

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

I'm hopeful that...

Students who feel hopeful about the future tend to be more motivated and earn better grades. To foster hopefulness in your child, suggest that she write down her dreams for the near and distant future (making the lacrosse team, becoming a chef). She can start working toward them by setting goals for herself.

A day in the life

What do 24 hours look like in your home? Throughout one day, let your tween shoot video clips of family members enjoying a meal, laughing together, or walking the dog. Or he might take photos of these moments and make a slide show. Watch his creation together—he'll practice presentation skills and spend time with family.

Safe after school

Now that your child is in middle school, you may wonder whether she can stay home alone after school. Check your state law or guidelines, and consider your tween's maturity level. If she is going to be home without you, be sure she knows what to do (call or text you, start homework) and what not to do (use the stove, chat online).

Worth quoting

"Think for yourself, and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so, too."
Voltaire

Just for fun

Q: What do you throw out when you use it and take back when you don't need it?

A: An anchor.



Focused and ready to learn

Does your child like the idea of being his own boss? Tell him congratulations—he has a job! Managing his schoolwork is his responsibility, and he's in charge. Here are ways he can stay focused on this important role.

In class

It's a good idea for your tween to keep only what he needs on his desk. If he's allowed to pick his seat, he might choose a spot close to the teacher and away from windows, doors, and kids who like to talk a lot. And if he uses a laptop or tablet for classwork, he should close non-academic apps and windows so he's not tempted to play a game or check social media sites.

Study time

When your middle grader studies, he can use strategies to avoid interruptions. For example, he could hang up a "Do Not Disturb" sign, ask you to keep his siblings occupied, or go work at the library. Have him put electronics in another room when he's not using them to study. Also, he should pay attention to how he works and consider ways to focus better. If he tends to fidget, he



might walk around or squeeze a stress ball while he reads.

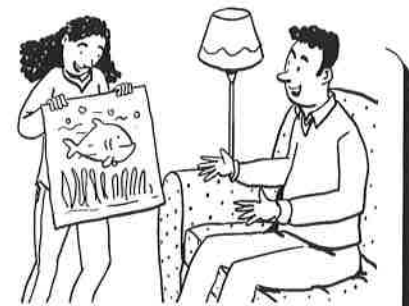
Everyday planning

To keep schoolwork front and center, encourage your child to record assignment deadlines in an agenda book or on a calendar as soon as he gets them. He can add commitments like practices and meetings, too. Then, he should review his plan each week to see what's coming up and make adjustments as needed. 👍

School: A hot topic

One of the best ways to support your tween's education is to make it a regular topic of conversation. Try these ideas:

- Let your child teach you something she's learning. If she tells you about the Lewis and Clark expedition, for instance, have her trace the explorers' route on a map for you.
- Think of questions that lead to more than one-word answers. *Examples:* "What was the most surprising thing you learned today?" or "What were the other kids' speeches about?"
- Focus on her favorites—she may have more to say about the things she enjoys most. So if she loves art, let her show you her latest painting or sculpture and describe the technique she used. 👍



Talk about bullying

Share this information to help your middle schooler understand what bullying is—and avoid being a target.

It's more than physical. Help your tween recognize bullying when it happens by explaining that it's not just about hurting someone physically. Bullying also includes harming people emotionally or verbally by spreading gossip and rumors, excluding them, putting them down, and texting harassing messages.



It's never okay. Bullying is not acceptable, no matter what. Knowing that it's not "normal" will make your tween more likely to seek help if needed. Have him think of a few people he could go to (a trusted teacher, an activity advisor, his school counselor).

There's safety in numbers.

Bullies aren't as likely to pick on someone with friends, so encourage him to walk with other kids in the hall and sit with people at lunch and on the bus. To build friendships, he might join a club or partner with classmates for projects. 👍



Coming up: Standardized tests

Standardized tests are one important way for schools to know how well they're teaching students and for students to know how well they're learning. Encourage your middle grader to do her best with these suggestions.

• **Make the most of in-class review.** Many states have adopted new tests that require more critical thinking and problem solving, so it's important that she understand topics in depth. When teachers go over test material, she should pay close attention. If she needs a refresher, she can talk to her teacher and review her notes or textbook.

• **Take practice seriously.** Being familiar with the test format and types of questions will help her prepare. She should work as hard on practice problems and sample tests as she would on the real thing. She'll exercise skills that will help her on test day, such as analyzing, comparing, and explaining. 👍



Parent to Parent

Build responsibility

Recently, my friend said she's having her seventh grader learn to do practical things like iron his clothes and make his own dental appointments. Her feeling is that her son is "in training" to be an adult—and he should start now.



I had never thought of it that way. But that made sense, so I decided to have my son, Charlie, begin taking on tasks that I usually did for him. For instance, when his bike had a flat tire, I showed him how to pump it up. The next time a tire was low, he did it himself.

Likewise, when it was time to change his sheets, I suggested that he learn to do it. I can't say he was excited, but after doing it together twice, we added it to his weekly chores. His sheets might not look as neat as when I did it, but I'm glad he has chalked up another life skill—and is becoming more responsible. 👍

Together for dinner

Q Now that our kids are older, it's hard to get them to the dinner table, much less keep them there enjoying conversation with us. What do you suggest?

A This is a common problem in today's hectic world. Try sitting down with your calendars, and write in dinnertimes that will work. If possible, be flexible with timing to accommodate work and activity schedules. Then, let your children know

that dinner is part of their agenda just as soccer and play practice are.

Once you're at the table, make it enjoyable to be there. Keep conversations light, and avoid bringing up unpleasant subjects like bad behavior or poor grades. Instead, think of topics to spark fun conversations, such as reminiscing about favorite childhood toys or asking about the funniest things that happened that day.

And one last thing: Keep the television off and cell phones in another room so you can focus on what's important—each other! 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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