

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Conferences in middle school

A parent-teacher conference is the perfect opportunity to work with the school to support your child. You may meet with one of his teachers who will share information from all the others. Or you might spend a few minutes with each teacher. If you have questions for specific teachers or need more time with them, call or email to follow up.

### Fit in fitness

An hour of daily physical activity promotes good health. Suggest that your tween calculate how many minutes of exercise she gets each day. She could include walking to school and participating in PE. Encourage her to add more exercise, perhaps by meeting a friend to swim at an indoor pool or by following along with a Zumba video.

### Promptness, please

Being at his desk when the bell rings means your middle grader won't miss class instruction or important announcements. Have him add a five-minute "cushion" to his morning so he has time to deal with the unexpected (missing shoe, early bus).

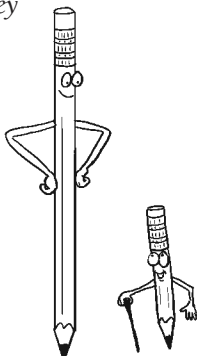
### Worth quoting

"I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions." *Stephen Covey*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What's tall when it's new and short when it's old?

**A:** A pencil.



## Study secrets—revealed

Anna knows what she needs to accomplish when she sits down to study. She stays focused and tends to remember the material. Her secret? Strong study skills! Share these strategies with your tween.



**Skill:** Set goals.

**Strategy:** Encourage your child to jot down specific goals for each study session and check off each one as she meets it. She should be as detailed as possible. *Example:* "Learn 30 vocabulary words before Friday's Spanish test." It may also help to make deals with herself. ("I can take a break after I've learned 15 words.")

**Skill:** Stay focused.

**Strategy:** Suggest that your middle grader eliminate distractions before she studies. For instance, she should silence her phone and put it in another room. Hunger and

fatigue can also make her mind wander, so she could eat a healthy snack or go for a quick jog before she buckles down.

**Skill:** Monitor understanding.

**Strategy:** After your tween reviews her notes, handouts, and textbook, she can make up a quiz. Taking the quiz and checking her answers will show her what she still needs to work on. Have her write anything she doesn't understand on a sticky note and ask her teacher for help. 👍

## Spotlight on history

History is full of fascinating places and intriguing people for your child to discover. With these ideas, he can step into the past—right in your living room:

- Work separately or together to create something fun that represents a time period. For instance, your family might build a Lego model of an Egyptian pyramid. Or tape large sheets of paper to a wall, and draw or paint an Aztec mural.

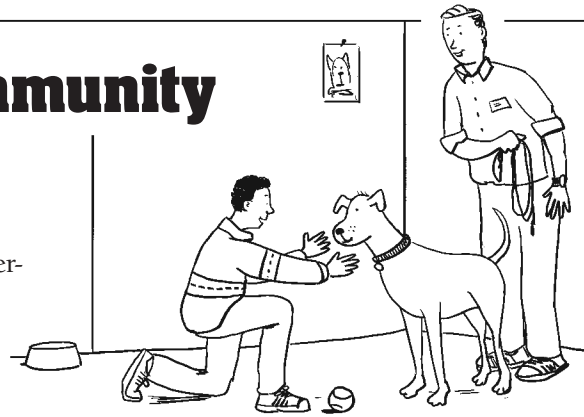
- Have each person secretly pick a historical figure to research, maybe Benjamin Franklin or Amelia Earhart. Then, host a game show where everyone asks yes-or-no questions to guess each other's characters. 👍



# Serving our community

Volunteering as a family can teach your middle grader about empathy and helping others. Here's how to get started.

**1.** Have your tween research community service opportunities for families. He should list ideas that match the ages of family members, and also jot down the time involved for each job. He could visit websites such as *createthegood.org* and *volunteer match.org*. He might also call or email community centers, shelters, and places of worship to ask if they need help.



**2.** Review your child's list together. Talk about possibilities that interest everyone, and pick one to sign up for. If your family loves animals, maybe you could feed and play with dogs and cats in a shelter. Or if you like to cook together, maybe you'll volunteer at a soup kitchen or a fire station's spaghetti dinner.

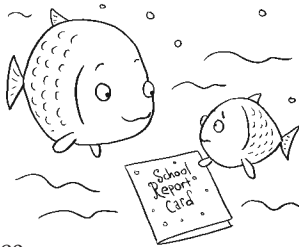
**3.** Talk about those you'll be helping, such as people who don't have enough to eat or animals who need attention and comfort. Considering how others feel will show your middle grader how important it is to help out—and make your volunteer experience more meaningful. 👍

## Parent to Parent Report cards: Find the positives



My sixth-grade daughter just got her first report card with letter grades. In elementary school, she always received "Excellent" or "Good," so I was surprised to see a C in English.

I decided to focus on the positives first. I pointed out Chelsea's good attendance, an A in science, and a nice comment from her chorus teacher.



Then, we discussed her English grade. Chelsea said she had fallen behind on assigned readings. As a result, she struggled to answer comprehension questions and participate in class discussions. We brainstormed solutions, including reading a certain number of pages each night and jotting down points to make in class.

Chelsea said that when she gets her next report card, she hopes that one of the first things I can point out will be a B in English! 👍

## Same answer, different strategies

There's often more than one way to approach a math problem. Try these tips for using family game night to help your tween talk through math strategies—and see that for herself!

**Monopoly.** When a player decides to buy (or not to buy) a property or add houses or hotels, have her share her thinking. Your child might calculate how many times an opponent would need to land on her properties to cover the cost. Or she could total her cash, subtract the cost of the hotels, and consider her liability (the rent she would owe if she lands on other players' properties before getting "paid" again).



**Yahtzee.** Let family members explain how they determine where to record their rolls of the dice. Say your middle grader gets four sixes and one five. Will she score it as four of a kind or as her sixes roll? Perhaps she'll consider the probability of rolling four of a kind again (unlikely) and decide to check off four of a kind rather than risk scoring zero in that spot. Or maybe she'll count it as sixes, which will put her on the path to earning a bonus. 👍

## Concern about anxiety

**Q** Several of my friends and neighbors have mentioned that their kids have anxiety. My son gets stressed out sometimes—could he suffer from anxiety, too?

**A** It's normal for middle graders to feel stressed from time to time about school, friends, or growing up. But if they're excessively anxious for long periods of time and miss

out on activities because of it, that may signal a bigger problem.

Anxiety disorder symptoms include worrying persistently for weeks or months, trouble sleeping, frequent headaches or stomachaches, and avoiding school or friends.

If you notice any of these symptoms in your son, contact your pediatrician. She can refer you to a specialist if necessary. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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