

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

Get involved

Parent involvement in education takes many forms. By setting strong expectations, asking about school-work, and valuing hard work, you emphasize learning and show your middle grader that you care about her education.

Motivated to read

Is your middle grader a reluctant reader? Try asking him to read to you while you prepare dinner. He could read newspapers, magazines, books on his favorite topic, comics, or whatever he chooses. He'll appreciate the personal attention—and improve his reading skills.

Staying active

After sitting in class all day, your children need some exercise. Suggest that they go outside when they get home. Physical activity will help them burn off extra energy and relax their minds before starting on homework.

Worth quoting

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does." *William James*

Just for fun



"Too loud?"

Preparing for change

Is your middle grader laughing one minute and arguing the next? As children enter puberty, their emotions, bodies, and minds change rapidly. Many parents aren't sure how to support their middle graders through this passage into adulthood.

Here are some of the changes your child can expect, along with some ways you both can handle them.

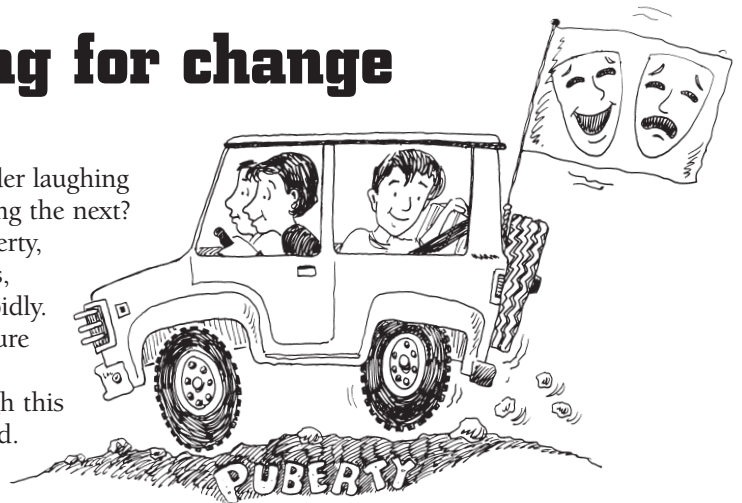
Emotional

Frustrations caused by changing hormones and busy lives may cause middle graders' tempers to flare. Give your child encouragement when her feelings are out of control.

Example: "I understand you're upset. Why don't you take a few minutes to rethink the situation?" Your child can use the time to separate her real emotions from overblown anger.

Physical

Your child's body will get taller, heavier, and stronger. Pimples and body hair will also appear, leaving your child feeling like an alien in his own body. In addition, your youngster may compare himself to celebrities who appear flawless. Talk with him about media images (movies, magazines) and how rare—and often fake—these "perfect" bodies are.



Intellectual

Greater reasoning power, a sharper sense of humor, and an increased ability to evaluate problems make middle graders an inspiration to be around. Encourage your child's growing mental skills and enthusiasm by taking time to discuss topics that interest her. 👍

Be on time

Teachers care if their students are tardy. So do the people your child will deal with later in life, such as employers. Try these suggestions if your middle grader has a tardiness problem:



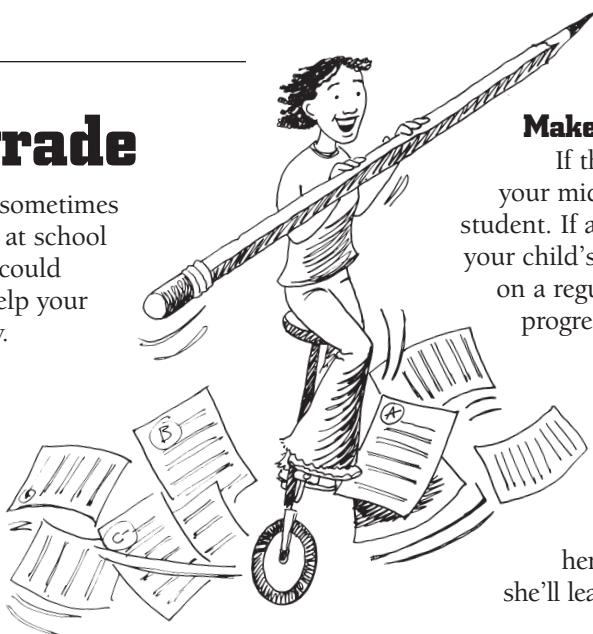
- ◆ Make sure your child knows his school's attendance policies. (Often, several tardies are counted as an absence.) Ask his teachers to alert you if he's tardy more than once.
- ◆ Discuss the reasons behind your middle grader's lateness. Did she stop to talk to friends? Forget something in her locker? Tardiness may also signify bigger concerns, such as academic problems. Sometimes kids are purposely late to class because they're afraid of failure.
- ◆ Remind your child that arriving late affects the whole class by disrupting the lesson. It's disrespectful to teachers and classmates. 👍

Making the grade

Middle graders, just like adults, sometimes have a bad day. But a few bad days at school and some incomplete assignments could add up to falling grades. You can help your child get back on track. Here's how.

Get the facts

Talk with your youngster's teachers. Are missed assignments, poor class participation, or test grades to blame? Also, ask your middle grader what happened. Does he understand the material? Is the child in the next desk disruptive?

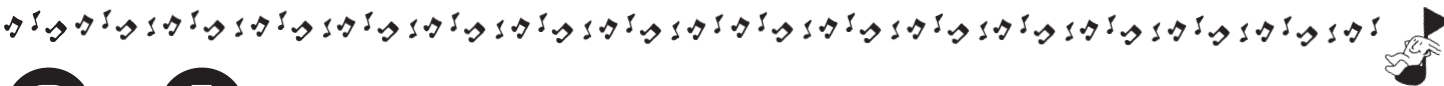


Make a plan

If the material is challenging, suggest that your middle grader study with a more advanced student. If another student is distracting him, have your child's seat changed. Check with the teacher on a regular basis to ask about your youngster's progress.

Step back

Once a plan is made, let your middle grader do the work. Improving her grades can boost self-confidence, lower anxiety, and increase motivation to learn. Remind her that it's her job to earn the grade, and she'll learn only if she makes an effort. 👍



Q & A Shoplifting?

Q My son often has clothes and CDs that I didn't buy—and he can't afford on his allowance. I'm afraid he's shoplifting. What should I do?



A Kids shoplift for a variety of reasons. Some are showing off, some feel pressure from friends, and some like the thrill of getting away with it. Many don't really know why.

Start by asking your son about the items. He could have borrowed them from a friend. But if he gets anxious or upset, there's a good chance they're stolen.

Have a serious talk with your middle grader about the consequences of stealing (being banned from the store, serving time in juvenile detention, having a criminal record). Encourage him to take the items back and apologize to the store manager.

If you suspect that your son is continuing to shoplift, talk to the school counselor or a family therapist. 👍

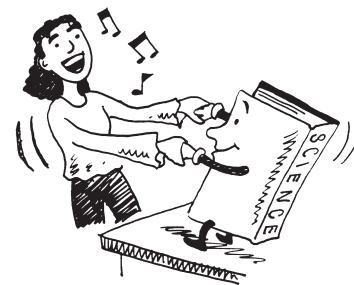
Parent to Parent Memory melodies

My daughter Marin was worried about her science exam, so she asked me to quiz her. Several minutes into the study session, I realized she was having trouble remembering facts and definitions.

During a break, I heard her singing a song I taught her when she was four. "How can you remember that song, but you can't recall something you just read?" I asked. "I remember almost every song I ever learned," Marin remarked.

That got us thinking. Why couldn't she make up songs using her science notes? We began that night with two songs. The next night, she thought of some silly rhymes about bacteria. I also suggested she read her textbook aloud as another way to improve her memory.

Marin did better than she expected on the science test. Finding a way to improve her memory skills was the key to my daughter's studying dilemma. 👍

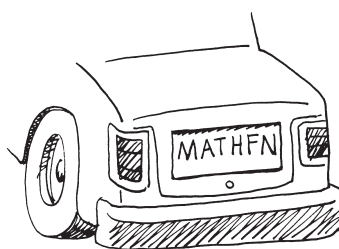


Activity Math on the move

This fun math game teaches relationships between numbers. Try playing it with your kids the next time you're stuck in traffic.

Together, choose several license plates that have numbers. Using any three numbers on the plate, see who can build the highest number by adding or multiplying. *Example:* ABC-824 could make 192 (8 x 24) or 328 (82 x 4). The person who comes up with the largest number wins.

Next, see who can create the smallest number using subtraction or division (8 ÷ 2 - 4 = 0). Try assigning numbers to the license plate letters, and include them in your calculations. *Example:* A = 1, B = 2, etc. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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