

September 2006

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Rainy-day reading

Does your middle grader complain of being bored on rainy days? Offer to drive him and a friend to the library. They can browse for books, magazines, books on tape, CDs, and videos. If your child doesn't have a library card, suggest that he get one while he's there.

DID YOU KNOW?

Heavy backpacks can cause back problems. To avoid injury, tighten straps so the backpack rides high on your middle grader's back. Have her put heaviest items closest to her body and ask teachers if she can leave some books at home. *Note:* Backpacks should be no heavier than 20 percent of your child's weight.

Family time

Try to make every moment with your children count. Turn trips to the store into quality time by limiting distractions, such as cell phone calls. Use waiting and errand time to chat with your child about a movie he's seen or a favorite song. This will help you stay connected to his interests—and to him.

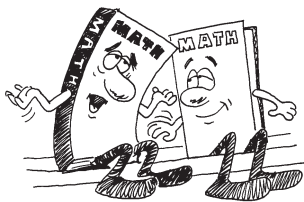
Worth quoting

"I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it." *Thomas Jefferson*

Just for fun

Q: What did one math book say to the other?

A: I have a lot of problems.



Blast off for a great year

This school year, why don't you and your child take the P-E-T approach to school?

That's Planning-Effort-Teamwork—three words that can spell the difference between a so-so year and a great one for your middle grader. Create a successful year with these ideas.

Plan ahead

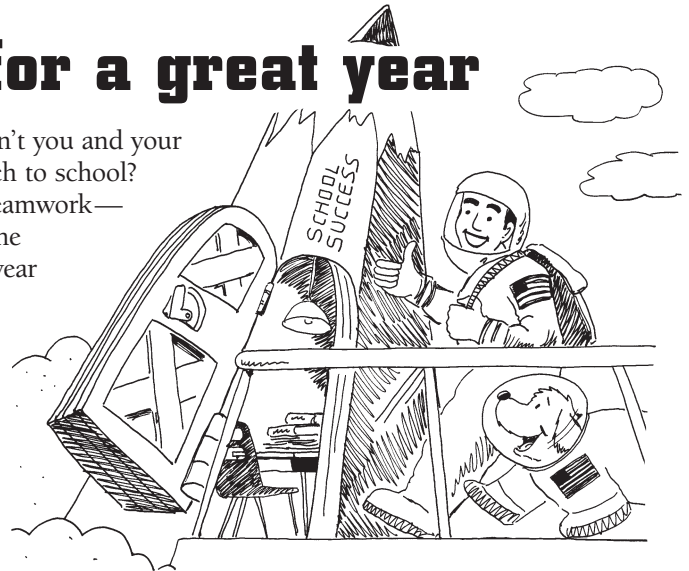
Help your child set goals for the year, such as improving his science grade. Then, have him create a specific plan to achieve those goals. *Examples:* Review textbook every day after school for 30 minutes; start studying for tests as soon as they are announced.

Effort counts

Encourage your child to participate actively in class. Taking notes, following along when the teacher reads, and asking questions all keep your middle grader involved. Also, finishing his homework on time allows him to join in class discussions. Staying "plugged in" to learning will mean better grades at report card time.

Team up

Want your middle grader to be excited about starting a new school year? How you talk about school makes a big difference in your child's attitude. Show support for teachers by making contact early in the year and attending school functions. Ask your middle grader about new classes or extracurricular activities. You'll be sending a strong message that his school is important to you too. 👍



Friends for keeps

"Make new friends, but keep the old."

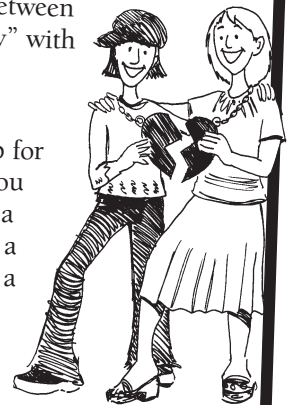
That saying is never more important than in middle school. Help your child keep a balance between the "old" and the "new" with these tips.

Look around. Notice classmates who sign up for the same activities as you do. Sharing interests is a great way to jump-start a conversation and spark a friendship.

Act friendly. Break the ice when meeting new people by making eye contact, saying hello first, and asking questions.

Introductions, please. Think of something your new and old friends have in common. For example, say they like the same music. Invite all of them over to get to know each other, and play that music.

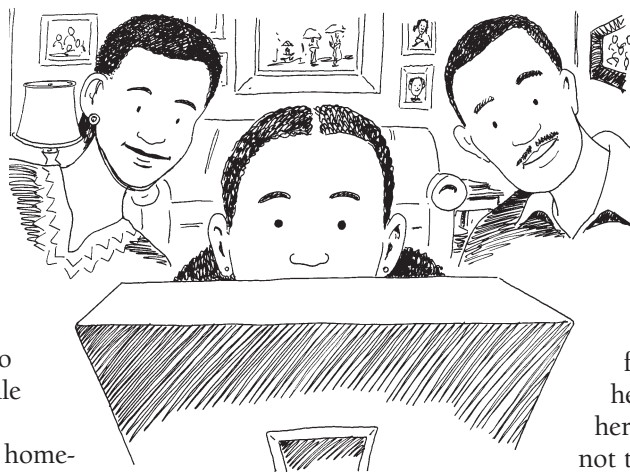
Note: Encourage healthy friendships by asking your child what she admires about her friends. Knowing those traits can help her form new friendships and appreciate old ones. 👍



Safe online

The Internet can be an exciting experience that broadens your child's world. Unfortunately, it can be dangerous too. Keep your child safe with these ground rules:

☑ Put the computer in plain view (family room or kitchen) so you can monitor your child while she's online. Post Internet rules nearby. *Example:* Use only after homework is done, only when a parent is home, and no more than 30 minutes a day.



☑ Make sure your middle grader never posts pictures of herself online or gives out her name, age, address, phone number, city, school, or any other personal information. Also, insist that she never arrange a meeting with someone she meets on the Internet.

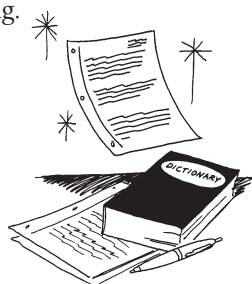
☑ Keep an eye on chat rooms by asking your child what she and her friends are talking about. Encourage her to tell you if something online makes her uncomfortable, and let her know not to respond to online bullying or rude messages. If she receives inappropriate messages, report them to your online provider—and tell her you are doing so. 👍

Edit and revise

Middle graders may think their papers are finished when they write the last sentence. But students need to edit, revise, and rewrite to catch mistakes and improve their writing.

Share this checklist with your youngster:

- ☑ Finish the rough draft early so there's plenty of time for editing.
- ☑ Use a dictionary and/or computer spell-check. Ask yourself these questions: Do sentences end with the correct punctuation mark? Does every sentence and proper noun begin with a capital letter? Are words used correctly (*its* versus *it's*)?



☑ Start at the end of the paper, and read each sentence one at a time. Reading backward can expose misspelled words, missing commas, or extra quotation marks.

☑ Have a parent or friend read the paper to you. Hearing it out loud will help ensure that it makes sense and that the necessary information is there. 👍

Q & A "You're so annoying!"

Q My middle grader often gets annoyed with me, and he's not shy about telling me. What can I do?

A It's not unusual for middle graders to be annoyed with their parents. But you *can* insist that your child treat you with respect. Tell him how his response makes you feel. Calmly say, "I don't appreciate your tone. We can talk when you're ready to be nice."

Kids sometimes use rudeness to distract from the issue at hand. Say, for example, you've asked your child to wash the dishes and he begins yelling. Note his behavior, but continue with your request: "Shouting won't get you out of doing the dishes."

Consider holding a family meeting and sharing ideas. Ask your child what would make him react better. Perhaps your timing is off. Has he just returned from school? Did he have a tough day? And talk about consequences for disrespect (spending time in his room, losing phone privileges). 👍



Parent to Parent Time to volunteer

Like many parents, my work schedule doesn't allow me to be as involved with my daughter's school as I'd like. After talking to her teachers, I was pleased to discover there are plenty of ways I can help out—even with my busy schedule!

Each month I volunteer to type the school newsletter and lunch menus at home. I also make phone calls about class events or school fund-raisers.

Some other parents I know help the librarian tidy up the school library or change the book displays on Saturdays. Others chaperone evening school events, such as a play or science fair, or help set up for parent-teacher conferences.

Volunteering at my daughter's school shows my child that I care about her education—and the jobs I do make a difference for all the students. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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