

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Catching up

Many teachers have a policy for turning in late homework. Encourage your child to write the rule in her notebook. If she falls behind, she should ask the teacher for her missed assignments. Then, have her include time for makeup work in her homework schedule.

Winter-break learning

Want to continue your middle grader's learning during school breaks? Have him scan a newspaper to locate as many types of numbers as he can. He could look for percentages, decimals, or fractions. Suggest he check business articles, advertisements, and sports scores.

Music sense

Many music CDs and cassette tapes come with ratings that warn about inappropriate material. Some stores let you listen to the music before you buy. Or you can listen to the lyrics at home. Discuss your feelings about questionable or offensive lyrics with your child.

Worth quoting

"The most wasted of all days is one without laughter." *e. e. cummings*

Just for fun



Q: What can you hold without touching it?

A: A conversation!

Parent power!

When it comes to working hard in school and earning good grades, it's true that your middle grader holds the responsibility. However, parents can boost their children's learning by getting involved in their education.

Studies show that parent participation often declines once students move on to middle school. But your child—and his school—still needs your support. Here's how you can help.

Weekdays

Do you work late shifts or part-time during the day? Consider volunteering during school hours. You could chaperone field trips, become a teacher's aide, or provide extra tutoring. Seeing you at school reminds your middle grader how much you care about learning.

Evenings

Afternoons and evenings are a great time to help at school. *Examples:*



Become a PTA/PTO volunteer or club sponsor; pitch in at school-sponsored car washes, bake sales, and other fundraisers. And attend school concerts, plays, and sporting matches whenever you can. Your child will know you're interested in his school life.

Weekends

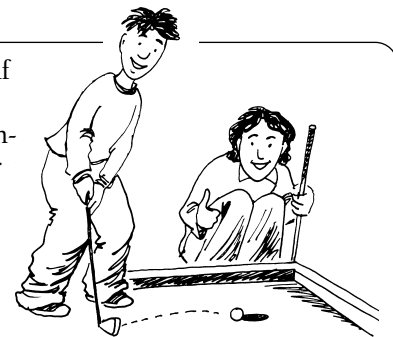
Being involved in your child's education isn't limited to the school week. On weekends, take your middle grader to museums, exhibits, libraries, and bookstores. Together, read aloud magazine or newspaper articles about topics that interest her, and discuss what you've read. You'll encourage your middle grader to become a lifelong learner. 👍

Connect with your kid

A telephone call can be hard to understand if you have a bad connection. The same goes for your relationship with your child. Good relationships make middle graders and parents happier by reducing tension, limiting conflict, and even boosting test scores.

To ensure that you and your child are "connecting," consider these suggestions:

- Try talking and listening—they're more effective ways of communicating than yelling or nagging.
- Do fun things together (play miniature golf; watch a movie). Enjoying each other can remind you both of the bond you share.
- Address upset feelings as soon as you notice them. Talking about problems right away can keep them from getting bigger. 👍



Do the right thing

Smart decisions don't just happen. They take practice, just like reading and writing.

With a little preparation from you, your middle grader will have the skills he needs to make the right choices. Try these ideas to encourage healthy decision-making by your child.

Discuss choices you make as an adult, such as choosing a job or deciding how to vote. Your child will become aware of the mental process you use to make decisions. And he will get a first-hand glimpse of your values and how they influence your choices.



Experience is a great teacher. Whenever possible, let your middle grader choose for herself. *Examples:* which extracurricular activities to participate in, whether to spend or save her allowance. In areas like these, she can safely practice making decisions that affect her life.

Reflect on decisions you or your child have made. For example, explain a choice from your past and how the outcome affected you. "I wish I'd paid more attention to spelling. Writing reports at the office sure would be easier." 👍

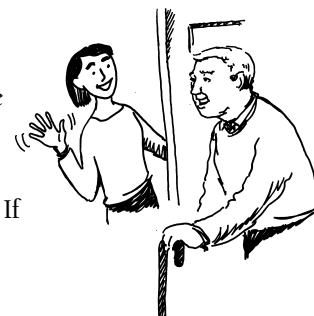
Q & A Dealing with rudeness

Q My middle graders are great kids, but they're sometimes rude when they're in public. They give people who don't know them a bad impression. How should I handle their rudeness?

A Think about what could be triggering your kids' behavior. Do they see friends or adults acting rudely? If so, perhaps they're mimicking what they think is acceptable behavior. Trying to act "mature" is typical during the middle years.

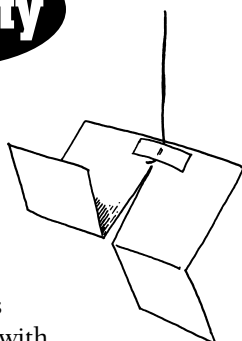
If you see your children behaving badly, say something to them privately. Don't make a scene in front of others, but let them know that rudeness isn't appropriate—whether they're with friends, family, or strangers.

Point out the specifics of their behavior (speaking disrespectfully, making fun of others), and set boundaries for what isn't acceptable. But give them a little room to discover things for themselves. They will soon realize that sharp words hurt everyone. 👍



Activity

As the paper turns



Get your middle grader's mind cranking with this science activity.

Materials: 5-inch-square piece of paper, thread, tape, table lamp

Cut the paper down the middle, leaving about 1 inch uncut. Fold the paper to form "wings" (see illustration). Then, tape a 6-inch piece of thread to the top of the paper.

Turn on the lamp. Carefully hold the paper by the thread, about 4 inches above the lightbulb. *Caution:* Don't let the paper—or your hand—touch the lightbulb!

What makes the paper spin? A convection current. The bulb heats the air, which rises. Then, cool air moves in to replace the warm air. 👍

Parent to Parent Battling bulimia

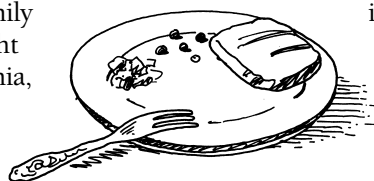
When our daughter recently began losing weight, we assumed it was a growth spurt. But she soon started making excuses to avoid eating. When she did come to dinner, she'd eat several helpings, then head upstairs to the bathroom. She continued to lose weight—and we noticed her breath was always foul.

Desperate, we scheduled a physical for her with our family doctor. He felt she might be suffering from bulimia, an eating disorder. He explained that bulimia affects a person's

judgment about food and body image, including using vomiting to lose weight. The doctor also recommended a therapist, and our daughter now sees her on a regular basis.

We know it's a daily struggle to beat the disorder. But with the help of counseling, our daughter is slowly beginning to gain weight and feel better about herself.

Editor's Note: For more information, contact the National Eating Disorders Association at 206-382-3587 or www.nationaleatingdisorders.org. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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