

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops

### The right message

These days, T-shirts are printed with phrases that are often sarcastic and insulting. Before your middle grader wears one, ask him if the message really represents who he is. Chances are, it doesn't. Let him know that having a more positive image can change how his classmates—and his teachers—see him.

### Awesome science

To get your child excited about science, encourage her to explore the Extreme Science Web site at [www.extremescience.com](http://www.extremescience.com). She'll find cool facts about ocean exploration, wild weather patterns, and outer space. The site also includes pictures of some of the world's strangest creatures.

### School improvement

Want to boost your middle grader's learning? Try reducing his TV time. Less time spent watching television means more time for activities that improve school success. *Examples:* reading, writing, hobbies, exercising.

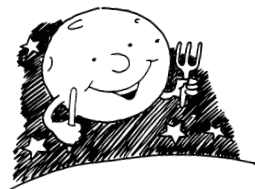
### Worth quoting

"It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." *Harry S. Truman*

### Just for fun

**Q:** When is the best time to invite the moon to dinner?

**A:** When it's full!



## Staying within the limits

Even the best middle graders misbehave now and then. Testing limits is a natural part of growing up—but children need to know that rules can't be broken without consequences.

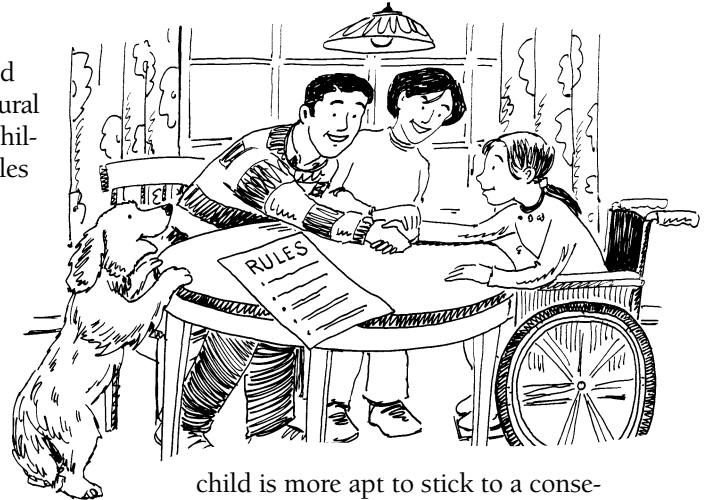
Here are some tips for encouraging your middle grader to stay within the limits.

### Keep your cool

While a child who breaks the rules can be frustrating for parents, it's important to keep calm. Lecturing your middle grader may only make things worse. Treating her with respect can encourage her to cooperate in the future. *Example:* Instead of saying, "You missed the bus again. You're so irresponsible!" try, "Because you missed the bus this morning, you can't go to the mall tonight."


### Agree on results

Talk over consequences with your middle grader. Ask, "What's a fair punishment for breaking this rule?" Your




child is more apt to stick to a consequence he has agreed to. Together, choose a punishment that's immediate, related to the rule, and brief. Clear consequences make rules easier to follow.

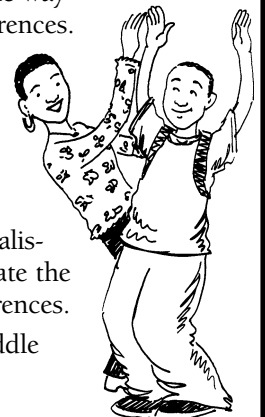
### Rebuild trust

Once your child accepts responsibility for an offense, she needs a chance to get it right. If she breaks a rule, explain the importance of trust, including how it's earned and how it's lost. Then, try to drop the issue. If you stay upset or suspicious, you may only encourage her to misbehave again. Believing in her may help her do the right thing next time. 

## Parent-teacher teamwork

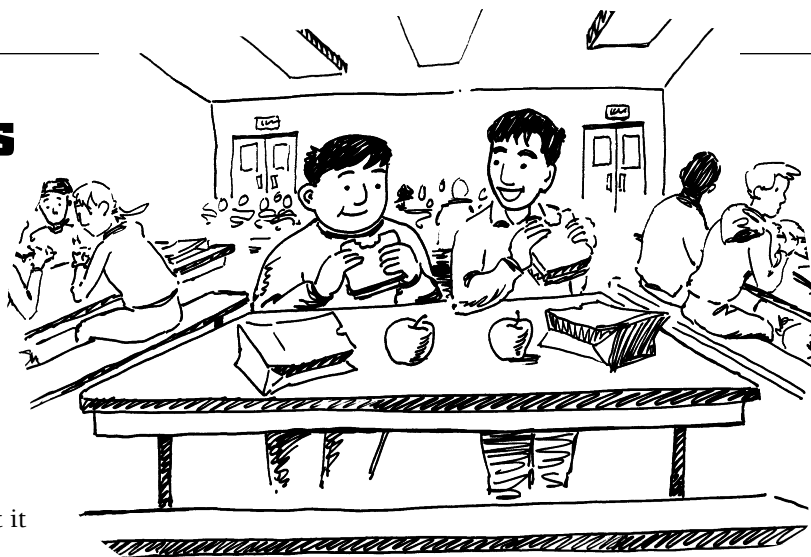
Teachers *and* parents want kids to succeed in school. One way they can help is by teaming up during parent-teacher conferences. Here's how to be a team player during your next meeting:

- Before you go, ask your middle grader about issues that concern him, such as homework or grades. Make a list together.
- While you're there, share the good things happening to your child at school (new friends, exciting class). And be realistic—you can't address every concern in a short meeting. State the most pressing issues, and plan to follow up at future conferences.
- When you get home, discuss the outcome with your middle grader. Be sure to mention the positives, along with any negatives. 



# Caring kids

Middle graders who are raised with love and gentle guidance have a better chance of growing into adults who care about others. Here are some suggestions to encourage compassion in your child:



▲ When you see someone in a difficult situation, point it out to your middle grader.

*Example:* “I feel bad for that man whose car broke down. It’s so hot today. I’m glad the tow truck has arrived.” Talking about other people’s situations can teach your child to notice those around him—and help

him be grateful for all that he has.

▲ Let your child know how you feel when something upsets you. *Example:* “What she said really hurt my feelings.” Exchanges like these may prompt your middle grader to share her own emotions and be more considerate of others.

▲ Encourage your middle grader to reach out to a classmate who is teased or excluded. Doing something to help someone else reinforces the value of compassion and can have a powerful effect on your child. 👍



## Vocabulary boosters

Want to help your kids build stronger vocabulary muscles? Try these exercises.

**Word box.** Encourage your children to write their vocabulary or spelling words on one side of index cards and the definitions on the other side.

Store the cards in an empty shoe box. They can sort through them to refresh their memory before a test.



**Word search.** Take turns choosing a word from your middle graders’ vocabulary lists. Give everyone a dictionary, and see who can find each word the fastest.

**Word game.** Play word games, such as Hangman and Scrabble, as a family. Learning and fun make a great combination! 👍

### 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 • rfcustomer@aspenpubl.com  
ISSN 1540-5540

## Parent to Parent Setting goals

For months, my daughter Mary talked about nothing but playing on the neighborhood soccer team. I suggested that she set some goals to help her prepare for tryouts.

I was pleasantly surprised when she took my advice. First, she wrote down a list of activities, like so many kicks each day. Then, she created a schedule to get her homework done so she’d have time to practice.

Mary trained every day. She even got up early to go running before breakfast. One day I put a sign saying “You can do it!” on her bedroom door.

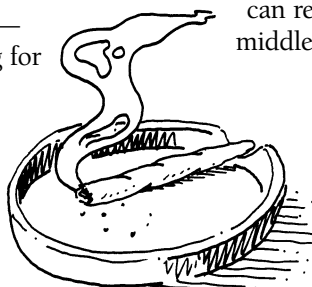
At the tryouts, I was nervous, but Mary seemed calm. She said all those weeks of practice helped her feel confident. Sure enough, she made the team. Setting goals and working hard to achieve them paid off! 👍



## Q & A The truth about pot

**Q** I’ve heard my son use words like “Mary Jane” and “ganja” when he talks to his friends on the phone. I’m concerned that he may be using drugs. What should I do?

**A** Those words and others—weed, skunk, pot—are slang for marijuana. It’s possible that your child is using language like this to sound cool to his friends. But bragging about drugs could lead to trying them.



Let your middle grader know that smoking marijuana can cause loss of coordination, a decreased ability to solve problems, and brain and lung damage. Simply sharing your opinion about drugs can reduce the chance that your middle grader will try them.

*Editor’s Note:* Be aware of the signs of marijuana use, such as bloodshot eyes, dilated pupils, memory loss, and an herbal smell on your son’s clothes. 👍