May 2016

Londonderry Middle School

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success

Short Stops

High school-bound

If your middle grader is moving on this fall, help her get familiar with her new school by attending plays, sporting events, or other activities there. Also, write down dates of important events like freshman orientation, and schedule rides. And be sure to attend parent orientation if it's offered—so you can get ready for high school, too!

Try new foods

Summer is a great time to try new fruits and vegetables. You and your tween might browse a grocery store, an ethnic market, or a farmers' market for unfamiliar produce (say, rhubarb or passion fruit). Then, have him look up ways to prepare it. You'll add variety—and nutritious foods—to your family's meals.

A shoulder to lean on

If your child is upset about something (she didn't get the grade she expected, or a boy she likes doesn't like her), she may use you as a safe place to vent. Let her talk, and put away distractions so you can really listen. She may need your help, or maybe she'll just feel better getting it off her chest.

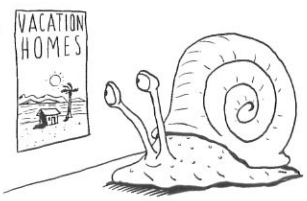
Worth quoting

"Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished." *Lao Tzu*

Just for fun

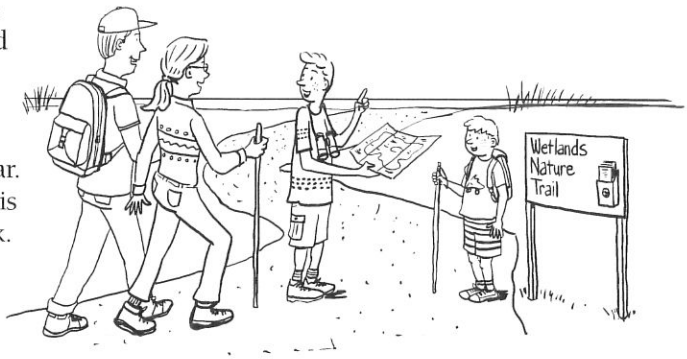
Q: No matter where I go, I'm never far from home. I travel by foot, but I'm toeless. What am I?

A: A snail.



Tuned into learning

Your child's brain is like an engine. While it's revved up to learn, he can keep it running—and build on that momentum—so he's ready to go next school year. These activities will help his mind stay sharp over break.



Tinker away

Inventing new objects out of old ones lets your tween practice critical and creative thinking. Have him gather odds and ends like paper towel tubes, plastic containers, and broken gadgets. He could use his imagination to make something functional or fun (a robot, 3-D art, a roller coaster for action figures). Your community may even have a "makerspace" in a school or library where kids can create things out of random parts.

Enter contests

Doing a project for a competition will motivate your middle grader to dig into a topic and use all kinds of skills, from writing and research to initiative and persistence. He might design a space settlement, write a short story, or film a video about ocean pollution. Encourage him to ask his teachers or look online for local and national contests. While winning would be the icing on the cake, he'll find the process itself exciting.

Build background knowledge

Together, review your child's course catalog to see what he will be learning next year. Then, look for interesting opportunities to discover more about those subjects. For instance, visit museum exhibits in your town or in places you travel to. When you hike, consult field guides for information about wildlife and plants. Or in the car, listen to music in the language he is taking.

Summer socializing

Help your middle grader socialize safely this summer with ideas like these.

Enroll in programs. Encourage her to join a class, craft program, or tween "club" that meets throughout the summer. Check free or low-cost offerings at rec centers, libraries, YMCAs, places of worship, or local businesses.

Attend community events. She may run into familiar faces at an Independence Day parade, free community concerts, or local festivals. Consider inviting along another family with a child her age.

Plan a get-together. Perhaps your tween would like to host a midbreak party for classmates. She might have everyone bring a game, and she'll supply snacks. (*Note:* Be sure you're home to supervise.)

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Caring counts

While it's normal for your middle schooler to focus on her own needs, you can foster compassion for others by having her consider these questions.

"How can I pay it forward?" Doing good deeds without expecting anything in return can be the ultimate kindness. Your tween can create a pay-it-forward chain by making a "Pay it forward" card.

When she does a kind act (walks the dog when it's her sister's turn), she gives the card to that person. Then, that person passes on the card with her own kind deed. Keep the card going, and even expand the circle outside your family.

"How do I act in public?" You want your child to be caring toward everyone, not just those she's close to. Set an example when you're out together: You might ask a cashier how her day is going or be understanding if a waiter spills a drink. Discuss everyday ways your tween can be kind, too. For instance, she could greet her bus driver with a friendly "hello" as she boards the bus and a "thank you" as she leaves.

Q&A Addicted to technology?

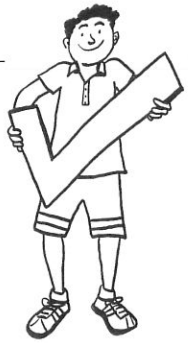
Q *My son would stare at a screen all day if I let him. Could he be addicted?*

A Many children use screens for hours each day, which limits face-to-face interaction and physical activity.

But a child who is truly addicted may not care about things that once mattered—even eating or sleeping—and grow violent if you cut off access to his screens. He might be preoccupied with the Internet or video games or lie about how often he uses them. If you suspect a serious problem like that, seek help from a mental health professional.

But even if your son isn't addicted, you probably want him to cut back. Consider making electronics off-limits during meals, car rides, and other family time. Also, you might keep television, video games, and smartphones out of his bedroom at night—using them can interfere with sleep. And finally, you could put on limits with parental control settings.

End of the year? Check!



The school year is winding down. Wrapping things up a little at a time will make the final days less hectic. Suggest that your tween tackle end-of-year to-dos like these.

- ❑ ***Check with teachers, or view grades online.*** He can see where he stands, make sure he doesn't have any missing assignments, and ask about extra credit to bring up a score.
- ❑ ***Add final projects and studying for exams to his planner.*** Your child should break the work into steps and space them out so it's not overwhelming.
- ❑ ***Return library books to the school media center.*** Thinking about this now will give him time to look for any he can't find right away.
- ❑ ***Clean out his locker and backpack.*** He could take a plastic grocery bag to use as a mini trash can for unneeded papers, gum wrappers, or used-up supplies.

Parent to Parent Make time for reading

My daughter Andrea's language arts teacher sent home a note saying how important it is for students to read over the summer. I hadn't made summer reading a priority before, but this year we've decided to try.

First, we set a daily time to read together—30 minutes after dinner and on weekend mornings. We also brainstormed places to read. I suggested our porch, while Andrea thought of sitting by a nearby pond. We both agreed it would be fun to read at a frozen-yogurt shop, too.

Then, to get ideas for books, I had Andrea ask friends. We also spoke to a librarian. She recommended a few classics as well as newer books, and she also encouraged Andrea to read nonfiction about her interests. I'm really looking forward to our reading time—and I think Andrea is, too.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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