

March 2016

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

School (still) comes first

Spring is just around the corner! As the days warm up, your middle grader may be tempted to enjoy the weather instead of studying or going to school. Let her know you expect her to keep up her schoolwork and attendance. Discuss ways she could feel refreshed, like reorganizing her study space or doing homework outdoors.

Late bloomer?

If your child isn't developing as fast as his peers, he may feel self-conscious. Reassure him that his body will catch up. Share your experience—if he's a late bloomer, it's likely one of his parents was, too. Then, suggest he focus on what he can control, such as staying healthy by eating well and exercising.

A humble attitude

Being humble makes it easier for your tween to accept feedback from teachers and coaches and to ask others for assistance. Putting others' needs first is one way to practice humility. For example, she might help a younger sibling with homework even if she'd rather watch YouTube videos.

Worth quoting

"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing." *Walt Disney*

Just for fun

Q: What gets bigger the more you take from it?

A: A hole.



Ready for future careers

Fifty years ago, no one could have predicted the jobs of today. And it's likely to be the same for the jobs of tomorrow. Help your middle grader prepare for a world of change with these suggestions.

Know how to learn

Equip your child to pick up new skills as he goes. When he needs to figure something out, have him brainstorm ways to get information or instructions that will help. This will teach him not to give up if his first idea doesn't work. If he's stuck on a science project, for example, he might consult library books, talk to an aunt in the field, or look online.

Be information-smart

On the job, your middle schooler may need to analyze and understand large amounts of information. He can practice now when he reads material for classes. For instance, he should read with specific questions in mind—looking for the answers will keep him focused. Also,



making an outline of the important points could help him concentrate on the information that matters most.

Work with diverse groups

Your child will likely collaborate with people very different from him at work. When he does group projects, point out that including people from other backgrounds can make his team stronger since they'll bring different viewpoints to the table. Also, encourage him to look for what he has in common with others. Classmates may be from different cultures but have the same favorite school subject or enjoy similar hobbies. 👍

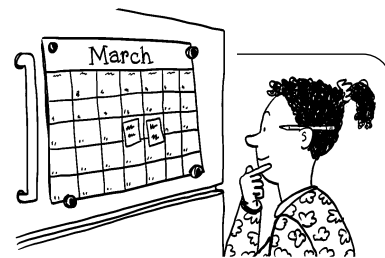
Standardized test success

Your child will probably take standardized tests around this time of year. Here are helpful tips:

- Have your tween post the test schedule on your refrigerator so she'll know the dates she'll be tested on each subject.

- Encourage your middle grader to pay close attention to directions. Many tests require students to go beyond filling in a bubble—she may be asked to show her work on a math problem or select two answers on a multiple-choice question.

- Even if a test is not timed, she should work steadily and avoid spending too much time on a single item so she doesn't get frustrated. When she is finished, she can go back to skipped questions and also double-check her work. 👍



Dealing with dilemmas

Middle graders may sometimes be unsure about the right thing to do, from handling friendship issues to facing peer pressure. Encourage your child to make good decisions with these strategies.



Think through choices. When no answer seems right, talking things through can help. Perhaps your tween doesn't know whether to tell her friend that a classmate said something behind her back. Ask what would happen if she told (the friend may be hurt and the classmate would probably get mad) or didn't tell (her friend might keep trusting someone

she shouldn't). Also, suggest she put herself in the other person's shoes. If she were being bad-mouthed, would she want to know?

Tip: Help your tween understand that there's not always a perfect answer—just a better one for her.

Plan ahead. Wanting to fit in may make it hard for your child to do what's best in the moment. She might know something is wrong, but not know how to get out of it. Role-play scenarios, and brainstorm ways to respond. Say friends want her to distract a store clerk while they steal makeup. She could describe the consequences ("We could be arrested," "I could be kicked off the track team") or go to the restroom and call you, giving her time to avoid the situation. 👍

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Q & A Middle graders need more sleep

Q My son gets decent grades, but his teachers say he's always sleepy and has trouble concentrating. Any suggestions?

A If he's eating well and shows no signs of illness or drug abuse, he may just be tired. The average 13-year-old needs as much as 10 hours of sleep every night.

During adolescence, your son's body signals him to go to sleep and wake up later than normal. So, he may have to train himself to fall asleep earlier. Choose a bedtime when it's easy for him to doze off. Then, move bedtime 15 minutes earlier for a few nights in a row. To make his new sleeping schedule simple to follow, your son should get up at the same time every day.

If your child still has trouble concentrating even with more sleep, contact his pediatrician. 👍



Music to my ears

Music offers a fun way to connect with your tween. Try these ideas.

Make a family playlist

Have everyone pick songs they like and put them together on one list. Let your child show you how—he's probably the expert! Then, turn on your playlist when everyone can sing or dance along (say, while doing chores together).

Hold a lip sync contest

Ask each person to choose a family-friendly song and practice mouthing the lyrics along with it. Pick a date to perform your songs for each other, and vote for a winner.

Name that tune

Listen to the radio or a playlist, and award a point to the person who names each song the fastest. Give an extra point to the first one to name the band or artist. 👍



Parent to Parent

Learn challenging words

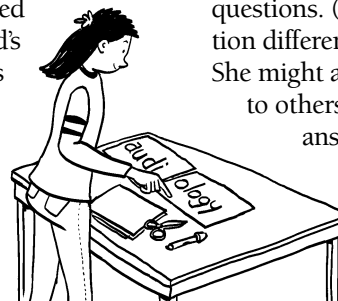
My middle schooler comes across some tough vocabulary terms in her classes. When Melanie got frustrated, I suggested she ask her teachers for ideas on how to approach learning the words.

One teacher encouraged her to think about a word's root. For instance, *audi* is the root of *audible*, *audiology*, and *auditorium*. Piecing together the definitions of the root word (*audi* = hearing, listening, sound) and any prefix or suffix

(*ology* = a subject of study) will help her grasp the meaning.

Another teacher said she should try to use these words as much as possible to get familiar with them. For example, she could quiz herself with open-ended questions. ("How is an *exothermic* reaction different from an *endothermic* one?") She might also use them when talking to others about homework or giving answers in class.

Melanie has been using her words around the house, too—and now we're all learning new vocabulary! 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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