

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### The difference a zero makes

Help your child understand the importance of turning in every assignment. Have her add up several of her grades ( $97 + 89 + 93 = 279$ ) and divide by the number of assignments to get her average ( $279 \div 3 = 93$ ). Then, ask her to change the last grade to zero and average again—suddenly, the 93 becomes a 62!

### Spring events

Support your middle schooler by attending his team dinner, art showcase, or other spring activities. If you can't be there, let him know, and see if another parent could videotape it or take photos for you. Look at them with your child afterward, and have him tell you about the event so he knows you care.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Sunlight signals our brains to wake up. Before your tween hits the snooze button in the morning, encourage her to open the blinds. She may feel more alert and find it easier to get up and get going.

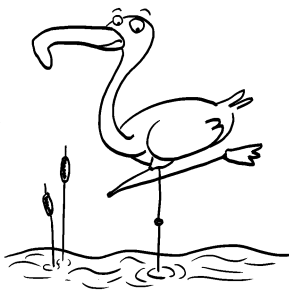
### Worth quoting

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." *Anne Frank*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why does a flamingo lift up only one leg?

**A:** Because if it lifted both legs, it would fall over!



## Spreading kindness and compassion

We hear a lot about teaching children to be kind and compassionate toward each other. But what does that look like in middle school? Consider these ideas for encouraging your child to show kindness and compassion.

### Spot it

When you ask your tween what he did in school today, you could also ask about acts of kindness. Maybe he smiled at a classmate who seemed nervous during a presentation, or perhaps a friend invited a less popular classmate to join their lunch table. Then, tell him about compassionate people you encountered, such as the coworker who listened to your problem with a customer—and helped you fix it.

### Reach out

Suggest that your middle grader get involved in a school or community activity that promotes compassion. He could be a "Best Buddy" for a classmate with special needs, for example. (If his school



doesn't have a Best Buddies club, he might start one.) Or he can look into Operation Troop Support, which puts together care packages for military overseas.

### Start a habit

Encourage family members to be kind and compassionate toward each other, and talk about what those acts could be. They may be as simple as doing the dishes for Dad when he's tired or sending an encouraging text to a sibling before a big volleyball game. *Tip:* Be sure to notice your child's kindnesses—you'll inspire him to continue acting that way. 👍

## Spring-fever busters

Does warm weather seem to be calling your tween outside? Help her stay focused on her studies, while still enjoying the outdoors, with these strategies.

■ **Finish homework first.** She might do it immediately after school or on weekend mornings. Then, she can spend time outdoors with friends in the neighborhood.

■ **Work outside.** Your middle schooler could spread out a blanket in the backyard or sit on the porch and do her work there. Or she might pack a picnic and invite a friend to study at the park with her.

■ **Take active breaks.** When your tween finishes reviewing for a quiz, she can walk around the block, do stretches, or jump rope. She'll burn off energy and be able to concentrate better on her remaining homework. 👍



# Keys to collaboration

If your child is a good collaborator, she'll be able to work well with classmates on school projects and activities. Plus, she'll be better prepared for today's team-oriented workplace. Suggest these tips for effective collaboration.



● **Create a plan.** Make sure everyone's on the same page. If your tween is doing a group project, she might ask a question to get the group started. ("Okay, so which famous person are we going to focus on?")

● **Let everyone contribute.** To give all group members a chance to think, she should wait a few seconds before jumping in after someone poses a question. Once she

comments, she could use the "three before me" rule—wait for three others to speak before she chimes in again.

● **Be a consensus builder.** Encourage your middle grader to look for compromises

the group can agree on. For example, if one person had hoped to do a funny skit, maybe they could inject some humor into an otherwise serious presentation.

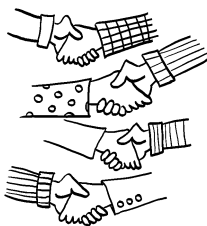
● **Make decisions together.** Even if everyone did different parts, the final product needs to feel seamless. As she and her partners put together the project, they should try to make the most of each person's talents and contributions. 👍



## Tease your brain

Stretch your middle grader's math skills with brainteasers like these. He'll think they feel more like fun than work!

1. At a party, each person shakes hands with everyone else once. There are 45 handshakes. How many people are at the party?



2. Sam added eight 8s and got the number 1,000. How did he do that?

3. Think about a digital clock. In a 12-hour period of time, what's the shortest break between two times that are palindromes (the numbers read the same forward and backward)?

4. Carol spent  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the money in her purse. Then she spent  $\frac{1}{5}$  of what was left. She spent \$36 total. How much did she start with?

Turn upside down for the answers. 👍

4. \$100  
3. Two minutes, between 9:59 and 10:01  
2.  $888 + 88 + 8 + 8 = 1000$   
1. 11

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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## Parent to Parent

### Turning tech time into offline fun

Like a lot of kids, my daughter Ariana's go-to form of entertainment is always something electronic. We limit how much time she can spend on screens, but when time's up, she complains that she's bored.

Then one day, she asked if I could take her to the dollar store. She wanted to try making her own lip gloss, an idea she discovered on Pinterest. Using her allowance, she bought supplies, came home, and experimented with the instructions she had printed out.

The next time she asked for screen time, I suggested that she spend part of it looking for an offline activity to do afterward. She decided to search for recipes, and she found one for strawberry cheesecake that she plans to make. I can't wait to taste it! 👍



## Q & A

### What drugs are out there?

**Q** I was shocked to hear that heroin has become a popular drug among young people. How can I learn more about it and help protect my son?

**A** It's important to know what drugs are available and the slang that people use for them. That way, you'll have a sense of what your child might encounter so you can talk to him about it. It will also help you recognize terms for drugs in his conversation or texts—and be alert for any signs of drug use.

Your son's school counselor and any police officers assigned to his school are great resources. Ask what they're seeing in your community. Read information they send home, and try to attend any parent drug-awareness nights.

Finally, you could look at a drug guide in the library or online (try [drugfree.org/drug-guide](http://drugfree.org/drug-guide)).

You'll learn what drugs look like, how they're used, and their street names (for instance, heroin may be referred to as "Big H," "horse," or "junk"). 👍

