

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Tough talk

Kids sometimes ask their parents how they behaved as children. Questions like “Did you use drugs?” may signal your child’s curiosity about risky behaviors. Consider a response such as “Why do you ask?” to encourage your middle grader to discuss what’s on her mind.

DID YOU KNOW?

The average middle grader spends about 17 hours a week online and 14 hours watching television. But most kids devote only six hours a week to reading for pleasure. Suggest that your child cut down on Web and TV time and read a magazine or listen to music instead.

Source: http://biz.yahoo.com/bw/030724/245198_1.html

“I’ll get it!”

Do your children race to the phone on the first ring? Talking to friends is important, but parents can still set limits. Try not answering the phone during dinner. Meals are a time to share their day, not the phone.

Worth quoting

“The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.” *B. B. King*

Just for fun



Student: Would you e-mail my test results to my parents?

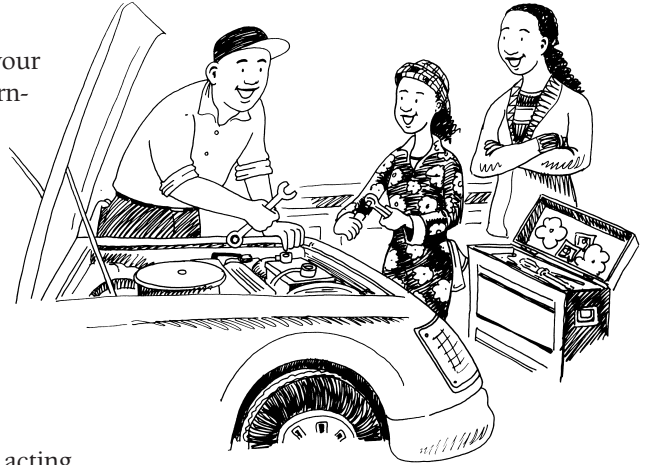
Teacher: But your parents don’t have a computer.

Student: Exactly!

Learning never ends

After studying all week, your middle grader is tired of learning, right? Wrong! He may be tired of sitting in class, but he’s still eager to learn. Your child’s interest in all sorts of things doesn’t end at school.

Here’s how several parents keep their kids learning on the weekends.



Friday night drama

“My daughter Rosa loves acting. One night I asked her to perform for our family, so she invited a friend to help her put on a play. It was such a success that they do one almost every Friday night. During the week, I take them to the library to find new material. Watching them sure beats Friday night reruns—and they’re doing lots of reading.”

Sunday comics

“My son Rob is always saying witty things. When I suggested he write down his one-liners, he turned his jokes into an essay called ‘The Rob Report.’ Talk about funny! I encouraged him to submit it to our community newspaper. The staff liked it so much, they’ve asked him to write another article for next Sunday’s edition.”

Saturdays at the shop

“Ask my daughter Jenny to write a poem, and she chews her lip. But fixing cars is something she enjoys. Every weekend her dad teaches her how to repair engines at his shop. As he puts it, ‘Sonnets may frustrate her, but sockets make her happy!’”

Conference know-how

You can use parent-teacher conferences to build partnerships that improve your child’s education. Use this checklist to make the most of these meetings:

Begin with what’s important. Planning your questions ahead of time allows you to discuss critical issues before time runs out.

Share information. Sharing your middle grader’s strengths and accomplishments, as well as his weaknesses, will help the teacher understand him better.

Stay positive. Look for solutions instead of focusing on problems.

Leave with a plan. Discuss steps to improve your child’s performance.

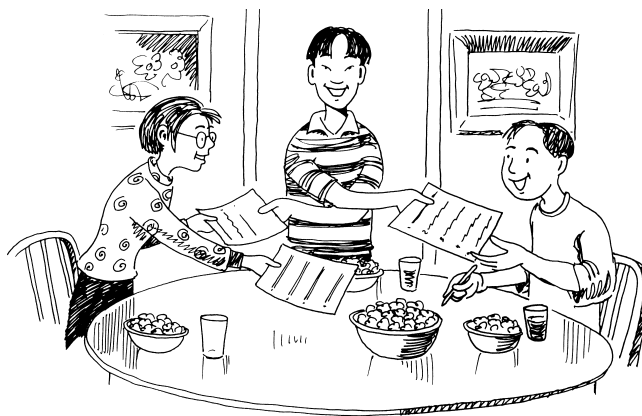
Check back. After a couple of weeks, contact the teacher to ask if the plan is working or if changes are needed. 👍



Gearing up for tests

Middle graders know how to make their lunch and select their school clothes—preparing for tests may be a little tougher. But tests don't have to be unbearable if your child knows how to handle them. Share these tips with your middle grader:

- Have your child rewrite class handouts in her own words. Rephrasing information will help build her understanding. Encourage her to write her class notes on one sheet so she can use the page as an easy-to-read study guide.
- During study sessions, suggest that your child and his friends make up their own practice tests. Then, have them swap papers and take each other's exam. Your middle grader may absorb more information by seeing how someone else interprets the material.



- Tell your middle grader to view the test as a challenge. She's being asked to demonstrate what she's learned, she has practiced hard, and now she's ready to show her stuff! Having a positive attitude about the test can help her score higher. 👍



Activity

Spaghetti chemistry

Here's a fun activity that teaches your middle grader about chemical reactions.

Materials:
tall, narrow glass jar; water; food coloring; baking soda; uncooked spaghetti; vinegar



Fill the jar about $\frac{3}{4}$ full of warm water. Add a drop or two of food coloring (don't make it too dark). Pour two tablespoons of baking soda into the water, and toss in a handful of broken spaghetti. Then, pour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vinegar into the mix.

Stand back and watch what happens. Mixing the vinegar and baking soda creates a chemical reaction that produces carbon dioxide. Because the gas is lighter than water, the bubbles float to the surface, pushing the spaghetti up. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.
3035 Valley Avenue, Suite 103, Winchester, VA 22601
(540) 723-0322 • rfecustomer@aspenpubl.com
ISSN 1540-5540

Parent to Parent Homework hotline

Homework had our son Charlie groaning every night. It wasn't too difficult, and he wasn't behind. He simply dreaded homework.

Charlie phoned his brother, Andrew, at college to ask him for advice. Andrew recommended starting with an energy booster, such as five minutes of jogging, to kick-start Charlie's mind. He also suggested setting time limits for assignments like math or science worksheets. "Racing against the clock is a good challenge," he said, "as long as you hand in quality work."

Andrew's final advice to Charlie: "Do homework at school to free up your evenings. Do it during homeroom, lunch, or the bus ride home—but not during class." We agreed with Andrew but made a rule that Charlie must bring his work home to show us that it's done.

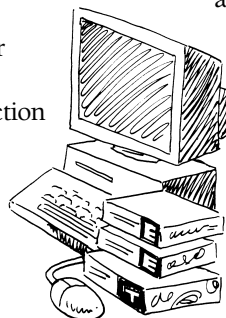
Charlie really appreciated his big brother's advice. He's also been using the same tips for long-term projects. 👍



Q & A Playing electronic games

Q My middle graders enjoy playing computer games. We avoid games that promote violence, but are there benefits to playing other, nonviolent games?

A Experts have identified several benefits of friendlier electronic games. They can provide a valuable introduction to computers, and studies suggest they may improve hand-eye coordination and problem-solving skills. Keep the following gaming tips in mind.



As with most activities, moderation is key. Have your kids keep a log of their game time so they don't overdo it. Check the games' ratings to make sure they're appropriate. Finally, consider playing along with them. It's a great way to have fun together—and you'll find out what the games are really like.

Editor's Note: For more information about game ratings, visit the Entertainment Software Rating Board's Web site at www.esrb.org/esrbratings_guide.asp, or call 800-771-3772. 👍