

March 2009

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



► Goodbye, bad habits

Middle schoolers may start biting their nails or chewing on pencils without realizing it. These habits can be triggered by stress or boredom. Suggest that your child offer herself an incentive to quit. For instance, if she doesn't bite her nails for two weeks, she might do home manicures with a friend.

► Standardized tests

It's important that all students be in school for standardized tests. Put the dates on your calendar so you don't schedule appointments for your child that week. If he's sick, check on makeup days. Also, be sure he gets a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast for test day (and every day!).

► Think summer

Now is a good time to start thinking about summer plans. Encourage your child to list possibilities. She might come up with programs to attend, opportunities for volunteering, or places to visit. The brainstorming will get her thinking - and give her productive ways to spend her days.

► Worth quoting

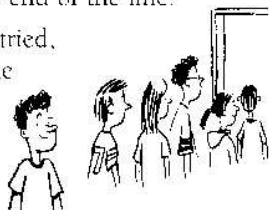
"Teachers open the door. You enter by yourself."

Chinese proverb

► Just for fun

Teacher: I thought I told you to stand at the end of the line.

Student: I tried, but someone was already there!



Kindness: It's contagious

While getting off the school bus, Ethan sees Abby trip and drop her books. He's in a hurry to get home, but he stops and helps her gather her belongings.

Ethan performed a random act of kindness—he did something thoughtful for another person just to be nice. Encourage your child to be kind with these ideas.

Model kind acts. Let your youngster see you hold the door for someone or motion another driver ahead of you in traffic. You might comment on how being considerate made you feel: "That woman was in a hurry. I'm glad we could help." Chances are, your child will want to feel that way, too.

Plan kind acts. Ask your middle grader to name 10 ways to show kindness, or have the whole family think of ideas together. Then, let everyone choose one to try. *Examples:* Weed a neighbor's flower beds, take treats to animals in a shelter, share CDs with friends.



Recognize kind acts. Attach an envelope to your refrigerator or bulletin board. When someone sees another family member act kindly, he can write a note about it ("Bryan helped Susie with her math homework"). Pull out the notes and read them aloud at dinner or during family meetings.

Finding fun reads

Pages seem to fly by when you're reading a good book. Use these tips to steer your child to selections she'll enjoy.

Share with friends. If her friends like a particular book or author, your youngster might, too. Suggest that she set up an exchange with classmates so she can try many different books.

Look for "readalikes." Does your child have a favorite series? She can search the Web for similar titles. For instance, if she's a fan of Carolyn Keene's Nancy Drew series, have her type "Nancy Drew readalikes" into www.google.com.

Browse book lists. Librarians can provide recommended reading lists. Your middle schooler can also find suggestions and reviews in *Booklist* magazine or online at www.kidsreads.com.

