Seneca Valley School District

May 2021

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success

Short Stops

A plan for final exams

Final exams may cover more material than your tween is used to studying for at one time. So encourage him to start early and stick to a schedule. He might set aside 30 minutes each night to review. Devoting time each weekend to studying older notes and earlier textbook chapters can refresh his memory, too.

Start a "just ours" tradition

Stepsiblings might bring different traditions to a blended family. While it's important to keep those, creating shared rituals can be a nice way to bond. Maybe you'll have pajamas-and-pizza night on Wednesdays or Saturday afternoon tennis. *Idea:* Start a last-day-of-school tradition to wrap up the year.

A letter to myself

As your tween finishes this school year, ask her to imagine she's starting it all over again. What advice would she give her past self? What's she proud of, and what does she wish she'd done differently? Suggest writing a letter to herself about what she's learned. She can use her insights when she faces obstacles in the future.

Worth quoting

"You will never win if you never begin." *Helen Rowland*

Just for fun

Q: What do you get if you cross a skunk with a boomerang?

A: A terrible smell you can't get rid of.

Keep learning all summer

What does your tween get when she combines reading, writing, and math with summer vacation? A ticket to a successful upcoming school year! Here's how she can retain what she learned this year—and learn even more.

Issue reading challenges

Have your child put together a summer reading adventure with cool challenges to check off. Examples might include reading under the stars, reading to a pet, checking out a book from a section of the library she has never visited, or reading books set on each continent. *Add math*: Assign a point value to each challenge (include fractions), and have her keep a running total.

Get inspired to write

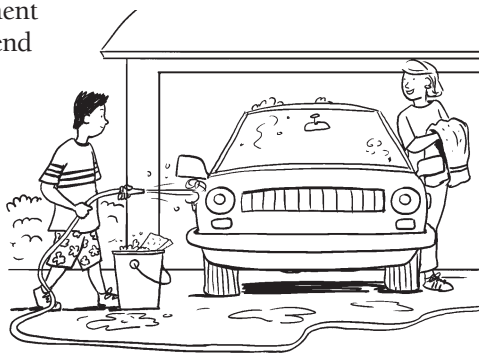
Books can be jumping-off points for creative writing projects. Your middle grader might turn a novel into a picture book for a younger sibling. Or she could create a comic strip or a board game based on a book. *Add math*: Encourage her to write "$2 book summaries" (pronouns = 5 cents, nouns = 8 cents, verbs = 10 cents, adjectives = 13 cents, adverbs = 15 cents). Can she sum up a book in exactly $2 worth of words?

Pitch a tent

Let your tween set up a tent in the yard or basement. She can stock it with books, magazines, paper, pencils and other writing tools, pillows, and healthy snacks. *Add math*: Fill the tent with math-related novels, nonfiction books, and puzzle books (ask a librarian for ideas).

"You can count on me!"

When your tween makes a commitment and keeps it, people learn they can depend on him. Help him be more reliable with these tips.



■ **Be sure it's possible.** Before your child agrees to something, like helping a friend rehearse for a play, he should think realistically about whether he can follow through. If he's not sure, it's better to say no than to let his friend down.

■ **Make commitments a priority.** Promises take priority over opportunities that crop up later. If your teen said he'd wash your car on Saturday afternoon, then gets invited to play basketball, he'll need to finish the car before his game.

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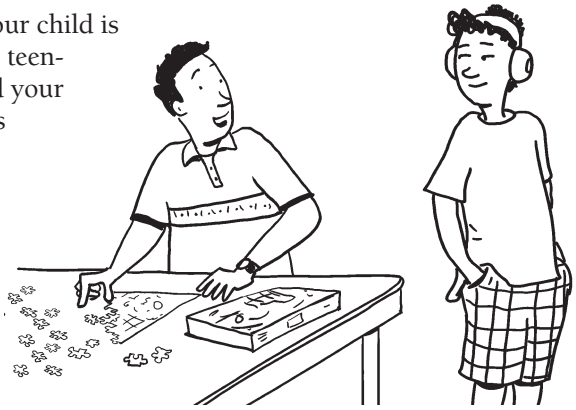
Understanding your ever-changing tween

The "in-between" years, when your child is no longer a little kid but not quite a teenager, can be challenging for you and your middle schooler. Try these strategies for navigating them.



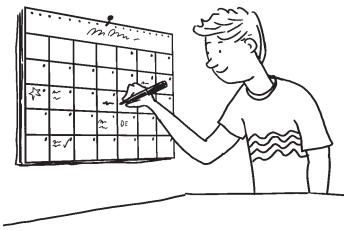
Don't take it personally. Your tween is going through big physical and emotional changes, and he's facing different social situations. That's a hormone-fueled recipe for unpredictable behavior. So try not to overreact if he rolls his eyes when you ask if he wants to work on a puzzle with you. Instead, just start on the puzzle yourself. He may change his mind later. *Tip:* Let him know you're there to answer questions about changes he's going through.

Give him space. After years of bedtime snuggles and chats, your child's closed bedroom door and whispered chats with friends can be upsetting. But testing his independence is a natural part of growing up. Try knocking on his door. Some days, he'll want to talk! *Tip:* Stand firm on rules about health and safety. But aim to give him more freedom about things like fashion and friendships.

Parent to Parent: A back-to-school plan

Summer always seems to fly by! Before I know it, my son Owen and I are scrambling to get ready for the new school year.

This year, we're going to start planning early. We hung up a wall calendar, and we're using it to keep track of school-related obligations. First, Owen put soccer tryout dates on the calendar. As soon as back-to-school information comes in the mail or is posted on the school website, I'll have him add important events like open house and schedule pickup. I also booked Owen's checkup already, since his doctor's schedule fills up fast, and wrote the date on our calendar.



Owen is excited to try out for soccer and to find out which friends will be in his classes next year. Thanks to our calendar, he knows exactly what to expect and when.

Q&A: Ease into social media

Q *My daughter is old enough now to sign up for social media accounts. Should I let her?*

A Children mature at different rates, so start by thinking about your child's offline behavior. Does she follow rules you've set for her? Is she considerate of others' feelings?

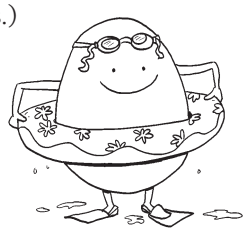
Ask your daughter which sites she's interested in using. Explore them together, and discuss dangers like cyberbullying. Also talk about ways to avoid problems, such as using the "Would I want Grandma to see this?" rule before posting anything.

If you let your tween open an account, help her adjust privacy settings. Then, create rules. She might have to "friend" you, only interact with family and certain friends, and limit her time on social media. Finally, keep checking in to ask how things are going. Making social media part of your everyday conversations can encourage her to come to you for guidance.

Eggs-periment: Sink or swim?

Why is it easier to float in the salty ocean than in a swimming pool? It's all about density, or how tightly molecules are packed together. Share this eggs-cellent experiment with your tween.

Steps: Have your child measure 16 oz. water into a bowl and gently drop in a fresh egg. What happens? (It sinks.) Then, she should measure 16 oz. water into another bowl, add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salt, and stir until completely dissolved. What happens when she drops an egg into that water? (It floats.)



The science: The egg sinks because its density is greater than that of plain water. Adding salt to the water increases the water's density. Since the water's density is now greater than the egg's density, the egg will float!

Extension: Have your tween experiment with the salt-to-water ratio. What's the minimum amount of salt needed for the egg to float? She could also try foods of different densities (apple, potato).

OUR PURPOSE

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

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