March 2019

Springhouse Middle School
Mrs. Michelle Minotti, Principal

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Write a poem

Encourage your tween to experiment with language by writing a family poem. Together, make up a title about something your family loves (*Tasty Tortilla Soup*). Agree on a format, such as a limerick or free verse (no rhyme or regular rhythm). Then, take turns writing the lines, and let your child read your poem aloud when you finish.

Problem-solving pro

If your middle grader leaves for school without something she needs (book, graphing calculator), resist the urge to rescue her. Handling the situation herself will teach her to be a good problem solver. She might find alternatives like borrowing from a friend who has the same class during a different period.

DID YOU KNOW? Taking an opioid like oxycodone for as little as five days can lead to addiction. Share this fact with your teen, and explain that he should never take medication that isn't prescribed for him. If he is injured or has surgery, ask his doctor about alternatives to opioids. And if anyone in your home takes an opioid, keep it locked up, and discard leftovers immediately.

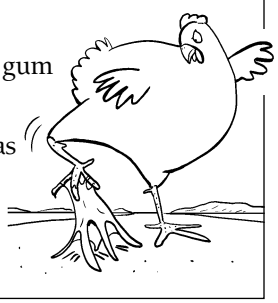
Worth quoting

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony." *Mahatma Gandhi*

Just for fun

Q: Why did the gum cross the road?

A: Because it was stuck to the chicken's foot.



Respect: The 4th R

Treating people with respect can help your tween form strong relationships with classmates, teachers, and family members. Consider these ideas to help your middle grader show consideration for others.



Look for examples

Point out respectful behavior to your child, such as knocking on a closed door or being quiet while others are speaking or performing. Likewise, let her know what disrespectful behavior looks like. After a concert, you might say, "It was not nice when the people behind us were whispering. That was disruptive to the musicians—and the audience."

Be a model

Middle graders are quick studies when it comes to life. What they see is what they learn. If you treat your child respectfully, she is apt to follow your lead. And if you embarrass her in front of her friends or invade her privacy for no reason, she will get the idea that actions like these are acceptable.

Set limits

Make it clear that disrespectful language is never allowed. If your tween loses her cool and behaves rudely, suggest that she take a break. Tell her you'll listen when she calms down. Letting her know that you won't tolerate disrespect provides the guidance she needs to change her behavior.

Spring science

Warm weather brings opportunities to explore science outdoors. Share these activities with your tween.



Design detective. Georges de Mestral invented Velcro after noticing burrs stuck to his dog! Suggest that your child observe objects in nature, pick one, and invent something inspired by its structure. Maybe he'll watch a turtle emerge from its shell, then design a retractable phone case.

Energy consultant. Have your middle grader look closely at renewable energy sources like solar panels on buildings or wind turbines spinning in the March breeze. Based on his observations, perhaps he'll try making a model turbine that will spin in the wind.

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Standardized test success

Your child may be gearing up to take standardized tests soon. Here are ways to support him so he can do his best.

Plan ahead. Have your tween post the school testing schedule on the refrigerator and highlight dates for the ones he's taking. Then, try to be sure he gets 9–11 hours of sleep and eats a healthy breakfast on test day (and every day).

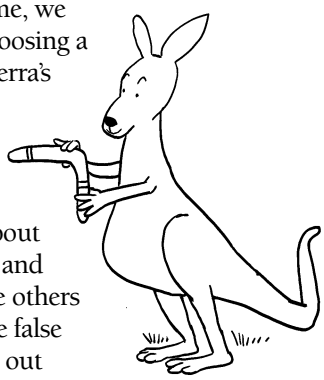


Ease nerves. Talk calmly and positively about the tests to reassure your middle grader. Explain that effort is what matters most. Also, he'll feel well prepared if he's in class each day leading up to the tests, since teachers often review material or give practice tests.

Follow up. After each test, ask your tween how it went. Which parts did he find easier, and which were more difficult? Reflecting on a test can help him do better on the next one. *Note:* When you receive the test results, go over them together.

Parent to Parent: Wordplay

Our family loves games like Scrabble and Boggle. They're fun, and they help my daughter, Sierra—and all of us—build vocabulary. Recently, we've started adding variety by inventing our own word games.



In one game, we take turns choosing a word from Sierra's textbooks or vocabulary lists and writing three statements about it—two true and one false. The others try to spot the false fact. I figured out Sierra's incorrect fact for the math word *acute* ("A boomerang has an *acute* angle"), so it was my turn to pick a word.

We also made up a vocabulary version of 20 Questions. One player thinks of a word. Then we ask yes-or-no questions like "Is it a living thing?" and "Does it have fur?" The first person to figure out the word selects the next one. I wonder what new game we'll come up with next!

Q&A: A perfect image online



Q *My eighth grader is new to social media. When she sees classmates' posts, she thinks they have perfect lives. Help!*

A Suggest that your daughter compare scrolling through social media posts to watching a movie trailer. The trailer doesn't tell the whole story—it just shows scenes that will attract viewers' interest. On social media, children (and adults!) tend to share happy moments, not ones that are boring or embarrassing.

If your daughter feels jealous of a classmate's vacation pictures, for instance, have her think back to a trip she took, perhaps when you went camping last summer. Ask which moments from the trip she would and would not want made public.

Also, set limits on your child's social media use. Maybe she can check her accounts once after she finishes homework and then log off for the evening. Kids need time away from social media to experience real life—not the lives their friends are "creating" online.

"Sunny" mornings

Daylight saving time begins March 10. Even if it's still dark when your tween wakes up, you can make mornings bright and cheerful in your home—and send him off to school ready to learn. Try these tips.

1. Turn on the lights. Light sends signals to the brain that it's time to wake up.

2. Play music. Ask your middle grader to make a playlist called "Good morning!" He can include everyone's favorite upbeat songs.



3. Laugh. When you hear or see a funny joke, save it for morning. You could tell it at the breakfast table.

4. Exercise. Have sneakers and headlamps or reflective gear ready to go the night before, and head out for a quick run or to walk the dog together.

5. Enjoy trivia. Get everyone's brain in gear with a question of the day. Keep a deck of trivia cards on the table, or ask your smart speaker for today's Jeopardy question.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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