

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Head start on high school

If your middle grader is going to high school this fall, you can help him start preparing now. Check the school's Web site for information sessions and orientation dates, and add them to your calendar. Also, consider attending a school play, band concert, or softball game there so he can see the campus.

DID YOU KNOW?

Seventy percent of American children don't get enough vitamin D, which they need to absorb calcium and fight illnesses. Spending 10–15 minutes a day in the sun can increase your youngsters' vitamin D levels. They can also get the vitamin from fortified milk, orange juice, bread, and cereal.

Hire me!

Your middle grader can learn responsibility, stay busy, and earn money with a part-time summer job. She might ask neighbors if they need help with housecleaning or yard work. Or perhaps she can be a "mother's helper" and watch youngsters while their parent is nearby.

Worth quoting

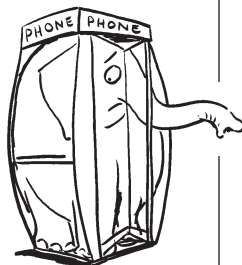
"Experience is not what happens to you. It is what you do with what happens to you."

Aldous Huxley

Just for fun

Q: What do you call an elephant in a telephone booth?

A: Stuck!



A summer of learning

Summer is right around the corner and, with it, a lot of free time for your child. While she enjoys the school break, keep her mind sharp with these ideas.

See what's out there.

Look for information about summer programs in newspaper advertisements and county and city recreation catalogs. Your middle grader might enroll in an art camp or a science or computer camp, for example. She could also attend nature programs at a park or go on a youth group trip through a place of worship.

Explore an interest. Suggest that your child use her summer break to try something she didn't have time for during the school year. Perhaps she wants to make a music video or design a Web page. Take her to the library so she can check out books or search the Internet for information. Encourage her to share her finished project with the whole family.



Learn every day. Find ways for your middle schooler to keep skills sharp. To practice writing, she might e-mail a favorite author or send a letter to the editor of a magazine. A family debate is a fun way to improve public speaking—she can choose an interesting subject like whether the driving age should be lowered. Or suggest that she work on math by creating a budget or estimating how long a car trip should take. 👍

Reviewing the year

As the semester ends, encourage your middle grader to look back on his year to help him get ready for the next one. Here are some suggestions:

- Ask your child what he liked about the school year. You might prompt him with questions, such as "Which class was the most interesting?" or "What was your favorite activity—working on the yearbook or being in the Spanish club?"
- Have him tell you something he was especially proud of (he made the track team, his science fair project won honorable mention).
- Suggest that he think of something he struggled with (history) and what he might do next year if he has the same problem (ask his teacher for extra help). 👍

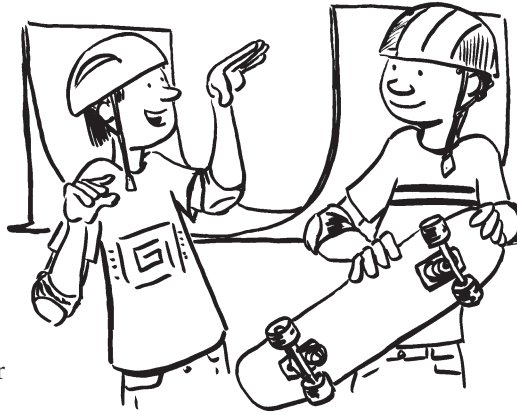


Being a true friend

Middle graders want and need friends. But to have friends, your child needs to know how to be a good friend. Share these tips for building strong friendships.

Support

One rule of thumb is for your middle grader to treat friends the way he wants to be treated. That means showing support, such as cheering for a friend at a lacrosse game or encouraging him before a class presentation. It also means not saying mean things about a friend behind his back.



Listen

Good listeners make friends feel important. Encourage your child to pay attention when a friend wants to talk. Maybe he wants to celebrate mastering a skateboarding trick or talk about an argument with a parent. By taking an interest, your middle schooler will show that he cares.

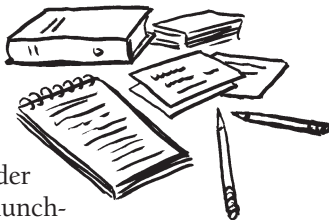
Be honest

Telling the truth helps keep friendships running smoothly. If your youngster wants time alone, he should be able to tell his friend rather than getting together and acting annoyed. Or if a pal uses your child's cell phone without permission, he should be able to say, "Next time, please ask me." 👍

Gear up for finals

The end of the school year often brings final exams in middle school. To do her best, your child can:

- Get as much information as possible about each test. Will it cover material from the entire semester or just what was taught since the last test? Will more questions come from notes or from the textbook?
- Pay close attention during review sessions in class. Consider attending a lunch-time or after-school review.



- Organize study sessions with classmates. Discussing the information will help your child remember it.
- Do most of her studying before finals week begins. Staying up late to cram can make your middle grader too tired to do her best. Also, she'll feel more relaxed during each test if she knows that most of her studying for the other tests is behind her. 👍



Q & A Staying in touch

Q My daughter doesn't tell me much about school or her social life anymore. How can I find out without prying?

A Middle graders like their privacy, since it makes them feel independent. But you can still find ways to keep in touch.

Whenever possible, attend your child's games or school events. You'll get the chance to see who she chats with on the sidelines or how involved she is in a school assembly, for example. Or offer to drive carpools. Hearing the chatter in the backseat will give you a window into your youngster's world.

Your middle grader will be more likely to share information with you if you stay connected in small ways. Even a few lighthearted minutes daily—whether you're having a snack after school or putting away laundry together—can help keep your relationship strong. 👍



Parent to Parent Concern about depression

My son Jack wasn't acting like himself. For several weeks, he had angry outbursts and overreacted to things. He also complained of headaches and stomach pains.

I kept asking Jack what was wrong, and he kept saying he didn't know. So I took him to the pediatrician, who did an exam to rule out illness. Then, the doctor explained that kids Jack's age are growing quickly and facing more pressure at school. Sometimes

these changes can lead to depression. I was surprised to learn that depression can show up as anger or sadness and even cause physical symptoms like Jack's.

Jack's pediatrician referred him to a counselor to help sort through his emotions. He's had several sessions. I'm relieved that he's talking to a professional, and he seems to be feeling a little better. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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