Bayless Junior High School
Mr. Tucker, Principal

September 2008

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

Meet and greet

Open houses and back-to-school nights help parents break the ice with teachers. Introducing yourself now will make it easier to talk later if you have questions about your child's progress. Be sure to let teachers know how you prefer to be contacted (phone call, e-mail, note).

Growing pains

Preteens may feel self-conscious about being shorter or taller than their peers. Reassure your child that everyone hits growth spurts at different times. Point out qualities that have nothing to do with his size, like his good sense of humor or strong leadership skills.

Attendance counts

Being a student is a full-time job. Your middle grader can stay on top of her studies by attending all her classes every day. Spell out acceptable reasons for missing school (illness, family emergency), and emphasize that being tired or forgetting to do homework are not excuses to stay home.

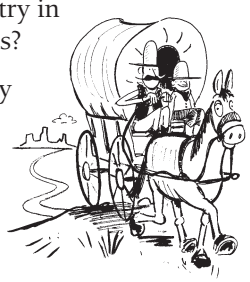
Worth quoting

"It is today that we create the world of the future." *Eleanor Roosevelt*

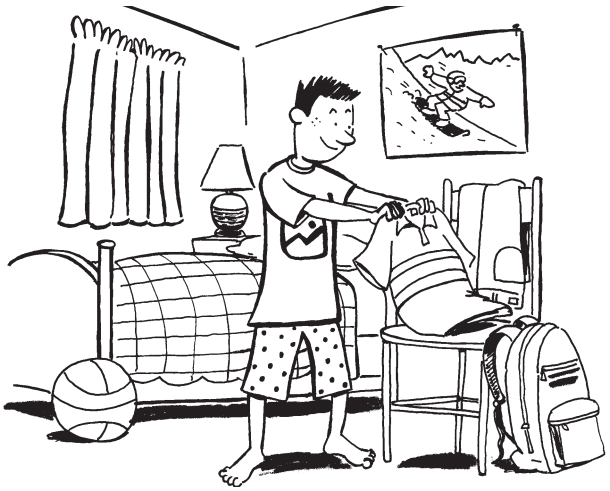
Just for fun

Q: Why did the pioneers cross the country in covered wagons?

A: Because they didn't want to wait 40 years for a train!



All-day success



It's the beginning of a new school year—and the perfect time to help your middle grader set up new routines. Here are some great ideas to keep his days running smoothly from dawn to dusk.

Calm mornings

Suggest that your youngster set his alarm 10 minutes earlier this year. If he gets ready quickly, he'll have a built-in reward—10 minutes to check e-mail, play with his dog, or read the comics. Be sure he has a healthy breakfast or plans to buy one at school.

Efficient afternoons

Does your child belong to a club or team that meets after school? Have him plan for extracurricular activities by spreading out his studying over the entire week. On free afternoons, he can read ahead in his textbooks or work on long-range assignments. If he stays on top of his work, he won't be tempted to rush through homework on meeting or practice days.

Plan-ahead evenings

Save time by pairing evening tasks with morning ones. For example, as your middle grader puts away leftovers from dinner, have him make his lunch for the next day. When he changes into pajamas, he can choose tomorrow's clothes. Together, look over his school papers, and have him place his backpack near the door so he won't forget anything in the morning.

Reading aloud

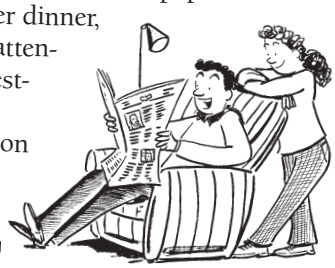
When your child was younger, you probably tucked her in with a bedtime story. Guess what? She's not too old for read-alouds now—her reading skills will improve, and you'll enjoy the time together.

Story time

On weekend mornings, squeeze in a chapter or story. Build your youngster's listening and vocabulary abilities with a Choose Your Own Adventure book like *Space and Beyond* (R. A. Montgomery) or a short story collection like *3 a.m.* (Dallas Woodburn).

Listen to this

While relaxing with a newspaper or magazine after dinner, call everyone's attention to an interesting item. You'll spark conversation when you read all or part of an article aloud.



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Science matters

Connect science with the real world, and your child may develop a lifelong interest in the subject. Try striking up a conversation about careers like these:

● **Forensic scientists** analyze evidence from crime scenes. You can mention this field when your middle schooler is learning about DNA or analyzing results from science labs. *Idea:* Suggest that she compare fingerprints in your family. She can have each person press an index finger on an ink pad and then onto paper. How do the prints differ?

● **Environmental scientists** research ways to reduce air pollution or keep beaches clean. Point this out to your child when her class studies land, air, and water. *Idea:* Have her brainstorm ways to protect the environment (organize a park cleanup, turn off appliances).

● **Biologists** protect endangered species or prevent the spread of disease. Studying biology will help your youngster learn what living things need to survive. *Idea:* Visit a zoo or a wildlife sanctuary so she can watch animal scientists in action.

Note: Inspire your middle grader with stories of real-life scientists and careers at Web sites like *www.pbs.org/safarchive/5_cool/53_career.html.*

Q & A

Making friends

Q *My daughter Ava just started middle school and is nervous about making new friends. How can I help?*

A It's natural to feel uncertain when faced with a new social scene. Middle school may be the first time your daughter is moving from class to class, with different kids in each room.

Point out that other students may also be nervous about making friends. Suggest that she introduce herself to a classmate at lunch or on the bus. She might offer a compliment ("That's a cool purse") and ask if they can sit together. By chatting, they may discover a common interest (movies, hiking) to share on a weekend.

Parent to Parent

A new way to study

My son's classes became more challenging when he entered middle school last year. I wanted to find a way to help him study that was easy and fun.

A friend suggested we make our own quiz show game to help Julian prepare for tests. The next time he had a history test, I decided to try it. First, we scanned his notes and textbook review questions to find categories. We tacked a large sheet of paper to the wall and wrote each category at the top of a column and then added a few questions underneath.

Julian chose categories and I asked questions until we had covered them all. He liked this new way of reviewing so much, we've decided to do it again this year!

Talking about tolerance

Today's middle schools—and workplaces—are filled with a diverse crowd. Help your child appreciate people of all backgrounds with these suggestions:

● Expose your family to different cultures. You might eat at an ethnic restaurant or attend a recital of foreign music or dance. Consider swapping holiday traditions with neighbors: invite them to your celebration, and join in theirs. Learning about others will help your youngster build respect and tolerance.

● Find everyday opportunities (movies, advertisements, TV shows) to talk to your middle grader about stereotyping. *Examples:* Boys don't like to draw; girls aren't good at sports. Ask your child, "How would you feel if your friends made fun of you because you like to draw?" "How would your sister feel if everyone told her she'd never be good at lacrosse?" Encourage him to look at each person as unique—just as he wants to be seen.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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