

# Middle Years

## *Working Together for School Success*

---

### **Short Stops**

- **Stay Informed** – Want to connect with your child’s school on social media? Make sure to select the official page so you’ll know the information is trustworthy. Click on social media icons on the school district’s website, or contact the office to ask for links.
- **Special Siblings** – A youngster with disabilities can require extra time and energy from parents. To help your other children feel important, too, try to give them some undivided attention each day. For example, you might play a board game in the evening or have a one-on-one talk before bed.
- **A Taste of Learning** – Encourage your middle grader to “chew on” information he learns – just like he would a tasty snack! For instance, rather than simply memorizing the First Amendment to the Constitution, he could mull over ways he has used his right to free speech or to “peaceably assemble.” Perhaps he wrote a letter to the editor or went with you to a rally.

**Worth Quoting** – “It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan.”  
-- Eleanor Roosevelt

**Just for Fun** – Question: Where do books sleep?  
Answer: Under their covers.

---

### **Ways to Manage Stress**

Anna, a typical middle grader, has a lot on her plate: schoolwork, yearbook committee, and sports. While she gets stressed from time to time, she uses strategies like these to cope – and your tween can, too.

- **Reduce Triggers** – Encourage your child to make a list of what stressed her out this week. *Examples* - “taking a pop quiz,” or “preparing for the student council meeting.” Suggest that she identify what’s behind the stressors (being unprepared or leaving things until the last minute) and plan ways to overcome them. She could review her notes each evening or start getting ready for meetings sooner, for instance.
- **Offer Ideas** – Share ways you deal with stressors such as a train delay or a computer problem. Maybe you look at a photo of a loved one or picture a peaceful scene like a falling snow. Then ask your tween to name ways she could work through her stress, like taking deep breaths or snuggling with her dog.
- **Turn to Others** – Let your middle grader know that she can come to you when she’s stressed. Also have her think of other people she could turn to, such as friends, her school counselor, or her coach. She can talk about what’s bothering her and learn strategies for dealing with it. *Note* – If stress seems to be interfering with your child’s daily life, talk to her pediatrician.

## **A+ Attendance**

The first step toward doing well in school is to show up! As the school year continues, encourage your child to keep up good attendance with these tips.

- **Set Expectations** – Weave comments into your conversations that make it clear how important you consider attendance. (“I scheduled your dentist appointment for 3:30 pm, so you won’t miss anything in 7<sup>th</sup> period Science.”)
- **Know School Policy** - If your middle grader misses school because he’s sick, use school policy to help you decide when he can return. For instance, if he has been fever-free for the required amount of time and feels better, he could go back to school.

## **Think Critically About Ads**

Evaluating advertisements is an important part of being a critical thinker and a savvy consumer. Share this advice with your middle grader.

1. **Product Placement** – When you and your child watch TV or movies, try to spot brand names. Maybe the judges on his favorite talent show always drink a certain brand of soda. Ask why he thinks that is – do all of the judges just happen to like it? Maybe – but the soda company pays the show to feature the product. Can your tween figure out the unstated message? (If famous people drink it, maybe he should, too!) He’ll learn that ads aren’t always obvious and start to think more critically about them.
2. **Targeted Advertising** – Did your tween ever look up a sports team online, then see an ad for game tickets on another site? Web browsers use “cookies” to determine who gets which ads. Your middle grader should consider who the advertiser is (perhaps a ticket reseller), why he’s seeing the ad (he’s a fan of the team), and what isn’t stated (how much tickets are marked up).

## **Practical Writing**

Writing isn’t just something your tween does in school – it’s important in daily life, too. Encourage her to practice different types of writing at home with these activities.

- **To Inform** – Your child could interview relatives about their jobs. What does a typical day on the job look like? What do they like best about their work? She can write and share a “Who’s Who” to help family members learn more about each other. *Example* – “Aunt Cora is an optometric assistant, which means she works alongside eye doctors. Her favorite part of the job is helping patients pick out glasses.”
- **To Entertain** – Suggest that your middle grader write a script for a silly skit. She can include dialogue and stage directions (notes that tell actors what to do). Encourage her to consider her audience – if her skit is for younger siblings, what will they find funny? Then, she and her friends could practice the skit and perform it for their audience.

## **Changing Friendships**

**Q:** My daughter seems to have a different best friend every week. Is this behavior normal for middle school kids?

**A:** Friendships can change frequently in middle school. It’s typical for kids to outgrow relationships and to feel closer to one friend than to another as their interests and maturity levels change.

### **Q & A: Changing Friendships, continued**

Let your daughter know that no matter who her “best” friend is, she can remain friends with many people. Mention the various social circles in your own life, such as your book club friends, work buddies, and college roommates.

Also, remind your child to treat everyone kindly, including classmates she may have grown apart from. Remaining friendly will leave the door open for spending more time together in the future.

### **Parent to Parent: Take Pride in Your Work**

This year, my son Adrian started rushing through his assignments and making careless mistakes. I wanted him to take pride in his work like he did when he was younger, so I had an idea.

I pulled out a storage bin full of papers and projects we’d saved from Adrian’s elementary school years. We took a nice trip down memory lane as we admired stories he’d written, pictures he’d drawn, and tests he’d done well on. Seeing his old papers made Aidan realize how nice it feels to be proud of your work.

Now Aidan has started saving his middle school work, too. I’m not seeing as many careless errors – I can tell he’s trying harder. I know we’ll enjoy looking through his collection when he’s in high school!

---

#### Our Purpose

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

#### Resources for Educators, a division of:

CCH Incorporated  
128 N. Royal Avenue  
Front Royal, VA 22630  
800-394-5052

[rfecustomer@wolterskluwer.com](mailto:rfecustomer@wolterskluwer.com)

[www.rfeonline.com](http://www.rfeonline.com)

ISSN 1540-5540