

January 2006

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Time to read

Could your child use a little more reading practice? Suggest that he take along something to read while waiting in line at the store or doctor's office. He can choose a book, a magazine, or even comics—the important thing is for him to read!

Phone SOS

If your kids constantly argue over using the telephone, try this. Help them create a schedule that gives each of them their own time slot (for example, 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.). By setting a schedule, your children can let their friends know when to call them, and there will be fewer disagreements.

"Well done!"

Middle graders need lots of encouragement. Whenever possible, comment on how well your child does something. *Example:* "You were very patient with your little brother today." Praising her with specifics will invite more good behavior while showing her you notice her efforts.

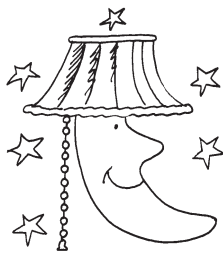
Worth quoting

"The best time to hold your tongue is the time you feel you must say something or bust." *Josh Billings*

Just for fun

Q: Why does the moon shine when the sun sets?

A: Because even the sun needs a night-light!



Beating peer pressure

All children face peer pressure at one time or another—good and bad. Wanting to be part of the crowd can encourage kids to study hard or get involved in a worthwhile community project. It can also tempt them to try something serious, such as skipping school or using drugs.

Help your middle grader handle peer pressure with these suggestions.

Explore situations. Talk with your child about the kinds of peer pressure she might encounter and ways to handle it. For instance, she could practice ways to respond if offered a cigarette. She might say, "No, thanks. I don't want to smell like an ashtray." Knowing how to deal with pressure in advance can help her when a difficult situation arises.

Gain confidence. Kids who experiment with dangerous behaviors are sometimes searching for their true identity. Encourage your middle grader to keep busy with hobbies and activities she enjoys and to learn new ones, such as scrapbooking or playing a sport. Her successes will give her the confidence to make smart choices—and avoid dangerous ones.

Stand strong. Help your middle grader decide where she stands on ethical issues, such as stealing and lying. Have her think about how she would feel if someone stole from her or lied to her. Being aware of what she believes can make it easier for her to say, "That's not for me," and move on to better options. 👍



Parent participation

Your middle grader may be getting older, but he still needs you to be involved at school. Here are several ways to participate in your child's education:

- Stay in regular contact with your child's teachers. Be sure they know how they can reach you (phone, e-mail, written notes) and the best time to do so.
- Ask the school how you can get involved in curriculum or activity committees, or creating and revising school policies.
- Many schools have a parent resource center. You'll find books, tapes, and brochures on parenting, as well as information about what's going on at school. *Tip:* If your school doesn't have a resource center, you could help start one. 👍

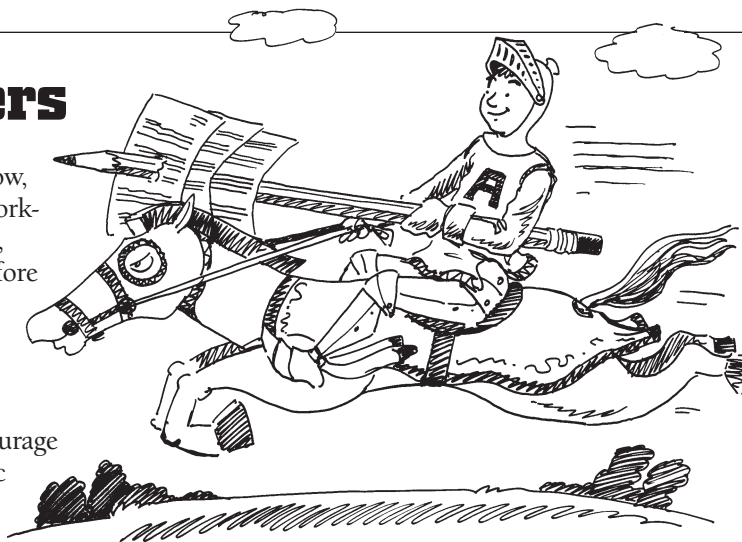


Project pointers

James has a project due tomorrow, but he's not worried. He started working on it soon after it was assigned, and he will review it once more before turning it in. Like this student, your middle grader can improve his project skills. Here's how:

▲ Project assignments often allow students to choose the topic. Encourage your middle grader to select a topic that interests him. The more eager he is to learn about the subject, the harder he's likely to work.

▲ Help your child set deadlines for different parts of the project so he doesn't leave everything for the final night.



Example: Complete the research one week after the assignment is given.

▲ Suggest that your middle grader get his project done several days before it's due in case he wants to redo something. Let him know that finishing early reduces stress and helps him do better work.

Tip: Remind your child to seek help from you or his teacher as

soon as he sees a problem. Waiting could mean he doesn't have the information or answers he needs to turn the assignment in on time. 👍

Listen up!



There are a lot of things kids could listen to during class. A friend wants to reveal a secret. Others are whispering about what happened at lunch yesterday. But what's going on up front—the lesson—is what your middle grader needs to hear.

Here are some tips for sharpening listening skills and staying focused on learning. Share them with your child:

■ Try repeating in your mind what the teacher is saying. See if you can summarize it as though you were going to tell someone else.

■ Ask yourself questions, such as "What is the main idea?" "How does this relate to what I already know?" Think about possible test questions.

■ Write down important ideas and concepts—taking notes forces you to pay attention.

■ Don't let stray thoughts distract you. If necessary, jot them down so you can deal with them after class. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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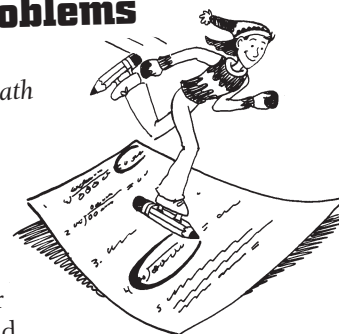
Q & A Solving math problems

Q How can I help my middle grader understand math word problems?

A Start by suggesting that she read each problem at least twice before trying to solve it. She will have a better chance of understanding what's being asked instead of feeling confused.

While your middle grader is reading, have her circle key words, such as "distance," "speed," and "diameter," that indicate the kinds of information she needs to find. This will help her formulate an appropriate equation that will lead her to the answer.

Your daughter could also draw a picture or diagram of the problem and review classroom worksheets to see how similar problems were solved. 👍



Parent to Parent Online matters

When we bought our first computer, my family was excited about exploring the Web, but we also wanted our kids to be safe. So we set some guidelines.

First, we insist they surf with a purpose, such as to do homework or e-mail a friend. We give each of them a time limit when they're using the computer. Also, we let the kids know they should never post or e-mail their

photographs or any other personal information, such as their name, address, and phone number.

For us, the Internet is a family affair. Together, we browse through favorite sites and look for new ones. This keeps us up-to-date on our middle graders' changing interests—and lets them know we're aware of how they're spending their time online. 👍

