

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Map it out

GPS can give your tween the impression that people don't need to know their way around. But a good sense of direction can help her use maps and globes for geography assignments—and it will come in handy in real life when GPS is unavailable or inaccurate. The next time you go somewhere new, give her a map, and have her help you navigate.

Autumn picnics

Take advantage of a sunny fall day by having a family picnic. You might tell your child he can invite a friend, and put him in charge of finding a nice picnic spot. Pack autumn-themed foods such as turkey sandwiches and apples. Also, tuck in a Frisbee or a volleyball so everyone gets some fun exercise.

A hard habit to break

If your child thinks cigarettes are cool, she might be surprised to hear that most smokers would rather be non-smokers. In fact, more than half of American smokers tried to quit last year. Consider having a former smoker tell her how hard it is to stop. That person can also talk about negative consequences like having bad breath or spending money on cigarettes.

Worth quoting

"Of all the things you wear, your expression is the most important."

Janet Lane

Just for fun

Q: What's a sure way to get into the circus?

A: Buy a ticket.



Getting the most from study time

How can your child improve his odds of remembering what he studies? One way is by learning strategies that will store information in his long-term memory. Share these "brain friendly" study methods with your middle grader.



Remember feelings

Paying attention to how information makes him feel can help him remember it. If he's studying the Middle Ages, for example, he can ask himself what surprises him or what he finds sad. He might add words or emoticons ("smileys") to his notes. He could draw sad faces beside facts about war and famine or happy faces where his notes mention achievements in technology.

Get moving

Making up a hand motion to go with a fact or definition can help your youngster recall it. Say he needs to know the difference between *potential* (stored) energy and *kinetic* (moving) energy. Each time he sees the words in his textbook or notes,

he might hold one hand as if he's about to throw a ball (for potential energy) or make a throwing motion (for kinetic energy).

Make connections

Seeing how learning relates to the real world can help your child process information and retain it. Suggest that he look for news articles on topics that he's studying. If he has a math quiz on ratios coming up, he might find an article about farmers using proportions to plant fields. Then, he could draw a diagram of a field to help him visualize a ratio problem. Or if he's studying for an art test, he can browse magazines for images that remind him of different styles (impressionism, cubism). 👍

Responsible for myself

Giving your middle grader new responsibilities can boost her self-esteem and teach her to take care of herself. Try these ideas:

■ Let her make appointments. She might call to schedule dental checkups, haircuts, or sports physicals. *Tip:* Show her your calendar so she'll know which days you can take her.

■ Add to her chores. Before she takes on a new task, walk her through it. You might show her how to clean the bathroom, including which supplies to use for the shower, sink, and mirror.

■ Have her keep track of personal items. If she's running low on toothpaste and soap, she can add them to the grocery list. 👍



Parent participation

You want to support your child's middle school, but she's worried you'll embarrass her by showing up there. Try not to let her hesitation stop you from getting involved. Consider the following suggestions.

Adapt. Learn about volunteer opportunities outside your tween's classrooms by asking in the school office and checking with activity advisors. You might work a



shift in the school store, provide snacks for an athletic team, or staff a PTO recycling event.

Assemble. Seeing other parents at school might make your child feel better about having you there. Contact friends or neighbors who volunteered in elementary school to see if they want to help out, too. Or post an announcement on Facebook or start a Twitter feed encouraging other parents to volunteer.

Attend. Put evening events like band concerts and soccer games on your calendar, and tell your tween that you plan to go. Let her know that she can still sit with her friends, but you just want to be there. Even if she rides with a friend's family, the fact that you're there will show her that she—and her school—are important to you. 👍

Activity Corner

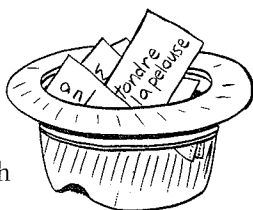
Foreign-language fun

If your middle grader is taking a foreign language, he can practice vocabulary by playing games he's used to playing in English. Here are two.

1. I Spy. Your child and a friend take turns secretly choosing an item in the room and describing it in the language they're studying. For example, if they're learning Spanish, your youngster could say, "Ve algo de plata" ("I spy something silver"). His friend gets three chances to guess the object. He might ask, "Es la tostadora?" ("Is it the toaster?") The winner is the person who guesses the most items correctly.

2. Charades.

Divide into two teams of at least two players each. Each team writes 10 words or phrases in the foreign language (such as "tondre la pelouse," which is "mowing the lawn" in French) on separate slips of paper and puts them in a hat for the other team to draw from. Teams take turns having one member pick a slip and act it out. His teammates have two minutes to guess what he is doing. 👍



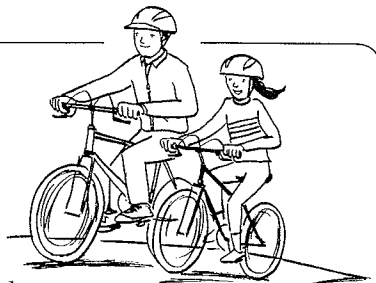
Parent to Parent

On the move

When my daughter Roya was younger, she'd spend hours playing outside with her friends. Now that she's older, she and her friends would rather experiment with makeup or watch YouTube videos. At her annual checkup, I asked the pediatrician how much exercise she needs.

The doctor said children—and adults—should be active at least an hour a day. He suggested that when Roya has a friend over, I encourage them to play a backyard game like badminton or Frisbee before they get out the makeup or turn on the computer. And he recommended that we take regular family walks or bike rides.

Roya must have been paying attention to the doctor, because she recently invited a friend to go rollerblading. Afterward, they watched skating videos online. And this Sunday after dinner, we're going to ride our bikes around the neighborhood. I'm looking forward to being more active, too! 👍



Q & A

Attending every class

Q When I was driving carpool the other day, I overheard my son mention that one of his friends skips classes. How can I make sure my child doesn't try this?

A Your son knows that skipping class is against the rules—but he might not have considered other reasons why it's a bad idea. Explain that his friend gets zeroes for work he misses. And homework assignments probably take twice as long when his friend doesn't hear the lessons

that they're based on. Skipping class also means missing class discussions, science experiments, and group project work.

Set clear guidelines about when your son is allowed to stay home or leave school early, such as for illness, a family emergency, or a doctor's appointment that couldn't be made for any other

time. Let him know that, beyond that, you expect him to be in school all day, every day. Then, explain the consequences for skipping, like being grounded after school or on weekends or losing his phone or computer privileges. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated
 128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
 540-636-4280 • rfcustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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