October 2017

Kamehameha Schools Kapalama Middle School
Mrs. Elsa Pua Ka'ai, Principal

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success

## Short Stops

### In the loop

You can stay involved in your tween's education from inside your own home. How? Make what's happening at school a regular topic of conversation. Visit the school website often, and check emails from teachers and the school district. Bring up subjects mentioned, such as school assemblies, or comment on photos that are posted.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Having good posture in class will help your middle schooler concentrate. Plus, it puts less strain on his back and lets him breathe better—increasing blood flow to his brain. He could practice while doing homework. Encourage him to sit up straight with his back touching the chair and his knees bent at a right angle.

### Fun historical facts

Want to spark your middle grader's interest in history? She could look in library books or online to find unusual stories about the people she studies. *Example:* Before the Civil War, Harriet Tubman once escaped capture by pretending to chase a flock of chickens.

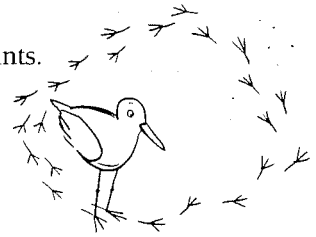
### Worth quoting

"Reach high, for stars lie hidden in your soul." *Pamela Vaull Starr*

### Just for fun

**Q:** "The more of me you make, the more of me you leave behind. What am I?"

**A:** Footprints.



# Tween push-and-pull

Your middle grader lets you into her world one minute, then seems to put up a "Keep Out" sign the next. She needs you—but at the same time, she's pushing away to figure out who she is and to become more independent. Try these ideas for handling classic "now I need you, now I don't" tween behavior.

***Challenge:*** *Your child no longer tells you all about her life.*

**Solution:** Instead of pressing her for information, wait until she's in the mood to chat. If she opens up as you're heading to bed, consider staying up longer. Then, listen closely instead of immediately offering your opinion or ways to fix problems.

***Challenge:*** *Your tween spends more time with friends and less time with family.*

**Solution:** It's normal for her to want to be with friends. To encourage family time, look for opportunities that appeal to her. Maybe you'll have breakfast together on weekdays or let her do your nails after she does hers.

***Challenge:*** *Your middle grader is embarrassed by whatever you do.*

**Solution:** At this age, children want to fit in and are sensitive to what their peers think. Try not to take it personally, and remember that she'll outgrow it. In the meantime, notice what embarrasses your tween, and work around it if possible. For instance, if she doesn't like you hugging her good-bye in front of others, you might say "Love you" and walk away.

## Musical learning

Most tweens love listening to music! Use your child's interest to boost his learning.

**1. Be a critic.** Suggest that he write reviews of favorite songs. He could bring songs to life with *similes*, or figures of speech that compare two things in an interesting way. *Example:* "The upbeat tempo is as thrilling as a roller coaster ride."

**2. Think like a songwriter.** Picking out the main message in the lyrics—the *theme*—will give your middle grader practice with a key reading skill. What message does the songwriter want to share? Invite your tween to search for songs with similar themes.

**3. Find the math.** Ask your child to choose a popular song. Can he detect a *pattern* in the lyrics (verse, chorus, verse) or the rhythm (say, the drumbeat)? How many times does the pattern repeat?

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# Stellar study techniques

Regularly reviewing textbooks and class notes helps information sink in and prepares your tween for tests without last-minute stress. Here are interesting ways he can study.

### Poster perfect

Suggest that your middle grader summarize a chapter's most important points on poster board or construction paper. Perhaps he'll model the lunar cycle for science or outline events in the Peloponnesian War for social studies. Then, he could add graphics to illustrate the information. Using both words *and* drawings is a great way to cement information in his brain. *Tip:* He might hang finished posters on a wall for easy review.

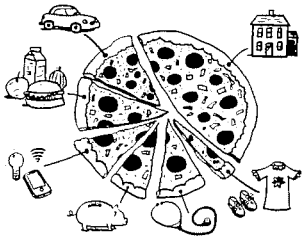
### Game show

Have your child and his study buddies write review questions on separate slips of paper and put them in a bowl. A "host" can draw and ask questions. Players "buzz in" to answer by tapping the table. If the first person answers correctly, he earns a point. If not, the other players buzz in again. (*Note:* The host should consult the textbook or study guide to check answers.) Give everyone a turn as host, using a new set of questions each round.

## Parent to Parent: Financial sense

My 13-year-old, Alice, complained that she wanted the same clothes her friends have. But they're too expensive, and I wanted her to understand how we make financial decisions.

I had Alice draw a circle and told her to imagine it was a pizza. Then, I asked her to divide it into slices to represent our budget.



I explained that about $\frac{1}{3}$ of our money goes to rent and almost $\frac{1}{5}$ is for car expenses.

After Alice finished dividing up the pizza, she was surprised by how little was left for clothing. She realized that to spend more on clothes, she'd have to take something from another slice—and there really wasn't anyplace to do that.

Alice still wishes she could buy more clothes, but now she understands the reason. I hope this lesson helps when she has to manage her own money "pizza" someday.

## Living in a diverse world

In school, in college, or on the job, your child will meet and work with people of various backgrounds and abilities. Share these strategies for embracing diversity:

- Point out that cultural differences make life more interesting. A classmate from another heritage might invite her to participate in a tradition with her family or introduce her to foods that taste and smell different. Then, have your tween do the same to share her background.
- Encourage your middle grader to connect with classmates who speak other languages. She can ask them to teach her words and phrases and then try using them in conversation.
- Let your tween know you expect her to show respect toward everyone. She could sit down to chat with a student in a wheelchair (rather than towering over the person). Also, she should smile and say hello when walking by people with disabilities—the same way she would with anyone else—rather than ignoring them.

## Q&A: Sticking with it

**Q** *My son gets frustrated when schoolwork isn't easy for him. How could I motivate him to keep trying?*

**A** It's important for your son to believe he can succeed when something is difficult.

First, have him think of a situation where he struggled and then made progress. Maybe he became a better Little League pitcher from one season to the next. Ask him what steps he took to accomplish that.

He might recall that a coach gave him feedback on his stance and that he practiced hard until he improved.

In the same way, he can overcome obstacles with schoolwork. To understand a tough science concept, he might ask his teacher for extra help and look up fun related experiments to try at home.

Finally, suggest phrases he could say to himself to stay motivated, such as, "I'll get this if I keep at it."

**OUR PURPOSE**

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

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