October 2016

Londonderry Middle School

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success

## Short Stops

### Call on counselors

Your middle grader's school counselor is there to help students *and* parents. Contact the counseling office with questions about your tween's schedule or for advice to help your child deal with a difficult situation like bullying or divorce. The counselor might meet with her or suggest a support group.

### Comparatively speaking

Stretch your tween's thinking with this analogy game. Choose two things with something in common (two states, for instance), and give him an analogy to fill in: "Virginia is to Richmond as Oregon is to _____. *Answer:* Salem (Salem is Oregon's state capital, like Richmond is Virginia's capital). Take turns, and see how many analogies you can come up with.

### Promptness matters

Being on time for activities and other commitments shows respect for others. For one week, suggest that your middle grader jot down anything that makes her run late. *Example:* "Couldn't find matching socks." Then, she can put solutions in place to avoid the problem (roll socks together before putting them away).

### Worth quoting

"The purpose of life is to contribute in some way to making things better."
*Robert F. Kennedy*

### Just for fun

**Q:** How do you keep someone in suspense?

**A:** I'll tell you tomorrow.

# Discipline for tweens

Handling your tween's behavior may be a challenge as he outgrows "little kid" discipline methods. Strategies like these can help.

### Use "I" messages

A sentence that starts with "You always…" or "You never…" might make your middle grader feel more defensive and less apt to listen. Instead, try starting with "I." ("I worry when I don't hear that you got to your friend's house safely" rather than "You didn't call like I asked!") At the same time, make sure he knows the consequences of not doing what you ask. ("I'll have to ask you to come straight home from school if you can't remember to call.")

### Meet halfway

Your child will be more likely to follow rules if he understands the reasons behind them. Maybe he complains that he's not allowed to go out on school nights. Explain that he needs to finish homework, spend time with family, and get to bed on time. Then, you could consider letting him go out one evening a week and give him a chance to show you he can meet his obligations.

### Keep it in perspective

Save serious consequences for serious circumstances (*example:* your youngster cheats on a quiz). But for something minor, try using humor. It may keep a situation from growing into a full-blown argument. If your child frequently misplaces the remote control, say something like, "I think the dog lost the remote again. Can you find it?" You might get a laugh—and a more cooperative tween.

## Inspire curiosity

Being curious about a topic she's studying can motivate your child to dig into it. Suggest these ways to pump up her curiosity.

- **Looking ahead.** Your middle grader might scan her syllabus or textbook to see what's coming up next. What would she like to know more about? What questions come to mind? ("How did the Gilded Age get its name?")
- **Choosing topics.** When your middle grader has a choice on a paper or project, encourage her to pick a topic that interests her (say, what schools were like in Colonial times). That way, she'll naturally want to jump in. As she researches, suggest she jot down questions and watch for answers. That will build curiosity and add to her knowledge.

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# On task from start to finish

Middle school students are expected to manage multiple assignments and deadlines. Your child can stay organized with these practical tips.

**Get started.** Recommend that your tween start on each project the day it's assigned. A good first step is to list the tasks required (get supplies, do a rough draft), along with a deadline for each. She can add to her list as she gets additional projects so everything is in one spot. *Idea:* Your tween and a classmate could check in daily on each other's progress to stay on track.

**Turn in assignments.** If your middle grader leaves completed work at home, she'll lose valuable points for turning it in late—or even receive a zero. Encourage her to immediately place finished work in her backpack. Before bed, she should put her backpack and other needed items by the door. *Idea:* Suggest that she put a sticky note on her dresser or bathroom mirror as a reminder. ("Take my math poster!")

# Fun family reading

At this age, children can lose interest in reading as friends and activities take center stage. But reading for pleasure is important at every age! Encourage your tween to enjoy reading with ideas like these:

- Keep an audiobook going in the car, and fit in bits and pieces when you run errands or drive your child to activities. You might discover he can't wait to get in the car to find out what happens next.
- Scope out used-book shops during family day trips. There may be interesting ones in historic districts or tourist areas. Browse together so he can find books that interest him. Or explore library branches around your city or county to look for cozy reading spots and good books on display. Your tween will probably want to bring books home—and continue the reading there.

## Q&A Ward off drugs and alcohol

**Q** *Now that my son is in middle school, I worry that he'll be exposed to alcohol or drugs. How can I keep him from trying them?*

**A** Starting a discussion—and bringing up the topic regularly—is the best thing you can do to help your son say no.

Let him know how much you care about him and that you want him to stay safe and healthy. Explain that this includes not drinking alcohol, using drugs, or taking prescription medications that aren't his—not even once. Also, make sure he's aware of outcomes that go beyond the health dangers. For instance, he could get kicked off a team or out of a club if he drinks or uses drugs.

It's also wise to team up with other parents. You might agree to share concerns, like letting each other know if you hear the kids mention drugs when they're in your car or hanging out at your house.

## Parent to Parent Believe in yourself

My daughter Madison wanted to submit a story she had written to the school literary magazine, but she was afraid it wouldn't be accepted.

I told Madison that even famous authors have had their work rejected. To illustrate, I looked online and learned that one of her favorite books, *Anne of Green Gables* by L. M. Montgomery, was rejected several times before it was published. She was so surprised that she did a search herself and discovered that rejections are really common.

Madison decided to take a chance. Her work wasn't published in the fall issue of the magazine, but the editor told her they would consider it for the spring issue. That gave her the confidence to try sending another of her stories to a national kids' magazine—now she's waiting to hear back from them!

**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

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