

September 2007

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### Daily update

Improve communication with your middle grader by meeting him on his own turf. Send him a daily e-mail asking about his day (“What did you do in science lab?” “What fundraiser did the SGA decide on?”). His response will give you something to talk about at dinner or bedtime.

### Learning about others

Help your child learn about different cultures, and she’s likely to be more tolerant of others. Ask your librarian for teen books set in foreign lands, or rent age-appropriate movies filmed abroad. *Bonus:* If the movie has subtitles, your youngster will get reading practice, too.

### Smoking stinks

Does your middle grader want bad breath or yellow teeth? Probably not. Tell him that’s what he’ll get from smoking, and you’ll give him two big reasons for saying no to cigarettes. While parents worry about future health issues, middle graders may be more afraid of what can happen right now.

### Worth quoting

“Anything is possible, but you have to believe.”

Lance Armstrong

### Just for fun



**Mom:** Why aren’t you doing very well in history?

**Jillian:** Because the teacher keeps asking about things that happened before I was born!

## Study smarts

Your child attends school every day, is well behaved in class, and completes her homework. Why aren’t her grades better?

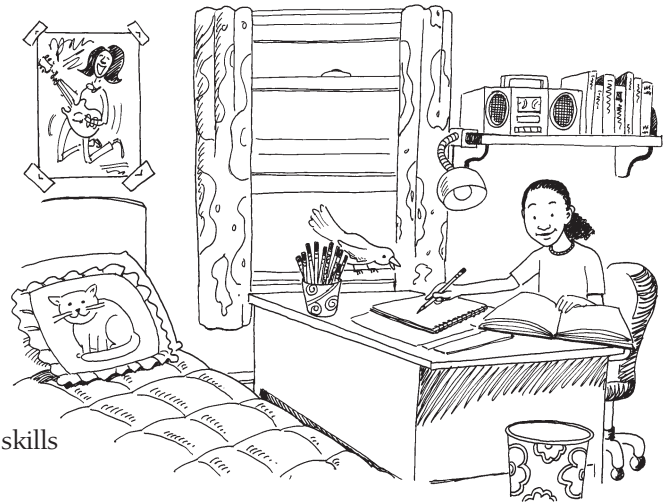
The answer may lie in how she studies. Guide your middle grader toward developing excellent study skills with these strategies.

### Be active

Explain the difference between studying and “active studying.” Reading her textbook is studying; writing an outline as she reads is *active* studying. Here are other ideas to share with your child: Jot down facts and dates. Type class notes. Highlight important points. Recite vocabulary definitions, names, and math formulas on tape, and play them back. The more senses (hearing, touching, seeing) your child uses, the more she will remember.

### Make choices

Help your youngster decide where, when, and how to study—depending on how she learns best. Does she focus better with her door closed or open? Is she inspired or distracted by music? Can she concentrate more after school or after dinner? Is she more productive studying alone or with a buddy? Have her try each way to see what works better. Figuring out her own studying style will help her achieve her best.



### Stay on course

Have your child write out a weekly study schedule. She can block out times for each subject, quiz, or test. Encourage her to monitor her schedule and revise it as needed. Tell your middle grader, “A schedule is a plan, not a contract.” She’ll see that having an agenda will keep her on the right track. 👍

## Keys to success

You can set your middle grader up for success this school year with some basic pointers. Show him this checklist, and you’ll help him get off on the right foot:

- I attend school every day unless I’m sick, and I get there on time.
- I get 8–10 hours of sleep each night.
- I eat a healthy breakfast in the morning.
- I pay attention in class.
- I write down my assignments for each subject.
- I start my projects when I get them.
- I complete my homework on time.
- I read for pleasure each day. 👍



# Confident me!

Charlie walks tall, has a spring in his step, and is sure of his next move. Colin is hesitant, treads cautiously, and watches others before acting.

Help your child gain Charlie's confidence, and you'll give him a better chance at succeeding in school—and in life. Try these tips:

■ Surprise your middle grader with a poster of his best moments. Include award ribbons, nice notes from teachers, and pictures of him doing favorite activities.



Hang the poster in his room to remind him of his accomplishments.

■ Think of ways your child can assist others. Maybe he can help a neighbor paint a fence or teach a child to play basketball. Their appreciation will provide a nice boost to his self-esteem.

■ Look for opportunities to praise your youngster. If he hears, "You're not doing that right," he'll think, "Why should I try?" Instead, find something good he did each day ("Look! You got five problems right!"). When you show that you believe in your middle grader, he'll believe in himself. 👍



## Stay involved

Your child may act like she wishes you would disappear sometimes. But when it comes to school success, middle graders still need their parents around.

### Why?

When parents get involved in learning, student achievement soars. Middle graders score higher on tests, turn in better projects, and participate more in class if they know their parents care.



### When?

You can be involved in your child's learning at any time of day. Talk about homework while you're making dinner. Watch a documentary together at night. Visit a museum on the weekend. You'll show your child that you think learning is important.

### Where?

Teachers will welcome your commitment, whether you help in the classroom, volunteer at evening events, or simply support your own child at home. Call or e-mail your middle grader's teachers to see what you can do—in or out of school—to help. 👍

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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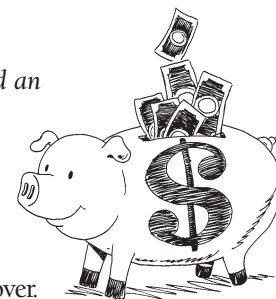
## Q & A Their own money

**Q** Middle school seems like a good time to start giving my child an allowance. Any suggestions?

**A** Having an allowance lets your middle grader experience firsthand the benefits—and pitfalls—of money management.

How much to give your child depends on several factors, including your income and the expenses you expect him to cover. But any amount will help your middle grader learn money basics like saving, planning ahead, and making good spending choices.

Go over what your youngster will use his allowance for (snacks, movies, saving toward big purchases). Then, help him develop a plan for how much to put away and how much to use each week. You can pass on your own money-management secrets by discussing how you make decisions on spending and saving. 👍



## Parent to Parent Keeping current

Last fall my daughter Brianna asked me how I planned to vote in the upcoming elections. She was particularly interested in my choice for mayor. I was impressed by her curiosity—and a little embarrassed because I really didn't know much about the candidates. I suggested that we learn together by following the developments in the news.

Each morning we checked the paper for information on the mayoral



race. After school, Brianna would read the online version to see if anything new had happened. We also watched a debate on our local news station.

I encouraged Brianna to look at both sides of the issues by reading what the candidates said in speeches. We looked up quite a few words in the dictionary, such as "conservative," "lobbyist," and "caucus." By the time Election Day rolled around, my daughter had learned a lot about local government and the election process. And I was right there, learning alongside her! 👍