information he needs.

**Organize information.** Now that your middle grader knows a lot about volcanoes, what should he include in his report? Have him pick the most important points from his research and provide supporting details for each. For example, he might give the names and locations of several volcanoes. Then, he could tell how big each one is and when it last erupted. 👍



## Q & A Safety first

**Q** Since school has started, my son is making lots of new friends. How can I help him socialize safely?

**A** The beginning of a school year is a good time to reevaluate ground rules for your son. Start with the basics, such as a reasonable curfew for school nights and weekends. And be sure to set consequences if he breaks the rules.

Encourage your middle grader to invite his friends over to your house. They'll have a safe place to hang out, and you'll get to know the kids he's spending his time with.

And if your child surfs the Web or chats with his friends online, be sure to keep the computer in the living room or another busy part of the house. That way, you can keep track of what your son is viewing and how long he has been using the computer. 👍



## Off to a healthy start

It's a fact: Childhood obesity is on the rise. Kids who are overweight have an increased risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. And overweight children often become overweight adults.

Parents can establish healthy lifestyle habits for the entire family. Experts suggest the following tips:

- Have everyone in the family eat a nutritious diet that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Prepare meals together so kids can learn how to cook healthy foods. Serve moderate portions to avoid overeating.
- Keep nutritious snacks available. Consider limiting junk food to once a week.
- Set aside time to exercise together (bicycling, rollerblading, walking).
- Assign "active" chores (vacuuming, washing the car, mowing the lawn) to each family member.

For more information about nutrition and exercise, visit [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). 👍



## Parent to Parent Family time

Thanks to a great idea from my daughter Alice, our family does volunteer work together almost every weekend.

It all started when I realized that we needed to spend more time together. I also mentioned that it would be nice to do something to help other people. That's when Alice suggested that we combine the two goals.

Turns out, it was easier than we expected. We ended up joining a

community group that helps needy neighbors with home improvement projects. Last week, my son helped paint a house while my daughter and I fixed the porch.

We all enjoy the extra time together. And volunteering has made us feel better about ourselves. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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ISSN 1540-5540