September 2016

Bennet Academy
Joseph Chella, Principal

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success

Short Stops

True to you

Encourage your youngster to stay true to himself as he meets new people. For instance, maybe he wants the approval of a popular student, but he knows that person cheats on tests or bullies younger kids. Explain that he shouldn't compromise his values, such as honesty or kindness, to fit in.

Swapping activities

Has your child been involved in a sport or club for the past few years—and now wants to switch to something different? As long as she has met her commitment, let her explore—even if you'll miss being a "baseball dad" or a "theater mom." Trying new activities helps her discover other interests, and you're likely to enjoy her new world, too.

No texting in class

If your middle grader has a cell phone or tablet, review the school's policy on electronic devices. They may not be allowed at all, or your tween might have to turn them off or leave them in his backpack or locker during class. Remind him to follow the rules, and make sure you don't text or email him during school hours.

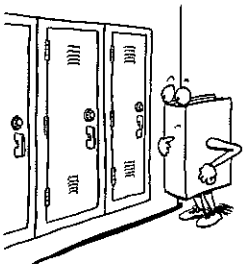
Worth quoting

"There are always flowers for those who want to see them." *Henri Matisse*

Just for fun

Q: How many books can you put in an empty locker?

A: One! After that, it's not empty!



School is priority #1

Knowing that school comes first will keep your middle grader focused on doing her best. Share these tips for making sure school remains front and center all year long.

Be there, be ready

Your child needs to be on time and in school each day. That way, she can hear lessons, participate in class discussions, and work in small groups—things she won't be able to make up outside of class. Also, she should be rested and alert by eating a healthy breakfast and getting enough sleep (9–11 hours for tweens and 8–10 hours for teens).

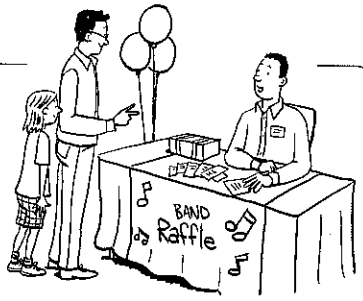
Keep up

Being a good student means taking assignments seriously, working hard, and finishing them on time. Encourage your youngster to stay on top of homework by writing down assignments and having a specific time and place each day to study. Also, while kids this age can be reluctant to ask for help, tell her that's something successful students do. For instance, she might approach her teacher after class or call a friend if she's stuck on a homework assignment.

Track progress

Suggest that your middle grader regularly check her grades in each class as well as her overall grade point average. Knowing where she stands will let her set realistic goals and plan ways to reach them. If she's halfway to the next higher letter grade, for example, she could attend after-school review sessions or organize a study group for that subject.

Still involved



Your tween or teen may not show it, but he still wants you involved in his schooling. Try these ideas.

Stay in touch. Sign up to receive emails from the school, parent-teacher groups, and your child's teachers, coaches, and school counselor.

Show up. Put upcoming school events on your calendar. Attending a curriculum night or field-trip information session shows your middle schooler that his education matters to you.

Help out. Look for ways to volunteer that fit your schedule, such as selling raffle tickets or serving on a parent committee. Or send in items that teachers request for their classrooms, such as paper towels, pencils, old newspapers, or empty cardboard boxes.

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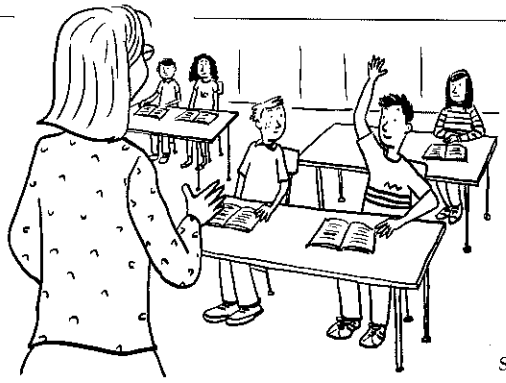
Respectful from the start



Being respectful will go a long way toward helping your child build strong relationships with teachers and peers—not to mention making him a nice person to live with. Here are ways your tween can show respect for others and earn it in return.

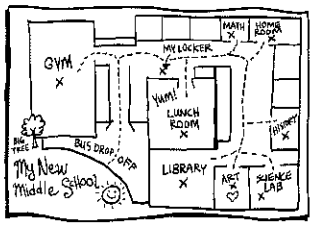
1. Listen with respect. Suggest that your middle schooler make eye contact with teachers and others to show he's paying attention when they speak to him. Tell him to avoid interrupting and to save comments or questions until after the person finishes.

2. Disagree politely. If a classmate (or a parent) says something your child disagrees with, he can disagree with respect. For example, he could respond, "I see what you're saying. Here's another way to look at it."

3. Accept differences. Your tween is likely to have schoolmates or teammates with different personalities and temperaments. Encourage him to find positive traits in people he doesn't click with. If he thinks a classmate is bossy, for instance, he might learn to respect the person for his leadership abilities during class discussions or club meetings.

Q&A Dealing with change

Q *We moved over the summer, and my daughter just started middle school. That's a lot of change! How can I help her?*



A Two changes at once can certainly feel overwhelming. The good news? Learning to adjust to change now will help your daughter later when she faces new situations in high school, college, or the workplace.

First, ask how it's going. Then, talk through ways to manage problems. If she's having trouble finding her way around the building, she could get a map of the school and put an X on each class to plan her routes. Or perhaps she doesn't have anyone to sit with at lunch or on the bus—she might ask to join another student who's sitting alone.

As the year goes on, continue to touch base. With your support, she should soon be feeling comfortable.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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a division of CCH Incorporated
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www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5540

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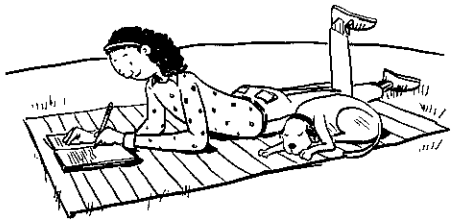
Just write it!



Middle graders do a lot of writing in school—not just in language arts, but in other classes, too. Motivate your child to enjoy writing with these fun at-home suggestions.

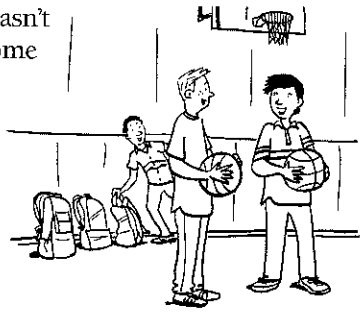
■ **Free writing.** Encourage her to get a cute notebook and write in it every day. She can set a timer for five minutes and write anything she wants (even if she begins with, "I'm not sure what to write…"). Your tween will probably get on a roll, and she just might want to keep writing when time's up! *Idea:* For inspiration, she could listen to music or write in a nice spot outside.

■ **Topic of the week.** Have family members take turns posting a random topic on the refrigerator. *Examples:* "Predict a 22nd-century fashion trend" or "Do you think people should eat only 'breakfast foods' for breakfast? Why or why not?" Everyone writes a response to the topic, and you can share them at the end of the week.

Parent to Parent: Home alone? Not yet

My son, Adam, wanted to stay home alone after school this year. "I'm not a baby anymore," he told me. "I'm old enough to watch myself."

I wanted to give Adam more independence, but I just wasn't comfortable having him come home to an empty house while I was at work. I've heard too many stories about unsupervised kids experimenting with risky behaviors—or just watching TV all afternoon.



So Adam and I came up with a plan. Three days a week he's going to an after-school program in our school district. He'll do his homework, play in the gym, and even try classes like coding and painting. The other two days he'll take the school bus to his aunt's house.

I'm breathing easier knowing that Adam will be safe, and I'm hoping he'll enjoy being with other kids and not being home alone after all.