

April 2007

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

Conference follow-up

After a conference with your child's teachers, follow up on points raised. You can make a list of goals with your middle grader. Then, check back with teachers in a few weeks. You'll improve your youngster's chances for success by keeping track of her progress.

Spring fever

When spring fever hits, the best cure can be to get outside. If your child spends some time enjoying the weather, chances are he'll focus more on learning when he's in school. *Tip:* Encourage your middle grader to free up his weekends for outdoor play by finishing assignments during the week.

The other foot

"You don't know how it feels to have so much work to do!" Accept your child's challenge, and switch places for a little while. Read her history textbook and do math problems, while she totals your monthly bills and learns to write checks. The experiment will help each of you understand the other's responsibilities better.

Worth quoting

"The only true gift is a portion of yourself."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Just for fun

Q: What did Napoleon become on his 41st birthday?

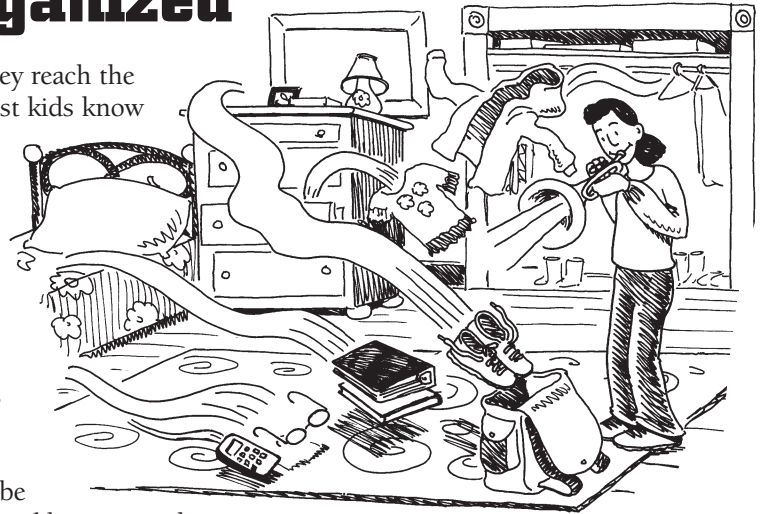
A: A year older!



Get organized

By the time they reach the middle years, most kids know which shirt they want to wear to school the next day. Finding it in their room, however, can be another story.

Try these ways for getting your middle grader organized. She'll be more productive *and* less stressed.



Create habits. Help your child discover new ways to keep things straight. For instance, maybe she can't find her shirt because she leaves dirty clothes in a heap on the floor or doesn't put away clean clothes. Encourage her to keep a hamper in her room for dirty clothes and to get in the habit of putting clean clothes away immediately. Once she gets used to new routines, staying organized will be easier.

Plan for tomorrow.

Suggest that your child get things in order for the next day. Every night after homework, she can create a checklist of items she needs to take with her (track uniform, glasses, trumpet for band practice). Have her leave the list by her backpack so she can double-check that she has everything in the morning.

Give a boost. Point out areas where your youngster is naturally organized.

Example: "Your crafts table is always in order" or "I like how your CDs are stored." You could even ask for her help in organizing your own CDs. Building on your child's strengths can give her confidence to tackle other areas—such as that cluttered closet! 👍

College ahead?

When it comes to college, it's never too soon to start thinking about the future. Try these ideas to get your middle schooler looking ahead:

■ Talk about what your child would like to do when he grows up. How much education does he think is necessary? Have him check specific jobs online at www.bls.gov/oco. He'll see that college is needed for some interesting careers.

■ Whenever college-going siblings, friends, or neighbors visit, bring up college life. Your child will get to hear what it's like living in a dorm, going to games, and participating in college activities. 👍

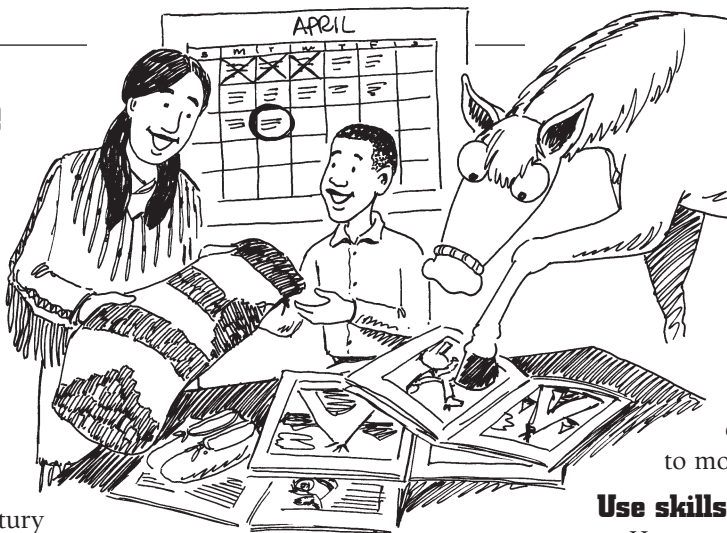


Project time

The middle school years are prime time for school projects. Use these suggestions to help your youngster tackle the ones that come his way.

Map it out

When a project is assigned, suggest that your child jot down topics as he thinks of them. For a report on 19th-century Native Americans, he might list “teepee,” “hunting,” and “buffalo.” Zeroing in on the topic early in the process leaves more time for research and writing.



Develop a schedule

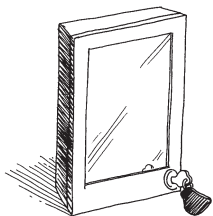
Encourage your middle grader to make a schedule. Suggest that he write down the steps (research, writing a rough draft, revisions, artwork) and figure out how many days he can devote to each. He may want to circle due dates on a large wall calendar. That way, he'll be able to monitor his time as he goes.

Use skills

Have your child think about his talents when deciding on his presentation. Is he good at building? He could create a model. If he's musical, he might write a song about the subject. He'll enjoy doing the project more—and the end result is sure to be better. 👍

Q & A Prescription drug abuse

Q Lately I've been hearing that some middle graders are abusing prescription drugs they find at home. How can I prevent that?



A Unfortunately, abuse of prescription painkillers and household medicines is on the rise among young people. Part of the

problem is that medicine is readily available at home or a friend's house.

Talk to your child about the dangers of using drugs he doesn't need (addiction, illness, death). Let him know that even drugs prescribed by a doctor can be dangerous if misused. Arming your middle grader with facts will make him realize that experimenting with medication is not harmless fun.

Also, keep all medicines (cold tablets, cough syrup, prescription drugs) in a locked cabinet. Having the items out of view will lessen any temptation. Finally, spread the word. Sharing your concerns with other parents will protect your middle schooler and his friends. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Parent to Parent Focus on school

Last fall, I told my daughter Natasha that unless she brought up her grades, she was going to have to sit out the spring soccer season.

Natasha objected to my decision—and then complained that her grades weren't fair. I started by telling her that schoolwork is more important than soccer. Then, I set up a meeting with her teachers. They told us that Natasha did okay on tests, but her homework was often incomplete or late.

So my daughter and I agreed on a plan. She would show me her assignment notebook and finished work each night. And there would be no TV, computer, or cell phone time until homework was done.

I'm happy to say the plan has worked. Now, instead of missing the season, Natasha is going to be the starting goalie! 👍



Attend school events

Going to school events is a great way to stay involved in your child's school.

You can choose from art festivals, band concerts, sports games, science fairs, and more. Even if your child isn't participating, showing up sends the message that you support the school and the students.

Try to find ways around obstacles to attending. If you have small children, ask

relatives or friends to babysit (you can offer to babysit for them next time). If you don't have transportation, seek a ride with a neighbor, or ask in the school office about carpools.



Check your school's Web site or the principal's newsletter for a schedule. Finding even one event per season that can fit into your schedule will show your middle grader you care about her school. 👍