

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Check your mail

What's in the bulk mail that arrives in your mailbox?

Opportunities for your child to discover writing strategies! What was the writer's purpose? (To persuade you to buy something, to inform you about an issue.) How did he achieve that purpose? (With facts, statistics, or words appealing to emotions.) Ask your tween if the strategies worked: Does he want the product or agree with the position?

Sun smart

Encourage your child to be smart about outdoor safety habits this summer. Have her drink lots of water to stay hydrated—when she's thirsty, with meals, and while she's active outside. Also, make sure she knows to wear sunscreen even on cool, overcast days, since harmful UV rays still come through.

Well-earned thanks

A simple thank you from students and parents means a lot to teachers, staff members, and coaches. Your middle grader could hand-deliver a card saying what he has learned from them. And you might send an email mentioning why you're grateful the person was in your child's life this year.

Worth quoting

"In summer, the song sings itself."
William Carlos Williams

Just for fun

Q: What do Alexander the Great and Kermit the Frog have in common?

A: Their middle name!



Keep on learning

Year in review: Your child has learned a lot in many different subjects, from language arts to math to science. Flash forward: By practicing skills during summertime, she can hang onto what she learned and gain even more knowledge. Try these ideas.

Read across the map

Print out a United States map, and hang it in a hallway. As a family, set a goal of coloring in every state by reading books or articles that take place there or mention it. If your tween reads a novel that's set in Arizona or you read a magazine article about sightseeing in Georgia, fill in those states. *Idea:* At summer's end, encourage her to pick a state and write her own tale about it.

Take math on the road

Have your middle schooler practice doing math in her head with this car-trip activity. Suggest that she add, subtract, multiply, or divide numbers she spots along the way. If she sees a sign for 7th Street and a 25 mph speed limit, she might multiply 7×25 or divide 25 by 7.



To turn it into a game, let her call out the problem. The first person to answer correctly gives the next equation.

Create a science spot

Designate a corner for storing odds and ends—say, cardboard, index cards, and aluminum foil. When your tween says, "I'm bored," see if she can figure out ways to use them in a science experiment or engineering project. Cardboard tubes could become a marble "roller coaster" to test gravity. Aluminum foil and index cards might be engineered into a shiny skyscraper. Have her research ideas online or in books. 👍

"I'm a CEO"

Starting a business in middle school brings job experience and the chance to earn money. Help your middle grader tap into his inner entrepreneur with these tips.

■ **Find a niche.** What does he like to do? What is he good at? Maybe he loves animals and would enjoy walking or feeding pets. Perhaps he is strong in math and could tutor younger children in multiplication and division.

■ **Advertise.** Suggest that he make flyers to place on community bulletin boards or distribute to neighbors. He should tell relatives and friends about his business and ask them to pass the word along, too. 👍



Foster loyalty

You want your middle schooler to be a good friend and a good student. Learning to be loyal will help him do both. Here's how.

With friends. Watch for opportunities to bring up what loyalty looks like in friendships. For example, if he mentions that a buddy said something mean about another friend, ask what a loyal person would do (defend his pal by



pointing out a different viewpoint). Also, share examples from your own life. Perhaps you were invited to an event and really wanted to go, but you stayed loyal to the friend you had already made plans with.

At school. Your child's school is his community, and being loyal to it influences his success there. Help shape his attitude by letting him hear you speak positively about his school and the teachers. To foster school pride,

encourage him to attend after-school events like pep rallies and art shows, even if his "crowd" isn't involved. He'll show loyalty not only to his school but also to the students who are participating. 👍

A natural explorer

Spending time with nature helps your tween connect what she's learning in school to real life—and can even boost her critical and creative thinking. Share these strategies.

Be a nature reporter

What kinds of plants, trees, and animals live in your area? Suggest that your middle grader start a journal to record what she sees. She could sketch and label objects and living things, describing where and when she saw crabapple trees or chipmunks, for instance. Encourage her to research anything she doesn't recognize and share what she learns.

Plant an herb garden

Your child can dig into herbs by planting her own. In the process, she'll learn how they can be used and what conditions they grow best in. She might create a themed garden—say, a "Mexican Food" garden with cilantro and oregano. Have her ask neighbors for clippings or look for inexpensive seeds in stores. Then, she could plant them in small pots to place on a windowsill or outdoors. 👍



Parent to Parent

Handling the end-of-year rush

The last couple months of the school year have become one of our family's busiest times. I love being involved in my sons' activities. But between Brad's band events, Josh's tennis team commitments, and my work schedule, it's hard to keep up.

This year, I wanted us to head into the final stretch better prepared. We started going over the kids' schedules each week to plan ahead. I let them know what I would attend—and whether I could drive them or they'd need to arrange rides.

Last week I swapped my night shift with a coworker so I could go to Brad's band concert. But since I had to work the day of Josh's team car wash, I sent in snacks and checked with him afterward to see how it went. Even if I can't be at everything, my boys know I care about what they're doing. And so far, I feel more on top of things. 👍



Q&A Ready, set, exercise!

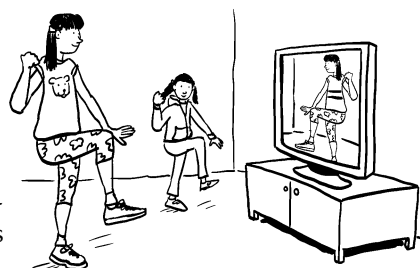
Q I want our family to be more active, but my tween says exercise is boring. What are some fun ways to get moving?

A Your child may like starring in a family fitness video. Tape video clips of each other leading workout moves to music. You'll be active while you make it, and you can play it back anytime and follow along. You could even create different kinds of fitness videos—one set to

slow music for stretching or yoga poses and another to high-energy music for cardio or intervals.

Also, instead of trying to exercise 60 minutes at once, try weaving in a few minutes of activity here and there. Consider having your child assign different exercises to each room.

She might put a sticky note in the bathroom: "March in place while brushing your teeth!" Or she could place soup cans in the living room to use as weights while watching TV. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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