

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

I'm hopeful that...

Students who feel hopeful about the future tend to be more motivated and earn better grades. To foster hopefulness in your child, suggest that she write down her dreams for the near and distant future (making the lacrosse team, becoming a chef). She can start working toward them by setting goals for herself.

A day in the life

What do 24 hours look like in your home? Throughout one day, let your tween shoot video clips of family members enjoying a meal, laughing together, or walking the dog. Or he might take photos of these moments and make a slide show. Watch his creation together—he'll practice presentation skills and spend time with family.

Safe after school

Now that your child is in middle school, you may wonder whether she can stay home alone after school. Check your state law or guidelines, and consider your tween's maturity level. If she is going to be home without you, be sure she knows what to do (call or text you, start homework) and what not to do (use the stove, chat online).

Worth quoting

"Think for yourself, and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so, too."
Voltaire

Just for fun

Q: What do you throw out when you use it and take back when you don't need it?



A: An anchor.

Focused and ready to learn

Does your child like the idea of being his own boss? Tell him congratulations—he has a job! Managing his schoolwork is his responsibility, and he's in charge. Here are ways he can stay focused on this important role.

In class

It's a good idea for your tween to keep only what he needs on his desk. If he's allowed to pick his seat, he might choose a spot close to the teacher and away from windows, doors, and kids who like to talk a lot. And if he uses a laptop or tablet for classwork, he should close non-academic apps and windows so he's not tempted to play a game or check social media sites.

Study time

When your middle grader studies, he can use strategies to avoid interruptions. For example, he could hang up a "Do Not Disturb" sign, ask you to keep his siblings occupied, or go work at the library. Have him put electronics in another room when he's not using them to study. Also, he should pay attention to how he works and consider ways to focus better. If he tends to fidget, he



might walk around or squeeze a stress ball while he reads.

Everyday planning

To keep schoolwork front and center, encourage your child to record assignment deadlines in an agenda book or on a calendar as soon as he gets them. He can add commitments like practices and meetings, too. Then, he should review his plan each week to see what's coming up and make adjustments as needed. ^j]

School: A hot topic

One of the best ways to support your tween's education is to make it a regular topic of conversation. Try these ideas:

- Let your child teach you something she's learning. If she tells you about the Lewis and Clark expedition, for instance, have her trace the explorers' route on a map for you.
- Think of questions that lead to more than one-word answers. *Examples:* "What was the most surprising thing you learned today?" or "What were the other kids' speeches about?"
- Focus on her favorites—she may have more to say about the things she enjoys most. So if she loves art, let her show you her latest painting or sculpture and describe the technique she used.^j]



Engineer that!

If your middle schooler is creative and likes to solve problems or help people, engineering could be the perfect career for her. Suggest that she tinker with engineering projects like these to see what she thinks:

- Let your tween try her hand at engineering a contraption to move a marble across a room—the way *automotive engineers* work on designing cars to move people. Like an engineer, she should design, test, and redesign until she's satisfied with her model.
- Using drinking straws and other household materials, can your middle schooler build a "hand" that could type keys on



a computer for someone with a physical disability? Maybe she'd like to be a *biomedical engineer*—they invent devices to help people with disabilities or other health concerns.

- A *packaging engineer* creates packing materials for products. Encourage your child to build the strongest box possible out of a single sheet of paper. She could test (and retest) it by filling it with pennies. The more pennies her box can hold, the stronger it is. ^

BSay no to skipping class

Fl Last year, my son skipped class a few times. How can I make sure he doesn't do it again this year?

Q Skipping class can become a habit and is even a risk factor for dropping out of high school. Kids skip for a variety of reasons, such as struggling in school, being bullied, or experiencing peer pressure.



Talk to your son about why he skipped and how to make this year different. Offer help for any problems he's having, and tell him he can always talk to you, his teachers, or the school counselor.

Then, remind him of the consequences he experienced for skipping class last year, such as detention or zeroes for assignments. And let him know you expect him to be in school all day, every day this year unless he has an excused absence. ^

Build good relationships

Whether in school now or in the workplace, a tween will need to get along with people in adult worlds. Encourage him to use these "people skills" when working with his teachers, coaches, or club advisors.



Listen well. Your middle grader should pay close attention when adults give directions. Being a good listener will help him know what he needs to do to follow through—a key way to build trust in any relationship.

Have perspective. Help your child see things from an adult's point of view. Maybe the teacher assigned him a project partner he's not happy with. Suggest that he consider why. (Perhaps the teacher hoped he would be a nice role model for the other student.)

Be cooperative. Focusing on the greater good can help your middle grader be a team player. Maybe he wants to run sound and lights for the school play, but the advisor asks him to make publicity posters. Changing gears will show he's willing to help—and teach him to be adaptable. ^

Patent Walking tall

patent

My daughter Marley started feeling insecure about her looks when she began middle school. She complained that other girls were thinner or prettier. I remembered feeling the same way at her age, so I asked my mother to remind me how we handled it.

My mom said she helped me put my energy into looking and feeling my best instead of comparing myself to others. She had some nice suggestions for my daughter.

Marley has acne, like I did, so we shopped for skin care

products and found one that's helping. And we looked through her closet for outfits she feels good in. For example, she's more comfortable wearing skirts and dresses when she pairs them with colorful leggings. Finally, I suggested that she use a journal to write about her strengths and the accomplishments she's proud of. I know the middle school years can be a long haul. But I think Marley is feeling a little better about herself, and I hope that will continue. ^j



OUR

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