

November 2006

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

Money myth

Does your child think money grows on trees? To help him appreciate the value of a dollar, have him divide the price of something he wants by how much he would earn at a minimum-wage job. *Example:* At \$5.15 an hour, a \$45 baseball mitt would mean almost 9 hours of work.

Needs or wants?

Setting priorities can make life easier for everyone. Suggest that your child separate “needs” (studying, chores) from “wants” (basketball tryouts, going to the mall). If she understands that needs come first, she’s more apt to get them done so she can move on to her wants.

Sign of trouble

A call from school that your middle grader is cutting class could mean something’s wrong. Does he understand the material? Is a friend encouraging him to skip? Talk to your child and his guidance counselor to help get him back on the right path.

Worth quoting

“You can complain because roses have thorns, or you can rejoice because thorns have roses.”

Tom Wilson

Just for fun

Joe: Great news! The teacher said we have a test today, come rain or shine.

Sam: And what’s so great about that?

Joe: It’s snowing outside!



Hooray for homework!

Anthony has his evening planned. He’ll do his math homework before dinner, then follow up dessert with English and science. Afterward, he can unwind from a busy day.

Sound impossible? It’s not. Help your child make homework go like clockwork with these strategies.

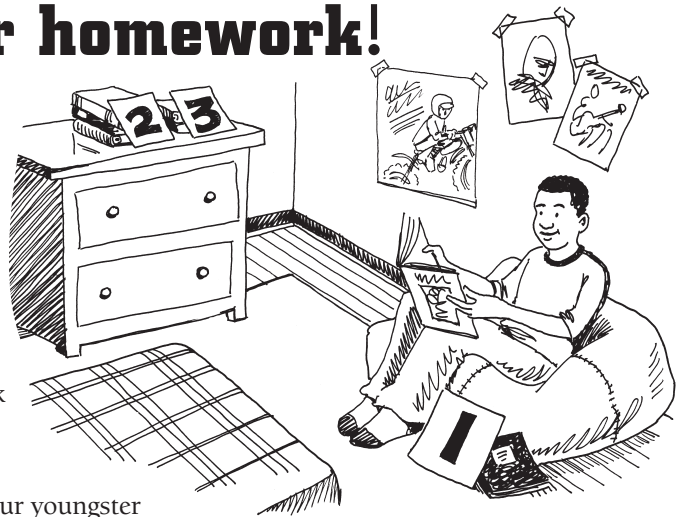
Think it through

Before he begins, have your youngster make a to-do list. *Example:* write a poem, read a history chapter, solve 10 math problems.

Then, suggest that he number the tasks, from toughest to easiest, and start with the hard stuff. This “save the easiest for last” strategy will help him finish on a high note, perhaps inspiring him to get in some extra studying.


Think about time

Ask your child to consider different time slots he can use to get work done. For instance, maybe he could set aside a weekend morning or Sunday night.



Also, many middle graders have time during study period or after lunch to tackle homework. Encourage your child to complete one assignment at school each day. The more he does then, the more time he’ll have for fun later.

Think positive


Help your middle grader see homework as a chance to prove his independence by getting his work done on time and by himself. Boost his confidence by telling him, “Homework gives you a chance to show all that you know.” And give him a thumbs-up when he does just that. 

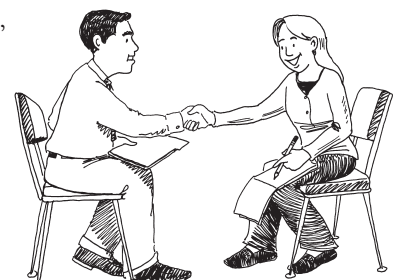
Conference time

Want to know how your middle grader is doing in school? Don’t wait for report cards! Attend parent-teacher conferences to stay connected to your child and her teacher. Try these ideas to make conferences more productive.

■ **Write a list ...** about your child’s home life, habits, and hobbies. This information will help teachers understand your child better.

■ **Stay friendly ...** but focused. Time is limited, so ask important questions (strengths, weaknesses, test skills), and keep small talk to a minimum.

■ **Take notes ...** so you’ll remember what’s been covered. Then, you can report back to your middle grader and help her create a plan for success. 



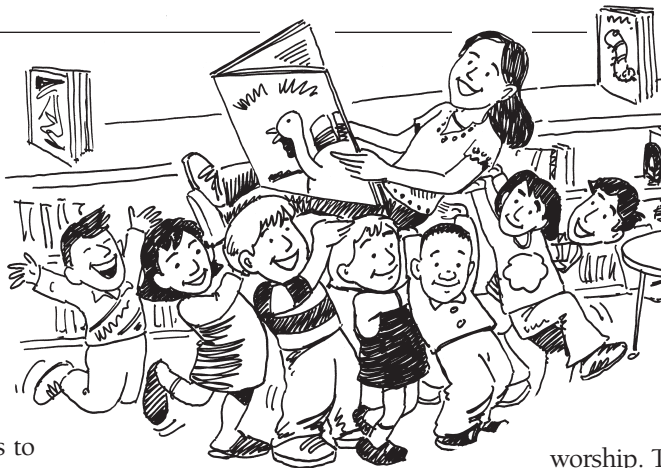
Giving back

If your child shovels her elderly neighbor's driveway, she'll come home feeling better. And it's easy to see why.

Helping others has many benefits for your middle grader, including boosting self-esteem and keeping her involved in rewarding activities. Use these tips to encourage your child to begin volunteering.

How to choose

Consider your youngster's interests. Does she like socializing? Helping out at a soup kitchen may be a good fit. Is she an



outdoors kid? She may enjoy cleaning up the park. For your bookworm, suggest reading to children at the library. Your sports star may like teaching special-needs children to play soccer.

Where to look

Begin by calling the school office for suggestions. Also, you could contact nursing homes, community centers, and places of worship. They may need volunteers to lead bingo games, babysit, or make holiday gift baskets.

What to ask

Take your child to visit several programs, and help her pick the right one. Together, talk to the director about the duties, the age of volunteers, and how many hours of help are needed. Remember: The typical middle grader probably has only a few hours a week to spare. 👍

Yesterday and today

History is more than a subject in school. It surrounds your middle grader—in the form of grandparents, aunts, and uncles. And they are all full of stories that can bring history to life.

The next time your extended family gets together for dinner, have your child ask a question, such as "What is the most important historical event of your lifetime?" Watch the debate fly as people consider whether the invention of television, the Vietnam War, or space travel changed the course of history the most.

Or, during holiday visits, encourage your middle grader to interview relatives about their lives. "How did you do research before the Internet?" "Who do you think was our best president?"

Learning about the past from those who have lived it will help your child connect the history he studies in school to his own life. 👍




Q & A "I'm too old for hugs"

Q My son says he's "too old" for hugs and kisses. How can I continue to show him I love him?

A While your child never outgrows your love, he probably needs you to show it in different ways now. Try simple gestures, such as eye contact and a heartfelt smile, or a pat on the back. A warm greeting when he returns from school sends the message that you care.

Other suggestions include leaving encouraging notes on your middle grader's desk ("Great job on that quiz!" or "Keep up the hard work"), or drawing a heart on his dinner napkin. Meet him on his turf by e-mailing him an occasional "I love you."

An important way to show your love is simply by communicating. Make time to listen to your child's ideas and to do things he enjoys. 👍



Parent to Parent Easing stress

I was worried about my daughter. She seemed tense all the time. When she forgot her backpack three days in a row and burst into tears, I knew we had to talk.

Liza admitted she felt overwhelmed and had fallen behind at school. When I asked to see her assignment sheets, she wailed, "I can't find them!" One look in her backpack explained a lot. It

was filled with wads of crumpled papers, and her binder was a mess.

I called her teachers to get to the bottom of things. It turned out Liza just needed to finish a few past assignments and keep better track of upcoming work.

I helped her get her desk and backpack organized and agreed to check them weekly. Liza seemed relieved to talk about her problems—and feeling more prepared has eased her anxiety. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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