

November 2020

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Attendance matters

Missing even a few classes — whether they're in person or online— can have a snowball effect. Not only does being absent make it hard for your child to keep up, but chronic absenteeism is linked with a higher dropout rate. Make sure your middle grader knows you expect him to be in every class every day, unless he's sick or there's a family emergency.

Digital manners

Before your tween sends a text, post, or email, suggest that she ask herself, "Is this nice? Would I say it in person?" If the answer to either question is no, it's a good idea to reword. *Tip:* If she feels the need to type a disclaimer like "No offense, but ..." she probably shouldn't hit "send."

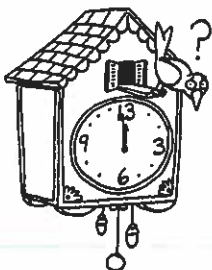
When parents disagree

Children who hear their parents arguing can feel stressed and insecure. Try to avoid topics that cause tension when your middle schooler is within earshot. If he does overhear an argument, offer reassurance: "We were upset, but we worked it out. And we still love each other and you."

Worth quoting

"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams!" *Henry David Thoreau*

Just for fun



Q: What time is it when the clock strikes 13?

A: Time to get a new clock.

Fine-tune your study routine

A good study routine helps your middle schooler manage her workload and make the best use of her time. Use these ideas to help her develop one that works for her.

Set the scene

For one week, challenge your tween to do "quality checks" of her study sessions. She can write down distractions (TV, text messages), note how she feels when she loses focus (fidgety, hungry), and pinpoint time wasters (searching for school supplies, choosing a snack). Together, brainstorm solutions. Maybe she can silence electronics, set a timer to take breaks, and gather supplies and snacks before she starts working.



algebra practice problems (30 minutes)" instead of "Study for math test."

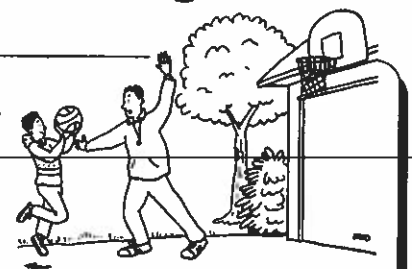
Personalize the approach

The "right" way to study is different for every student. Suggest that your child experiment with study methods to find her favorites. She might notice whether she stays on task better when she studies alone or if she learns more in a study group. Or maybe she'll try reading notes silently and out loud. She may realize that silent reading is faster but that she remembers more when she sees and hears the material. 👍

On common ground

As your child gets older, you can stay close by discovering routines and activities to share. Here's how:

- Choose things you do regularly, like eating and exercising, and try to do them with your tween. For instance, have breakfast together before he leaves for school. Or if he's doing online school, aim to sync your lunch breaks. Invite him to join you on your next run, or offer to shoot baskets with him.
- Look for common interests. Does your middle grader like music you enjoyed at his age? Play "Name That Tune" to see who can shout out titles and artists first. Or did he stream a TV series you loved when it originally aired? Make up trivia questions about the show, and try to stump each other. 👍



Focus on mental health

Strong coping strategies can help your tween navigate difficult situations—including a pandemic. Share these techniques for boosting his mental health.

Let it out. If your middle grader feels anxious or sad, writing may make his feelings more manageable. Suggest that he keep a journal, write poetry or song lyrics, or jot concerns on slips of paper to drop in a “worry jar.” Also, talk to him regularly about his feelings, and



share your own thoughts. (“I miss working in the office with my colleagues, but it’s nice to work in comfy clothes.”)

Look for the good. When your tween is stressed, encourage him to close his eyes, take deep breaths, and visualize one positive thing that happened today. Maybe he got to video chat with a friend he hasn’t seen in a while. Thinking about good times can make worries seem less intense.

Find humor. Laughter is a proven mental health booster. Your middle schooler might decorate his bedroom wall with things that make him chuckle, such as comic strips or funny pictures. He could even draw his own comics or write silly captions for photos. Ask him to show you the jokes, and enjoy a good laugh together. 👍

Parent-teacher conferences

There are many great reasons to take part in conferences with your middle grader’s teachers. Here are four.

1. You’ll help your child succeed. Students do their best when parents and teachers work together. Making a personal connection sets the stage for a strong partnership.

2. You’ll get to share information. Hearing about life at home gives the teacher insight into your tween. (“Lucy’s two younger siblings are also doing remote learning.”)



3. You’ll learn what’s expected. Knowing what your middle schooler needs to master helps you support her. Ahead of time, ask if she has questions for her teachers.

4. You’ll send a good message. Taking time to attend conferences shows your tween that school is important to you. *Tip:* Share teachers’ nice comments with her. (“Mr. Walker said you make excellent points during class discussions.”) 👍



Parent to Parent

A STEM-powered race

My son Tony loves STEM club, and he asked if we could do STEM challenges at home. So we decided we’d hold a family competition to engineer the best balloon-powered car.

Tony used a paper cup for the body of his car, chopsticks for the axles, and wagon-wheel pasta noodles for the wheels. He poked a hole in the bottom of the cup and threaded an uninflated balloon through the hole. Then, he blew it up and let go—the car whizzed across the room as the air left the balloon.

I made my car out of an empty cream cheese tub, knitting needles, and thread spools. It didn’t go as far as any of my kids’ cars—but Tony helped me redesign it so it would go a lot farther.

Next, we’re going to see who can build the biggest house of cards that stands on its own. 👍



Q & A Raise a lifelong learner

Q My daughter told me I’m lucky that I don’t have to do school-work or take tests anymore. How can I help her understand that learning is lifelong?

A Knowing that she’ll keep learning throughout life can motivate your daughter to do better in school.

Share with her what you learn each day. You might mention a new cash register system you’re being trained

on at work, an article you read about the Mars rover, or a podcast on food trends that you listened to in the car. Show enthusiasm for learning new things—it may rub off on your child!

Then, talk about how she’ll keep learning outside of class. If she wants to get a puppy, she’ll need to research training tips.

Or if she loves playing guitar, maybe she’ll teach herself to play other instruments like the ukulele and the banjo. 👍



OUR PURPOSE






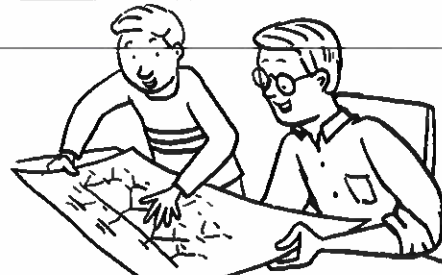
To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5540

Note: Fill in the month and dates, and post this calendar on your refrigerator. Then, encourage your child to do an activity a day.

Middle Years Daily Calendar

MONTH
November 2020

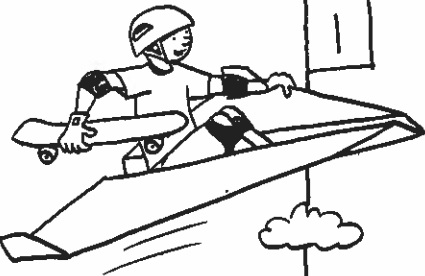

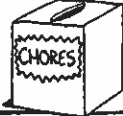


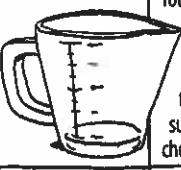


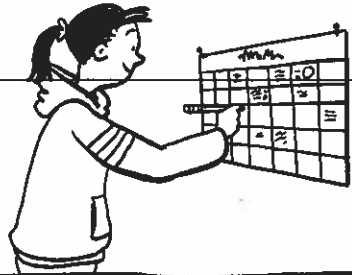
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		3 Make a family quote jar. Everyone can collect quotes from books or websites, write them on slips of paper, and drop them in. Take turns reading and discussing one each day.	4 Write random numbers on separate sticky notes and stick them on each other's foreheads. Take turns asking yes-or-no questions until you figure out your number.	5 Encourage optimism by asking family members to put a positive spin on challenges they faced today. ("I couldn't play outside, but I made up a song on my ukulele.")	6 Write hashtags that sum up a person or an event you studied in school. <i>Example:</i> #rosaparks #courage #stayedseated.	7 
	8 Explore centripetal force. Thread a bead on a string, and tie the ends of the string together. Swing the loop overhead in fast circles, then stop suddenly. The bead keeps spinning!	9 Create a "found poem." Select several books with interesting titles, and stack them. Rearrange until you're satisfied with the poem the titles form.	10 	11 Play charades—with a twist! Instead of having one person at a time act out a clue for others to guess, appoint one person the guesser. The other players act out the clues as a team.	12 	13 Research different styles of kites. Then, engineer your own, using craft supplies and recyclables (<i>examples:</i> tape, straws, bread bags). Go outside to test it.
15 Choose one new responsibility to add to your routine. You might start doing your own laundry or making your own breakfast, for instance.	16 Send fan mail to a favorite author. Search for contact information online, and write an email or a letter that describes what you like about the author's books.	17 Use sidewalk chalk to draw a giant tic-tac-toe board. Players try to land a stone in a box and make their mark (X or O). Three in a row wins.	18 Have family members share reading material at dinner. You might read a newspaper editorial or a magazine advice column, for example.	19 Hang up a world map. When you read or hear about a place in the news, put a sticky note or thumbtack on it. <i>Idea:</i> Use one color to flag places you want to visit someday.	20 Being on time shows respect. Keep track of what makes you late, such as misplaced shoes. Then, come up with solutions (always put shoes in the same spot).	21 Choose a photo from a newspaper or magazine. You get 60 seconds to make up a story about it. Use details like scenery and facial expressions for inspiration.
22 Engineer a tabletop version of a video game. For "Angry Birds," place plastic animals on block towers. Then, use a rubber band to launch Ping-Pong balls and knock down the towers.	23 	24 Play a backyard game with your family. Possibilities include Frisbee, bean bag toss, or badminton.	25 Start a word journal. Whenever you read or hear a new word, add it along with its definition and an illustration. Then, use your new words when you write.	26 Roasting vegetables like brussels sprouts or carrots makes them sweeter and crispier. Search online for recipes, print one out, and cook the dish for your family.	27 Engineering challenge! Build the tallest possible structure using marshmallows and uncooked spaghetti. You may also use tape, string, and scissors.	28 Look for errors on signs. You might find misspelled words, missing punctuation, or incorrect capitalization. Can you find any that make you laugh?
29 How much do credit card purchases really cost? Pretend you owe \$500, have a 20% annual interest rate, and pay \$50 per month. How long will it take you to pay it off? (<i>Note:</i> You pay interest on interest.)	30 Analogies use similarities to make comparisons. <i>Example:</i> Herd is to cows as swarm is to ___ (bees). Have family members take turns thinking of analogies. Can you figure them out?	Dec 1 Write a letter to a friend. Tell what you appreciate about the person and what positive impact he or she has on your life.	2 Discover some of your ancestry by researching your family name online. What does it mean? Where did it originate? Share what you learn with relatives.			

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Middle Years Daily Calendar

MONTH
December 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 Look for physical science in your favorite sports. For example, some skateboarding tricks involve gravity, lift, drag, and thrust—the same physics that apply to airplane flight.	3 Flip through a dictionary and match prefixes, suffixes, and roots to make up new words. Create imaginary definitions for them.	4 Learn a greeting in a foreign language spoken by a friend or neighbor. Greet the person in that language.	5 
6 Create a chore box. Write tasks on separate slips of paper, and put them in an empty tissue box. Family members take turns drawing a slip and completing the chore. 	7 Invent a new card game. Design cards (perhaps on index cards), and write instructions. Then, play the game with your family.	8 Line up 10 plastic cups and flip 5 upside down. Set a timer for 5 minutes. One player tries to get them all right-side-up while the other works to turn them upside down. Get the most cups your way to win.	9 	10 Code a family dance party! Choose symbols for dance steps (← = slide left, @ = spin around). Write "programs" for each other on paper, and "perform" them to music.	11 Call a relative you haven't spoken to in a while. Ask questions about the person's job, hobbies, and pets, and share information about your own life.	12 Read a magazine article, then put it away. How many details can you remember? What sources were quoted? What interesting adjectives did the writer use?
13 Number 25 slips of paper, 1–25. Arrange them in a 5 x 5 grid. Can you make all the rows, columns, and diagonals add up to the same number?	14 	15 Hold a family "read in." Have each person bring a book to read silently, or listen to an audiobook together.	16 Practice being assertive by clearly expressing a need. If a friend hasn't returned a borrowed item, you could call and say, "I need my charger back by tomorrow morning, please."	17 Create a science "news flash" on a bulletin board. Family members can post articles about science (renewable energy, medical advances, robotics) and discuss the discoveries.	18 Explore life before electricity by unplugging from modern conveniences for a night. Grill food outside. Tell stories or play games by candlelight.	19 Practice leadership skills by planning and leading an activity for younger siblings, cousins, or neighbors. <i>Examples:</i> craft project, outdoor game.
20 	21 Think logically to measure exactly 6 oz. of water. The catch? You can use water from the tap—but only a 4-oz. container and a 9-oz. container—and no measuring cup, except to check your work!	22 Save memories by writing postcards to yourself. You might write about a great novel you read or a rainbow you spotted.	23 Think of something that seems a bit overwhelming for you, like running a mile or cleaning out your closet. Show perseverance by taking a step each day toward tackling your goal.	24 Watch a TV broadcast of a sporting event, and point out examples of good sportsmanship. Maybe you'll see fans chanting a positive message or opponents shaking hands.	25 	26
27 Don't have a new book handy? Try using a reading app or an e-reader. You'll be able to check out library e-books and download free e-books from sites like read.gov/books/ .	28 Ask your parents about their day today. <i>Example:</i> "What was the best song you heard on the radio?" Then, bring it up at bedtime so they know you were listening.	29 	30 Below-zero temperatures are real-life examples of negative numbers. Go online and compare temperatures around the world. If it's 65 where you live and -65 in Antarctica, what's the difference?	31 Plan ahead for exams and other tests by creating a schedule. Write dates for the tests and for study sessions, then post the schedule in a visible spot. <i>Idea:</i> Find a study buddy, and pencil in study meetings.		

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