

September 2013

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### A new language

If your middle grader is studying a foreign language, consider learning it along with her. Watch foreign films together, listen to language CDs in the car, and ask her to teach you greetings and other vocabulary. She'll enjoy having conversations with you, and she'll probably pick up the language faster.

### Texting manners

Good texting habits can help your tween get along with friends and develop communication skills. Have him reread texts to make sure they sound polite, don't contain autocorrect errors, and are being sent to the right person. *Note:* Remind your child to put his phone away and not text in school.

### Handling nerves

Your youngster may feel anxious about new teachers and classes. If so, reassure her that it's normal—and that she's not alone. As she adjusts, suggest ways to cope with her feelings. She might get more exercise, write in a journal, or talk to you or another trusted adult.

### Worth quoting

"Little by little, one walks far."  
Peruvian proverb

### Just for fun

**Teacher:** Where was the Declaration of Independence signed?

**Student:** At the bottom!



## Strategies for success

With a simple plan to get off on the right foot, your middle grader can have a great year. Share these ideas for making this year one he can be proud of.

**Give your all.** What is your child looking forward to learning this year? Maybe he will study an interesting period in history or do more science experiments. Have him name ways he can learn more and do well.

For instance, he might promise himself that he'll review notes every day, start long-term assignments right away, or earn extra credit when it's available. He could write down these commitments where he'll see them—inside his binder or on sticky notes by his desk at home.

**Find resources.** To navigate middle school, your tween needs to know where he can get information and support. Let him bookmark school and class websites on your family's laptop and add teachers'



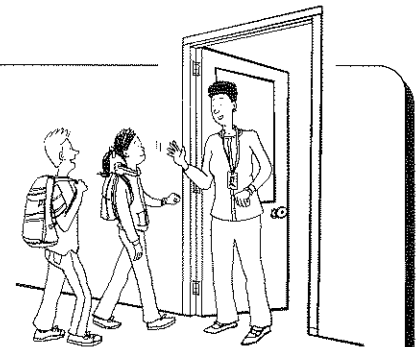
email addresses to his contacts. He might also explore ways to get extra help, like joining an after-school study group or making an appointment with a teacher or counselor.

**Stay on top of grades.** Tell your child he should pay attention to how grades are determined. You could explain that homework, tests, and projects may count for different percentages in each class. He can check his grades online or make his own spreadsheet for tracking them. 👍

## Be there!

Being in school all day, every day, helps your child get the most out of middle school. Encourage good attendance with these ideas:

- Point out that there is no substitute for being in class. Your youngster needs to be present to hear teachers explain concepts, to participate in group projects and class discussions, and to ask questions.
- Schedule doctor, dentist, and orthodontist appointments for before or after school hours whenever possible. If you can't, try to arrange them during lunch or study hall.
- It will be easier for your child to get up on time for school if she's had at least nine hours of sleep. Set a reasonable bedtime, and make sure she puts away electronic devices so she isn't tempted to stay awake to play with them. 👍

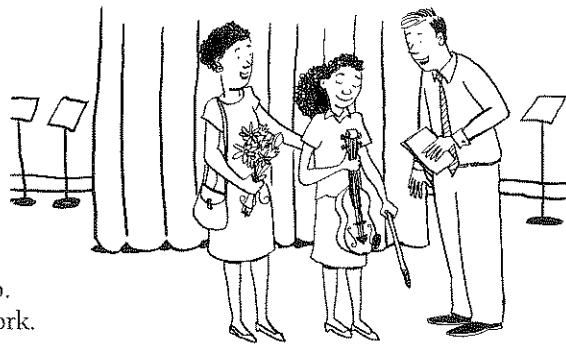


# Setting high expectations

Your middle grader wants to know you care about her and believe in her abilities. Having high expectations can show her that you do. Here's how to set expectations that work.

## Talk about it

Be clear about what your expectations are. If you expect your child to take certain classes (say, algebra in eighth grade) or to behave well in class, communicate those points to her. Then, weave your expectations into regular conversations. ("Good job on your math test—doing well this year will mean you'll be recommended for algebra next year.")



## Stay realistic

Make sure what you expect is realistic so your tween can achieve it without becoming discouraged. If she's in a spelling bee, you might expect her to study her words and try to make it through as many rounds as possible, but avoid pressuring her to win first place.

## Celebrate accomplishments

Your middle schooler needs to see herself as capable of meeting expectations. Watch for opportunities to point out times that she reached high. For instance, you might say, "You got frustrated learning the songs for your strings concert, but you kept practicing. Look how much you've improved!"



## Q & A Right-fit activities

**Q** My son wishes he could be more involved at school, but he hasn't discovered his "niche." How can he find a group to participate in?

**A** Extracurricular activities help your child explore interests, socialize, and feel like part of a group.

Tell your son to listen carefully to morning announcements about activities like intramurals, yearbook, and academic teams. Together, look over information that comes home, or check the school website for an activity list.

If he has a favorite subject, he could ask his teacher if there is a club for it, such as a French club or a history club. Your tween might also talk to friends to see what they're doing. At this age, being with friends provides a major incentive for joining an activity.



## Questions to ask after school

When you hear "parent involvement," you may think of volunteering in school. But talking to your tween about school counts as parent involvement, too! Here are 10 questions to ask your child—you could choose one or two each day.

1. What's the most interesting thing you learned today?
2. What was the best part of your day?
3. What was on your math quiz?
4. Who did you sit with at lunch?
5. What book are you reading in English?
6. What made you laugh today?
7. What have you done so far for your science project?
8. What are you learning about in history this month?
9. Is this school year what you expected so far? Why or why not?
10. What was your least favorite part of the day, and what would you change about it?

Tip: Encourage your middle grader to ask questions about your day, too.



## Parent to Parent What I believe in

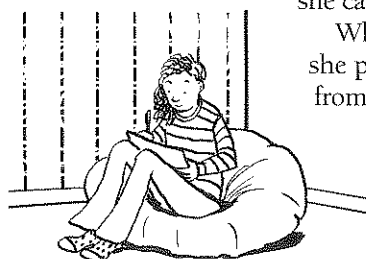
Now that my daughter, Molly, is in middle school, I know it's even more important for her to be able to stand up for herself and her beliefs. But first, she has to be sure what her own values are. I remembered an exercise she did in elementary school during a "Say no to drugs" program and thought it might work at this age.

I asked her to write a letter to herself about what's important to her—and I told her I would write one to

myself, too. To help her get started, I mentioned things I would include, such as making time for our family and being a team player at work.

Molly came up with her own ideas. For instance, she wrote that she values being a loyal friend and wants to stay healthy so she can play lacrosse.

When she finished her letter, she put it in her desk to reread from time to time. I'm hoping it will help remind her of what's important to her when she faces challenges this year.



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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