

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

On that note

Middle school courses cover a lot of ground.

Taking good notes will help your child keep up. Encourage her to write down key points instead of every word, noticing items the teacher emphasizes or repeats. Also, note taking will go faster if she uses shorthand like symbols, abbreviations, or the first letters of words (“&” for *and*, “imp” for *important*).

Together time

Spending even a few minutes one-on-one with your middle grader each day will help you stay connected. Look for ways to make the time enjoyable. Invite him to show you how to do his latest Frisbee trick, for example, or tell him a funny story from your day.

Meet the staff

Secretaries and other staff play huge roles in running your tween’s school—and they can be a terrific resource. Say hello when you’re in the office, and encourage your child to do the same. The staff will feel appreciated, and you’ll both feel more comfortable asking for help if you need something.

Worth quoting

“The expert at anything was once a beginner.” *Helen Hayes*

Just for fun

Q: When you lose something, why is it always in the last place you look?

A: Because when you find it, you stop looking!



In gear for a new year

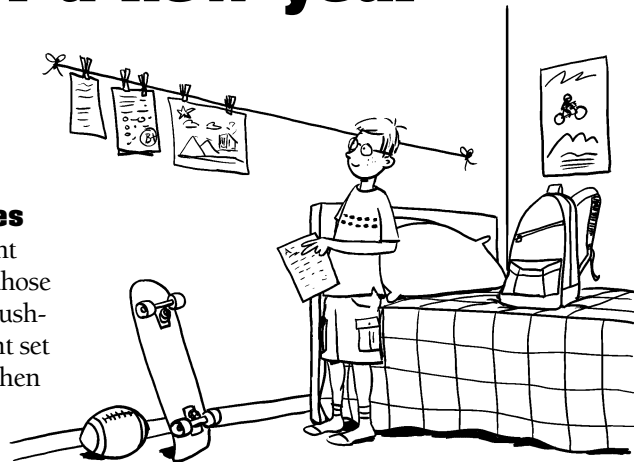
As the new school year gets under way, encourage your middle grader to set himself up for success with these strategies.

Sticking to my routines

Let your tween experiment with routines until he finds those that work best. If he’s often rushing to catch the bus, he might set his alarm 5 minutes earlier, then 10 minutes earlier, until his mornings go smoothly. For his evening routine, perhaps he’ll do homework after dinner on days he has sports practices and right after school on other days. Once he has routines he likes, have him write them down so he’ll remember them.

Expecting my best

Encourage your child to decide what he expects from himself. Where does he want to improve? He might focus on paying attention to detail if he lost points last year by not filling out science lab reports thoroughly. Or maybe he’ll create a plan for spreading out long-term projects so



he’s not scrambling at the last minute. He’ll gain satisfaction from a job well done when he follows through.

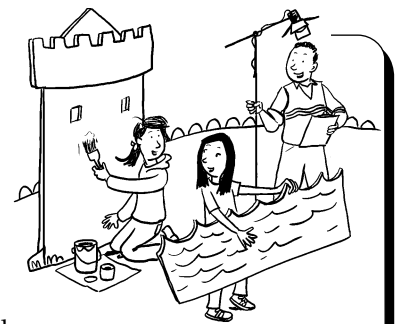
Watching my progress

Suggest that your middle grader hang a school year “timeline” in his bedroom. He could string yarn from one corner to another and use clothespins to clip on assignments or tests he’s proud of. Perhaps he’ll display an essay on a favorite novel or a self-portrait he drew in art. Seeing his progress can motivate him to keep working hard. 👍

Extra worth it

Are extracurricular activities worth the time when your tween has a lot on her plate? Share these reasons for giving them a try.

1. She’ll get to know classmates and teachers. As she builds sets in drama club, for example, she’ll bond with peers who have similar interests. And forming connections with club advisers can lead to networking for the future.
2. She’ll learn to set priorities. If her robotics club has a competition coming up, she’ll have to organize her study schedule around team meetings.
3. Gaining new skills will boost her confidence—and translate into school success. Playing doubles tennis encourages teamwork, for instance, while working on the yearbook helps with writing and editing. 👍



Responsibility? It's all mine!

Tweens take on more responsibility in middle school. Help your child understand what she's responsible for now—and how she can meet her obligations.

Do your work. Teachers might not remind middle graders when homework is due or to hand it in. Your tween should write due dates in her planner and put completed projects by the front door. That way, she will be more likely to complete assignments and take them to school.



Or perhaps a teacher wants finished work placed in a tray. Your child might get in the habit of not sitting down until hers is turned in.

Do your part. When others depend on your tween, it's up to her to do her part. For group projects, she could meet with members to get work done and let them know how her section is coming along. To prepare for a band concert, she may set goals for her practice sessions.

Then, at concert time, her performance will be stronger, and she'll feel good about holding up her end. 👍

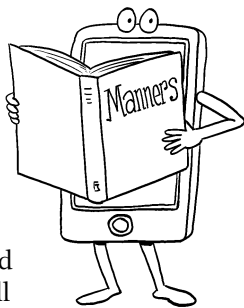
Parent to Parent

Mobile manners

I was in line with my son James at the store when his cell phone rang. He proceeded to carry on a conversation while the cashier rang up his purchase.

After we left, I told James it was rude to talk on his phone while he was being waited on. When he said, "Everyone does it," I knew it was a good time to discuss cell phone manners. I said people tend to talk loudly on their phones, disturbing others and turning private conversations into public ones.

James said he hadn't thought about it that way. He agreed to put his phone on vibrate when we're out and to return calls later. My son can't imagine what it was like growing up without cell phones. But I'm trying to help him understand that just because we have them, we don't need to use them all the time—and that good manners still apply. 👍



Read to relax

Reading for pleasure can help your middle grader unwind—and has the added benefit of boosting reading skills along the way. Suggest these two ideas to encourage reading for fun.

1. Go on a "blind date"

Your child could swap books with friends using this interesting twist: Each person wraps a novel in paper and writes or draws clues about it. Everyone gets together and selects a book based on the clues. Then, they open it to reveal what book they have a "date" with.

2. Play reading bingo

Let your tween turn reading into a game by making a bingo card on a sheet of cardboard. In each box, have him write a reading category, such as mystery, science fiction, graphic novel, poetry, and autobiography. As he reads each type, he should X out a matching square. How quickly will he cross out a row? How about the whole bingo board? 👍



On the same team

Q My oldest child just started middle school. Now that she has different teachers for each subject, how can I partner with all of them?

A To put faces with names, try attending an upcoming event to meet them, such as an open house or a curriculum night. You could also introduce yourself by writing a short message and copying and pasting it into an email for each teacher.



Either way, let them know you want to help your tween succeed, and ask what you can do to support her at home. Also, ask the teachers how they want to be approached (email, phone call, note).

Finally, find out if they want your child to come to them directly before you contact them. A middle school teacher may prefer that a student take the first step if she needs help or has a question. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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