

May 2008

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Celebrate success

Celebrate your child's efforts this year. Perhaps he tackled a foreign language, raised his English grade, or sang in the chorus. You might take him to a sporting event, make his favorite dinner, or go canoeing. Recognizing his hard work will encourage him to keep it up!

Divorce help

A family split is hard on everyone. Help your youngster handle divorce by discussing details of her new day-to-day life (when she will see each parent, where she'll spend birthdays and holidays). Getting her input can ease anxiety during a difficult time.

Overcoming shyness

Some children are naturally shy. One way to encourage your middle grader to be more sociable is to suggest that he join a group that shares his interests (Boy Scouts, jazz club). Having a common focus makes it easier to approach and talk with others.

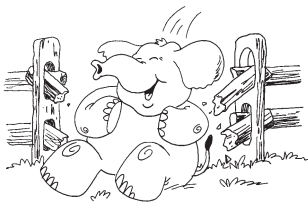
Worth quoting

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."
Dr. Seuss

Just for fun

Q: What time is it when an elephant sits on a fence?

A: Time to get a new fence!



Summer fun

School's almost over. Now what? Help your middle grader stay active—and have fun—with these summertime ideas:

1. Check your community center or high school for open gym hours. Your middle grader can practice tumbling or play Ping-Pong, basketball, or badminton.
2. Is your child a horse lover? She might be able to spend time at a nearby farm or stables in exchange for caring for the animals.
3. Look for free programs at museums, zoos, and nature centers. Check with your chamber of commerce or scan your library's bulletin board for suggestions.
4. Your parks and recreation department, YMCA, or 4-H center may run low-cost camps (arts and crafts, sports, hiking). Visit Web sites for details.
5. Suggest that your middle grader and a friend do jobs around the neighborhood. They might wash windows, pull weeds



in gardens, or play with youngsters while the parents are home.

6. Consider a study skills course, a computer keyboarding class, or summer school. Ask the school office for brochures.
7. Find nearby fairs and festivals to attend. Your child might even enter one of the competitions (photography, vegetables, animals). Have her check the newspaper for upcoming events.
8. Local theaters might stage summer productions where children can sing, act, or work on the stage crew. Call their offices for information. 👍

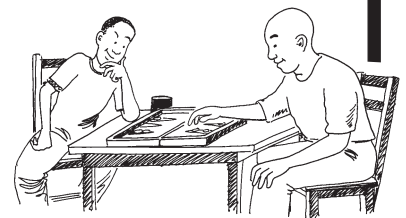
Keep learning alive

Every middle grader has a summer job—learning. Keep your child's mind sharp with these tips.

Play strategy games. Build thinking skills with games like backgammon, Life, Monopoly, Mastermind, Battleship, and Clue. Leave games around when friends are over, and try to play with your youngster, too.

Volunteer at the library. Shelving books will help with organization, while registering kids for summer programs can improve communication skills. *Bonus:* Being surrounded by books means your middle grader will probably read more.

Gain a skill. Encourage your youngster to learn something new. He might use the Internet to teach himself songs on the guitar, or have his grandfather show him how to use tools. 👍



Dream big

Does your child dream of swimming in the Olympics, becoming a pediatrician, or directing movies?

Help your child achieve his dreams by encouraging and supporting his ideas. After all, someone will reach those goals—it just might be your youngster! Try these suggestions.

Ask questions

Talk to your child regularly about his hopes and ambitions. Ask, “What do you want to be when you



grow up?” or “What would your ideal job or hobby be?” Your interest will show that you believe in him.

Take action

Together, brainstorm ways he can work toward his dream. The Olympic hopeful can join a swim team, while the future doctor could take after-school science classes, and the budding filmmaker might use the family camcorder to make movies.

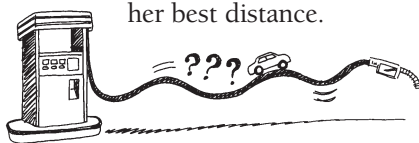
Make it real

Find books and articles to motivate your middle schooler. Try an autobiography like *Gifted Hands* (Ben Carson) or an inspirational story like *Dream* (Susan Bosak). Help him talk to people who have fulfilled their dreams, such as a reporter for your city newspaper or a local college football star. 🤝

Math mind

Your child may not realize it, but math is everywhere. Show her ways to practice with these suggestions:

■ Have your middle grader estimate how far she can hit a baseball or throw a Frisbee. She can record her actual distances and compare them to her estimates. Challenge her to beat her best distance.



■ On car trips, put her in charge of tracking gas mileage. She can write down the odometer settings at each fill-up and figure out the miles per gallon. Or have her compare in-town and highway mileage.

■ Let your youngster keep score when you go bowling or play miniature golf. What is each person’s average per frame or hole?

■ Ask her to calculate the tip when you eat out. Have her subtract the tax first, and give you different options (15%, 18%, 20%). 🤝

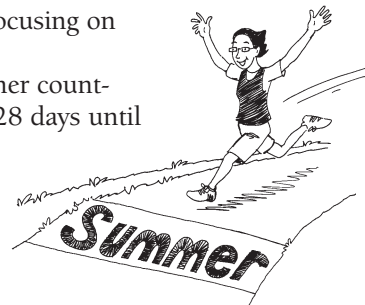


Parent to Parent Home stretch

Last spring, my daughter Alicia’s grades began to drop. It seemed that she didn’t feel like working anymore and just wanted the year to end. Her guidance counselor gave me a great idea to keep her going.

Since Alicia likes to run track, the counselor suggested that I compare her effort in school to a race. I told my daughter that when runners “hit the wall” and feel like they can’t keep going, focusing on the finish line can help them make a final push.

This made sense to Alicia, so we started a summer countdown on a whiteboard in the kitchen. She wrote “28 days until summer” across the top and numbered 28 boxes underneath. Each day when she finished her homework, she crossed off another box. Before she knew it, she had completed all her work, and summer was here! 🤝



Q & A Buy me that!

Q My son Evan keeps asking for video games, expensive sneakers, and other things his friends have. How can I help him be satisfied with what he has?

A You can start by involving your son in the family budget process. Talking about what your household budget has to cover can help him understand when you say, “We can’t afford that.” Discuss alternatives, such as swapping

games with friends or buying less expensive shoes.

Also, describe how you save for big items like a car or furniture. Together, come up with ways that he can earn money or save allowance to buy what he wants. He’s likely to think twice about purchases when he’s spending his own money!

Another idea is to take your son to work with you one day. Seeing what you do to earn a paycheck will help him learn the value of money. 🤝



OUR PURPOSE

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

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