

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



The write stuff

Keep your middle grader writing by encouraging him to send letters, cards, or e-mails to extended-family members or friends. Getting him to put his thoughts into words will build writing skills—and help keep his mind sharp.

Mental growth

If your middle grader seems like a different person each week, take heart. As middle graders mature, they often go through phases in which they “try on” different identities to understand themselves. These changes are a normal sign of a growing child.

Avoiding gangs

When kids reach middle school, they are at greater risk of joining a gang. Why? Gangs promise money, friends, and power (although at a violent price). For more information on helping your child avoid gangs, visit www.openthegate.org/parents1.htm or www.usdoj.gov/kidspage/getinvolved/3_2.htm.

Worth quoting

“Courage is doing what you’re afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you’re scared.”
Eddie Rickenbacker

Just for fun

Q: What do you give a kid with big feet?

A: Big shoes!



Successful parenting

Most people know that being an effective parent involves more than making sure children eat a balanced diet and do their homework. It’s also about providing the love, discipline, and support that kids need to grow into capable adults.

Here are some suggestions for strengthening these key ingredients in your relationship with your middle grader.

Love

One of the most important things you do as a parent is to love your child. There are many ways to express love. Listening when she needs to talk, spending time together, and valuing her opinion are signs to your child that you love her. It’s good to just say it, too. Feeling loved puts middle graders on the path to making healthy life choices.

Discipline

Set fair limits on your child’s actions, and provide clear consequences if rules are ignored. The idea is not to constantly ground your middle grader but to teach responsibility until he can make his own decisions. Consistent limits simplify your child’s life by spelling out what you expect from him.

Support

Be kind, honest, and hardworking, and you’ll be a role model

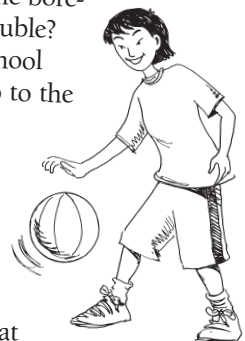


to your middle grader. And when you see these traits in your child, be sure to point them out. You’ll boost her self-confidence. 👍

The “extras” in extracurriculars

How can your child cure the boredom blues and stay out of trouble? By getting involved in after-school activities. From the chess club to the baseball team, the benefits of extracurriculars include:

- ▲ A clear sense of identity from interacting with like-minded people.
- ▲ An increased connection to school. Studies show that kids in extracurricular activities have a greater chance of graduating.
- ▲ Motivation for improving grades (some activities have a minimum grade standard).
- ▲ A great way to make friends.
- ▲ Emphasis on developing teamwork skills.



Is it too late in the year to join a school extracurricular activity? Encourage your middle grader to check into what’s available so she’ll be ready to sign up when the next school year begins. 👍

Safer chatting

The Internet can be an exciting place for middle graders to explore—especially chat rooms. However, there are real dangers involved. Try these tips to keep your child safer while chatting online.

Discuss the rules

Create some ground rules, such as when your child can go online, how long each session will last, and which chat rooms he's allowed to enter. Then, write down the rules and post them next to the computer.

Avoid harmful links

Teach your child to steer clear of obscene or threatening bulletin board items or links. Tell her never to click on



suspicious links that appear on the screen. They can take her to sexually explicit or otherwise inappropriate sites.

Report misuse

Your middle grader should tell you immediately if he receives a rude, demeaning, or sexually suggestive message or e-mail. Consider forwarding a copy to your Internet service provider, who may want to contact the sender.

Note: Remind your child that she should never give her name,

address, telephone number, or other personal information to any online contact or site. 👍

Building character with books

Good character traits, such as responsibility and kindness, are the building blocks of a maturing young adult. Here are several books that can help your child learn the importance of good character *and* discover the joy of reading.



◆ **Bud, Not Buddy** by Christopher Paul Curtis. This adventure story demonstrates the power of persistence.

◆ **Little Women** by Louisa May Alcott. A delightful classic about the virtues of patience and loyalty.

◆ **A Single Shard** by Linda Sue Park. This 2002 Newbery Medal winner offers a valuable lesson in courage and honor.

◆ **Walk Two Moons** by Sharon Creech. A touching novel that teaches about loss and the search for love. 👍

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 Signs of depression

Toward the end of the year, my daughter Terri started having trouble sleeping. Sometimes I'd find her pacing or staring at the ceiling with her light on. I often asked if anything was bothering her, but she always said no.

I realized one day that she no longer joked around with her brother like she used to do. Then, she quit volunteering at the animal hospital. I asked her why. "It doesn't matter anymore," she replied. I suspected that Terri might be suffering

from depression. So, I took her to a therapist, who began seeing her on a weekly basis.

It wasn't long before Terri started volunteering again. She's definitely making progress. Talking with the therapist and staying involved with her hobby seem to make things more bearable for her. 👍



Q & A Dyslexia and school

Q My son was recently diagnosed with dyslexia. How can I help him cope with the effects of his condition on his schoolwork?

A Dyslexia is a learning disability that makes decoding (figuring out) words or numbers difficult. Children with dyslexia can do everything their classmates do—they often just need a little more time and assistance.

Make sure your son's teachers know he's dyslexic so they can modify his assignments as needed. For example, they might give him more time to complete his work or allow him to tape-record classroom lectures.

To help your son stay organized, encourage him to write his assignments in a notebook. And because kids with dyslexia sometimes do poorly on written tests, give your child short practice tests at home. You can use questions and problems from his homework assignments or textbooks.

For more information, contact the National Center for Learning Disabilities at 888-575-7373 (www.ld.org). 👍

