November 2017

South Cumberland Elementary School
Mr. Darrell Threet, Principal

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success

Short Stops

Which language?

Is your child taking a foreign language now or thinking about taking one? Suggest that she weave a new language into her leisure time. She could watch a televised soccer game in Italian, set an online account or her phone to Spanish, or listen to music in French. She'll pick up new words—and be motivated to continue learning.

"What I do well..."

Focusing on your tween's strengths will help him see himself as capable. Point out what he's good at ("The characters you invent in your stories really come to life"). Then, encourage him to develop talents by stretching his skills. For instance, he might try his hand at writing a science fiction story or enter a writing contest.

Hygiene habits

Middle school is a good time for you and your children to evaluate their hygiene routines. At this age, they'll start to sweat more, so they'll need to work harder to keep their skin clean. Introduce habits like washing their faces morning and night and using deodorant daily.

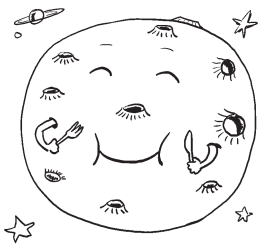
Worth quoting

"A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination."
Nelson Mandela

Just for fun

Q: How do you know when the moon has had enough to eat?

A: When it's full.



Respect all around

Being respectful will make your middle schooler's relationships better at school and at home. Here are ways he can show respect for himself, other people, and the world around him.

Respecting himself

Tweens with self-respect are more likely to stick to their values and say no to risky behaviors. Teach your child to check in with himself *before* he makes decisions. Say a friend invites him to a party where parents won't be home. He could think about what might go on there and say, "Thanks, but that's not for me."

Respecting others

Explain that showing respect will make it easier for your tween to get along with adults and peers—and help him earn their respect, too. He can do that by treating people as he wishes to be treated. For instance, he should eat snacks in the kitchen at a friend's house if that's the family's policy (even if he eats in the living room at your house). Also, he'll respect classmates by doing what he says he will, such as completing his part of a project he's doing with a partner.

Respecting the environment

Encourage your middle grader to adopt the motto, "Leave a place better than you found it." To put that into practice, he might throw away trash that he sees in your neighborhood or at a park. Conserving resources is another way to respect nature. He can turn lights off when he leaves a room and shut water off while brushing his teeth.

Help wanted

When your child is stumped about a concept or a homework problem, teachers want to help. Plus, asking for assistance shows that your tween cares about her work. Encourage her to seek help confidently with these tips.

- **When to get help:** Her question may have an easy-to-find answer. Suggest that she check her textbook and notes or call a classmate. If that doesn't work, she should approach her teacher.
- **How to ask:** Your child might wait until the teacher is free and say, "I'm having trouble with my essay thesis. Can you help me?" Or if the question pops up after school, she could email, "I don't understand why I got this algebra problem wrong. When is a good time to stop by?"

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STEM at home

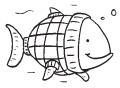
You don't have to be a scientist to foster a love of STEM in your middle grader. Share these quick-hit ideas for exploring STEM at home.

Science. Play with sound by turning a straw into a musical instrument. Let your child experiment with ways to create vibrations—and thus produce noise. For instance, she can make a "flute" by poking holes in a straw, or an "oboe" by flattening one end of a straw and cutting it into a point.

Technology. Make a stop-motion movie. Suggest that your tween snap a series of photos of an object, moving the item slightly each time. Then, she could upload and string the photos together to create the illusion that the object is moving.

Engineering. Piece together a "marble trampoline" with household items. Have your child come up with different materials to use for a ramp and a "bouncy" target. The goal? For her to send a marble down the chute so it bounces off the "trampoline."

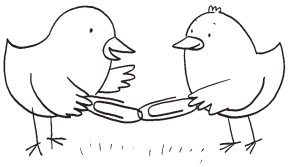
Math. How would an object look if it were suddenly much larger or smaller? Ask your middle grader to measure an eraser or a sneaker. Then, using graph paper and what she's learning about ratio and proportion, she can draw the same item scaled up or down by 1, 5, or 10 times.



Conversation games

Being able to carry on a conversation will help your tween in everything from participating in class to hanging out with friends. Have fun practicing together with these games.

Link by link



Show your middle grader how conversation connects people. Choose a topic (movies, holidays), and set out one paper clip. Go in a circle, and let each player speak. For each related comment, follow-up question, or answer, add a paper clip to the chain. When the chain reaches 20 links, switch topics and play again.

Freeze chat

Teach your child to speak on his feet. Have two people stand, set a timer for two minutes, and call out a random question ("What's better, snow or sun?"). The players go back and forth discussing the answer. When the timer rings, whoever is talking freezes, and another player takes his place. Ask a new question, and the game continues.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Parent to Parent

A self-conscious tween

During the first few weeks of school, my son Sam forgot his gym uniform several times. When I casually mentioned it, Sam got a little touchy, but ended up saying he looks "stupid" in it since he's skinnier than the other boys.

I told Sam that I felt self-conscious at his age, too. I was shorter than my friends and not very coordinated. Exercising made me feel better about myself. I thought it could help him, too. Since I run on the weekends, I invited him to join me. During our cool-down, I pointed out that everyone develops at different rates. I eventually grew taller, and I told him his body would grow and change, too. Regardless, I let him know that what matters most is the awesome person on the inside.

Sam hasn't forgotten his gym clothes lately. I'm taking that as a sign he's feeling a little more secure.

Q&A

Conferences: A good choice

Q *Now that my oldest child is in middle school, do I really need to go to her parent-teacher conference?*

A It's a good idea to attend parent-teacher conferences regardless of your student's age. Going to them sends her a clear signal that you're interested in her education.

Knowing that you're paying attention can inspire her to give her best effort. Plus, teachers will share helpful insights about your child, from her work habits to her social life.

Before you go, see if your tween wants you to bring up specific topics. Also, look over her graded papers. That way, you'll pinpoint anything you want to discuss, such as the math she's working on or her progress in English.

Finally, consider any changes at home that her teachers should know about (a military deployment or a change in marital status, for example).