

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops

### Family feelings

The addition of a stepparent is an adjustment for the whole family. Sometimes children feel guilty about liking their stepmom or stepdad. Reassure your middle grader that getting along with her stepparent doesn't mean she loves you or her other parent any less.

**DID YOU KNOW?** More than half of all middle graders say they've cheated on an exam. Tell your child that cheating is wrong—and practice what you preach. By being dishonest during a game of cards or on your resumé, you're showing your youngster that cheating is okay.

### Hygiene hint

Good hygiene is necessary as middle graders mature. But how can you get the point across without hurting your child's feelings? Try casually mentioning the importance of daily showers the next time you both work up a sweat while raking leaves or playing catch.

### Worth quoting

"Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought."  
*Albert Szent-Györgyi*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What do you call a week-old sandwich?

**A:** A science experiment!



## Middle graders are gr-r-r-reat!

They're smart. They're funny. They're unpredictable. Who are they? They're middle graders!

The National Middle School Association has named October as the Month of the Young Adolescent. Here are some ideas to help you get to know your wonderful and often baffling middle grader.

### Share time

Each day is a new adventure for your child. Try spending time with him to see what his world is all about.

*Example:* Does your middle grader want a new pair of shoes for school? Instead of just handing over the cash, tell him, "Let's go find a pair together."

### Share feelings

As another way to communicate with your child, send her an e-mail, or leave a note on her door or in her backpack. *Examples:* "Thanks for teaching your little sister how to skateboard." "I'm proud of the great job you did on the essay!" Encourage her to write back. You may find she's more comfortable sharing her thoughts and feelings in writing.

### Share opinions

Middle graders know more than you might expect. Next time you're trying to figure



something out, such as how to handle a disagreement with a coworker, ask him for his opinion. You'll let him know that you're interested in what he thinks. 👍

## Online learning

Computers can make learning more interesting for kids of all ages. Here's how:

- Your middle grader could type her next research paper using a computer. Most word-processing software includes a spell-checker to reduce mistakes. Or she could add pizzazz to an oral presentation by creating graphics to go with her text.
- Explore the Internet together. Your child will get a chance to show off his computer skills—and surfing the Web provides lots of reading practice.
- Suggest that your middle grader make lists on the computer. *Examples:* the CDs or books she owns, her to-do list. Ask her to type up the family grocery list and group foods into categories to simplify shopping. 👍



# Homework handover

By the time children reach middle school, they should be in charge of their homework. But some kids struggle with the increased responsibility that middle grade homework requires. Try these suggestions for helping your youngster handle homework:

■ Tell your middle grader that completing and turning in homework on time is her job. Let her know that you're confident she can handle it on her own. Offer to help her gather supplies or decide on a



place and time for homework. Then, move to the sidelines and let her take over.

■ Even though homework is your child's job, continue to pay attention to her work. It's okay to give her help when asked. Ask questions from time to time to see how things are going. A "Ready for that geography test?" shows your child you care.

■ Changes won't happen overnight—developing homework skills takes time and effort. Your middle grader's grades may even drop at first as she adjusts to the new challenge. But if she knows that you take her responsibility seriously, chances are she will, too. 👍



## Math help

Could your middle grader use some help with math skills? Share these tips:



✦ Math lessons build on each other—miss one, and you're lost. Have your child keep up by reviewing every day. Falling behind makes each lesson harder to understand.

– Suggest that your middle grader rework the teacher's sample problems from class. This review reminds her of what she learned that day.

✦ If your child gets stuck, have him look back over the chapter. His math textbook is a road map to learning success.

✦ Let your middle grader know that math is like any other skill she wants to master—from shooting hoops to writing an A+ book report. The more she practices, the better she'll become. 👍

## Q & A Nix bullying



**Q** My daughter seems anxious about going to school. I think another student might be picking on her. What should I do?

**A** The best way to find out why your daughter is anxious is to talk to her. Explain that harsh teasing is a form of bullying that she doesn't have to endure. Tell her that keeping quiet only increases the chances that she'll be bullied again.

Help your daughter learn to be calmly assertive. Suggest that she tell the bully to leave her alone—a strong, steady voice will get the point across. Also, encourage her to stand up straight and make eye contact with the person when speaking. If your daughter doesn't show that she's upset, the bully may lose interest and back down.

*Editor's Note:* If the bullying continues or your daughter remains worried, contact the school about your concerns. 👍

## Parent to Parent Chore-to-chore

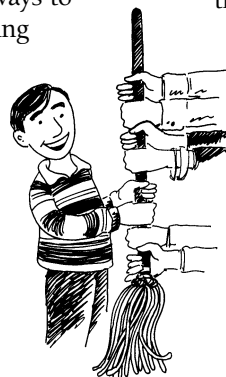
Saturday afternoons have always been designated as cleanup time in our home. But everyone seemed to find ways to put off doing it. We tried making job lists, giving constant reminders, even nagging. Nothing worked—until we decided to do the chores together as a family.

We start by having a quick lunch. Then, the straightening up begins. We dust, vacuum, empty the recycling bins, wash dishes, and catch up on laundry and anything else that

piles up during the week. Each child prefers certain jobs, which makes everything go more smoothly.

Having a set time helps us get started. Since we all share the chores, no one feels overworked. Plus, our cleaning schedule leaves the rest of the weekend open. We can enjoy a movie on Sunday afternoon without thinking that we should be cleaning instead.

In our family, a group effort keeps everyone happy—and the chores get done, too! 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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