

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### "I'm on it!"

Teach your youngster to be proactive when tackling his to-do list. For example, suggest that he plan early review sessions for exams so he doesn't put off studying. Or if he hopes to earn money this summer, he could talk to neighbors now about his services (lawn mowing, window washing).

### Family memories

Use "together time" to make scrapbooks that will capture your family's memories. You can brainstorm themes (spring break, family reunion). Then, gather photos and household supplies (glue, ribbon, illustrations from greeting cards), and pick up a binder and stickers at a craft shop. *Idea:* Have a family scrapbooking night each week.

### College ahead?

Middle school is a good time for your child to start considering college. Point out jobs held by family, friends, or community members, and talk about the education required. Then, encourage her to think about what she might like to do one day. She can chat with her school counselor about the schooling she would need.

### Worth quoting

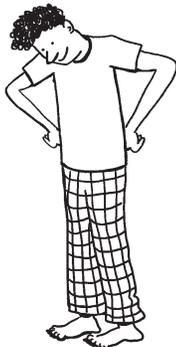
"There is nothing like a dream to create the future."

*Victor Hugo*

### Just for fun

**Aunt Mary:** Have you grown another foot since the last time I saw you?

**Jack:** No. I still have just two.



## Stretch your child's learning

You know that the time your child spends in school helps her learn. But did you know that activities over the summer can help her learn, too?

Engage your middle grader in learning with these ideas.



### Reading and writing

Suggest that she try reading and writing in new settings. She might invite neighborhood children to a weekly story time or help them write short plays they can perform for parents. She could also take advantage of the nice weather by reading in your backyard or writing poems in a park.

### Math

Numbers are everywhere, and you can help your youngster find chances to use them. Does she like to cook? She could convert recipes into smaller or larger serving sizes (for single servings or parties) and record them for reference. Or give her early

practice in tracking her finances. She might help you balance your checkbook or follow your online banking transactions.

### Science

Your child can practice science skills at home, too. Challenge her to create a kite with paper, sticks, and twine. Encourage her to make more than one and experiment to see which one flies highest. Or she could research the types of butterflies in your area and use a magnifying glass to study them. Suggest that she carry a notebook, colored pencils, and a field guide so she can sketch pictures and try to identify the butterflies. 👍

## It's a wrap!

Soon your child's final report card will arrive. Use it to celebrate his successes and pinpoint where he could do better next year.

■ Go over grades. Offer a high five for solid grades or those that have gone up. If he got any disappointing grades, discuss ways to improve in the next school year. He might do extra reading on the topic, review his notes and handouts daily, or find a friend who can help him study.

■ Review numbers of absences and tardies, check behavior marks, and read teacher comments. You'll want to praise good attendance and conduct. But if your youngster struggled anywhere, set goals for the fall and discuss how to achieve them (wake up 10 minutes earlier, don't chat in class). 👍



# Summer safety

What's the forecast for your middle grader's summer? Sunny with a chance of downtime! Your child can safely enjoy warm-weather months if you set guidelines ahead of time. Consider rules for when your child is:

**...active outside.** Sports and outdoor activities can provide hours of entertainment, and a few simple precautions can keep injuries at bay. Check that your middle schooler has a bike helmet that fits properly (snugly on the top of his head with a strap that pulls tight). Then, be sure he wears the helmet—and protective gear like knee pads and wrist guards—while biking,



skating, skateboarding, or riding a scooter. Also, have him use sunscreen and reapply it after sweating or taking a swim. *Tip:* To help him remember, keep sunscreen near your front door and in pool bags.

**...on his own.** Your child may be able to spend time unsupervised if he's trustworthy and feels comfortable being alone. Arrange for him to check in at certain times throughout the day, and post names and numbers of neighbors who can help. Go over steps for emergencies, and review rules (whether friends are allowed, which appliances he can use). Finally, if he goes out, he should let you know where he's going and who he will be with. 👍



## Vocabulary fun

Whether running errands or taking a road trip, your family is probably in the car a lot. Turn travel time into vocabulary time with these two games.

### Sounds alike

Create a sentence using alliteration—a writing technique where each word begins with the same sound. Have one person say a word. Then, take turns adding a word using alliteration until a complete sentence is formed. *Examples:* "Silly Sandy sat sideways." "Tom's terribly touchy today."

### Z-E-B-R-A

Work together to spell the longest word possible—without making another word first! One person says a letter (S). The next person adds a letter, attempting to keep the word going (P would continue the word, O would end it). If a player ends a word, he loses the round, earning a Z for the first letter in Z-E-B-R-A. Keep playing until someone loses by getting all five letters. 👍

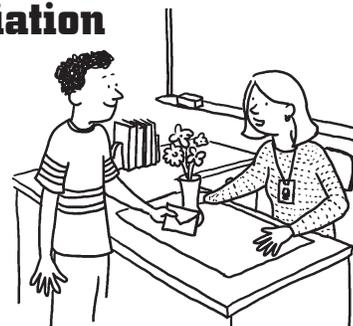


## Q & A Teacher appreciation

**Q** I would like my son to thank his teachers at the end of the school year. What are some nice gifts that are free or very low-cost?

**A** Your child can show gratitude with a simple, heartfelt thank-you. Teachers say that personal, handwritten letters or thank-you cards mean a lot. Your son might write about how much he enjoyed a class or mention ways that a teacher helped or inspired him. To add a special touch, he could include a nice quotation about teachers (he can search for "teacher appreciation quotes" online).

For teachers who made his year extra special, your child might frame a photo or handmade piece of art, gather a bouquet of flowers from the family garden, or record classmates saying "thanks" in a video. Or he could give a coupon for help cleaning up the classroom or organizing supplies the last week of school. 👍



## Parent to Parent Making friends

When my daughter Avery started middle school this year, she had lots of friends from elementary school. But as the year went on, I noticed that she was by herself more. When I talked to her about it, she said her old friends had made new friends, and she wasn't part of their crowd anymore.

I told her the same thing had happened to me when I was her age. Then, we talked about ways she might feel comfortable making new friends. She

decided to try inviting one or two classmates over so she could build friendships without the pressure of the cafeteria or hallway scene.

Avery also liked the idea of joining activities where people would share her interests. She signed up for the school newspaper and ended up making a couple of good friends. Now she has summer plans with her new friends—and she's looking forward to being on the newspaper with them again in the fall. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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