

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### A new perspective

Being able to see situations from more than one angle can help your child with reading and writing. Suggest that he consider different characters' points of view when reading a book or writing a story. How would the story change if a different person were the narrator?

### Tween crushes

Crushes are normal at this age. In fact, they may even show your middle grader what qualities she admires in others. If she mentions "liking" a classmate, ask what she likes about him. Also, encourage her to be polite if someone has a crush on her and the feeling isn't mutual. This can help set the tone for future relationships.

### All kinds of jobs

What would your tween like to do when he grows up? The world is full of jobs he may not have heard of. When you're out together, point out workers like the physician's assistant at his doctor's office or the loan officer in the bank. Also, tell him about your friends' jobs, such as horticulturalist or occupational therapist.

### Worth quoting

"Find something you're passionate about and keep tremendously interested in it." *Julia Child*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What kind of coat goes on wet and doesn't have buttons?

**A:** A coat of paint.



## A plan for study time

Effective studying can set your middle grader up to succeed—and create good work habits that she'll be able to rely on in college or in her career. Help her find a study routine that works for her with these tips.

### Know how to study

Studying involves more than simply reading a textbook or reviewing class notes. Reflecting on and using the information while studying will help your child learn more deeply. For example, she might do a quick science experiment to better understand a concept in her chemistry chapter.

### Take your time

Research shows that spreading out study time is more effective than cramming. Have your tween choose a block of time to study every day so she can review information more than once. Her notes and textbook material will stick in her long-term memory, and



she'll be better able to write an essay or participate in class.

### Be goal-oriented

Before your child begins studying, suggest that she define what she hopes to accomplish. Starting with the end in mind will help her stay focused. If she's reviewing for a quiz, she might plan to study half the vocabulary terms today and the other half tomorrow. Or if she's reading a chapter for the next day's lesson, she may want to see if she has questions to ask in class. 👍

## Dealing with academic pressure

As academic demands increase in middle school, some tweens become stressed. Consider these suggestions for encouraging your child to do well in his classes and handle any pressure he feels:

- Focus on the joy of learning. Let your youngster know that you want him to get good grades, but also ask what he's learning in math or which song he liked best in choir. You'll give him an opportunity to talk about the fun parts of school.

- Keep an eye out for signs of stress, like headaches, stomachaches, or trouble sleeping. If you notice anything, or if he seems too hard on himself, ask whether he's feeling too much pressure. If you're concerned, talk to his school counselor or pediatrician. 👍



# Character in the news

Good news: The newspaper is full of people who show good character. And your child could learn from them. Try these ideas.

**List traits.** How many positive character traits can you and your youngster think of? Together, brainstorm a list. *Examples:* Generosity, compassion, respect, responsibility. Then, have your child read the paper and look for a person to fit each trait. For instance, maybe a *generous* teenager started an organization that gives shoes to low-income children. Or perhaps a



responsible neighbor is spearheading a litter pickup day.

**Find role models.** Tweens often admire famous athletes or musicians—and yet some of those people end up in the news for less than admirable reasons. Encourage your middle grader to

look for articles about celebrities who use their money and fame for good purposes, like campaigning for cancer research. If someone he admires gets into trouble (say, a football player is fined for poor sportsmanship), take the opportunity to talk about good character and how the player could have acted instead. 👍



## Parent to Parent Be a digital storyteller

Like many kids, my son Blake loves spending time online. This year, while looking around for gift ideas for relatives, he discovered digital storytelling. By using this idea, he is saving money *and* practicing making presentations.



He downloaded free software that lets him combine words, photos, audio, and video. For his little brother, he recorded himself reading a few picture books and uploaded photos to match the text. Next, he plans to make a video for his aunt who just moved away. We are each going to share our favorite memory of a time we spent with her.

Blake is getting the hang of digital storytelling—and now he plans to try it for an upcoming class project. 👍

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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## Talking to your middle grader

What do tweens and parents talk about? If your child doesn't have much to say to you these days, broach one of these topics—you may get her to open up:

- Ask for her help with something she's an expert on (say, fitness or technology). She could recommend a new workout for you or a knitting app you might like.
- Many young adult novels are popular with grown-ups these days. Consider reading one, and then lend it to your youngster. If she reads it, ask her what she thought, and share your opinions.
- Your tween will probably enjoy hearing about what your life was like at her age. Tell her about using a cassette player or a typewriter, for example. She may laugh, but it could start a conversation about how times have changed.
- Ask her to share a few music playlists with you. Tell her which songs you like best. Then, you might suggest some "oldies" for her to listen to. 👍



## Q & A Should I attend conferences?

**Q** Now that my daughter is in middle school, do parent-teacher conferences matter as much?

**A** Yes! Attending conferences shows your middle grader that you value her education, and that's a good message to send regardless of what grade she's in. Also, being an involved parent has proven benefits for students of all ages, like helping them to feel motivated and to have a good attitude toward school.

When you meet with teachers, you'll find out how your daughter is

doing in class and how you could support her at home. You will also strengthen your relationship with them so you'll feel more comfortable getting in touch if a problem arises. And you can help the teachers get to know your child better by sharing information about her life outside of the classroom.

After the conference, tell your daughter how it went. She'll want to know what her teachers said about where she's doing well and where she needs to improve. She'll see that you and her teachers are working together to help her. 👍

