

October 2006

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

Figure it out

Encourage scientific thinking by tapping into your child's natural curiosity. Ask her how something electronic works (an iPod or a computer, for example). If she has an idea, let her explain her theory. If not, invite her to guess. Then, have her browse the Web to find the answers.

Offer to help

Kids can be reluctant to ask their parents for help. If you notice your child struggling, make a suggestion. *Example:* "Want to talk about ideas for the science fair?" That may be just the ticket to get him thinking!

Sleep solution

Most middle graders need 10 hours of sleep each night. But winding down can be hard for them. Suggest that your child relax before bed by reading, doing a crossword puzzle, or drawing a picture. Calm activities can help prepare his mind to rest.

Worth quoting

"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined." *Henry David Thoreau*

Just for fun

Q: What has 22 legs and goes crunch, crunch, crunch?

A: A football team eating potato chips.



Raising responsible kids

"I don't want to do laundry. That's not my job."

Sound familiar? If you're having trouble getting your middle grader to take on more responsibility, you're not alone. Children this age want to handle things on their own—but not necessarily the things you want them to handle! Here are some ways to get your child on the right path.

Decide together

Invite your middle grader to help solve a family problem (keeping the house clean, sharing the computer). Letting her be involved tells her you value her input and teaches her how decisions are made. Plus, she's more likely to act responsibly when she has a say in the plan.

Make a list

Encourage your child to do things for herself by giving her a list of responsibilities. *Examples:* do laundry, help prepare meals, walk and feed the dog. You may want to include reasonable deadlines for completing each task.

Step back

Try not to "fix" things if your middle grader doesn't do them the way you would like. She may feel discouraged and not want to take responsibility next time. Instead, gently point out a way she could improve. "If you wash the light and dark clothes separately, you won't get spots on your white shirts."

Note: Remind your child of her responsibilities, but keep it



simple. You could say, "Study time," or "Trash, please." This approach will point her in the right direction without opening up room for argument. 👍

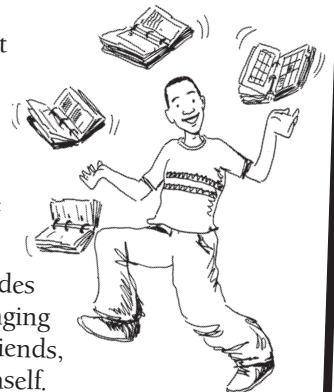
Juggling act

In today's world, busy schedules aren't just for adults. Share these tips to help your child juggle his days:

- Have him put a day planner in his binder to record homework due dates and activities. *Option:* He could create calendar reminders that pop up when he logs on to the home computer.

- Each week, suggest that your middle grader look at the month ahead. This will help him plan projects and schedule study time.

- Make sure he includes room for exercise, hanging out with family and friends, and downtime for himself. Taking time off can boost productivity. 👍

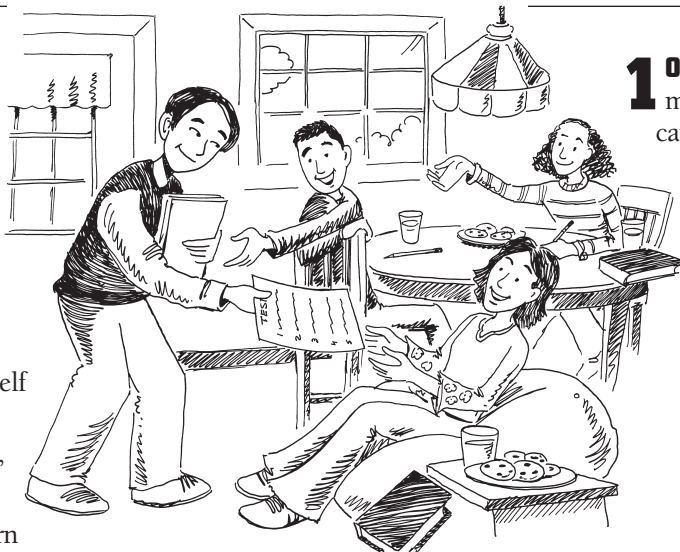


Testing 1-2-3

Preparing for tests should be done:

- a) alone
- b) with friends
- c) by quizzing yourself
- d) all of the above

If you answered “d,” you’re correct! Help your middle grader learn this three-step approach to test success:



1 Organize study groups with classmates to make review time more effective. Students can compare information, ask questions, and refresh their memories by discussing their notes and quizzing each other. Hold several short sessions (about 30 minutes each) to keep things focused. *Note:* Suggest that your child seek out students who work hard, rather than just asking his close friends.

2 Create study guides using class notes and textbooks. Watch for facts and names in bold or italics, along with what the teacher emphasized in class. Highlight and underline the most important information.

3 Make up tests, and create answer keys. Take your own test at home, and then swap sheets with study buddies for more practice. Also, find online quizzes to take when working by yourself (“Google” the keywords you’re studying). 👍

Drinking: Catch it early

When it comes to alcohol, early detection can keep a bad idea from becoming a nightmare.

But how do you know if your middle grader is drinking? Look for these warning signs: bloodshot eyes, excessive mood swings, lower grades, poor school attendance, and a change in friends.



If you suspect your middle grader has tried alcohol, seek help from your school counselor or pediatrician. Talk to your child about your concerns, and tell him about the dangers of drinking (problems thinking clearly, addiction, legal trouble).

Let your child know that kids who start drinking in middle school are more likely to end up with a serious drinking problem. And tell him that research shows young drinkers may remember 10 percent less of what they learn than their classmates do.

For facts and advice, point your child to a Web site just for middle graders: www.thecoolspot.gov. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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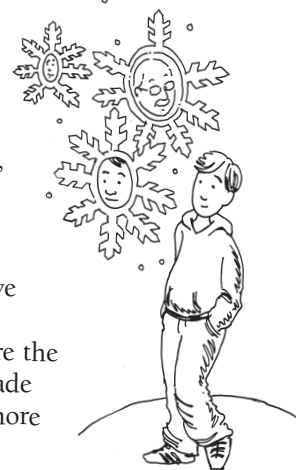
Parent to Parent Time for tolerance

The other day, my son and I were stuck behind a slow-moving car in a parking lot. Finally, the car parked, and we drove past it. As we did, I heard Eric mutter a nasty remark about older drivers.

I was shocked he would be so intolerant. We talked, and I explained that it’s wrong to make rude remarks because someone looks or acts differently.

“Everyone says those things,” Eric replied. I let him know that was no excuse and explained how insensitive comments can grow into something worse.

“People are like snowflakes,” I told him. “No two are the same, but each is remarkable in his own way.” That made sense to Eric, and I’m glad to say I haven’t heard any more of those comments. 👍



Q & A Everyday reasons to read

Q My child reads only what she’s assigned for homework. How can I get her to read more?

A There are simple ways to encourage daily reading in your middle grader. Ask relatives and family friends to give your child books as gifts. Suggest topics (space travel, horses) that interest her so she’s more likely to read the books.



Try sending your child an e-mail to get her reading about an upcoming event. *Example:* “This is the weekend we’re going camping. Take a look at this Web site I found about cooking over a campfire...”

Use newspapers and magazines to grab your middle grader’s attention. Find items that tie into her interests. Then, leave them on the kitchen table with a sticky note: “Look at this great article on Arabian horses!” 👍