

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Connect after school

Your middle grader may not feel like talking the minute he gets home from school. Try simply saying, "Hi, I hope your day went well!" and giving him time to relax. Later, you might ask about a class or an assignment, such as what he did in art or how his history presentation went.

### A load off your back

Carrying a heavy backpack can strain muscles and cause shoulder, neck, and back pain. Let your tween weigh herself and then her backpack to make sure it's no more than 10–20 percent of her body weight. Also, she should carry the bag over both shoulders so the weight is evenly distributed.

### Guess my number

This fun family game stretches your child's logical thinking skills. Take turns choosing a number between 1 and 100. Have everyone else ask yes or no questions ("Is it odd?" "Is it more than 60?") until someone figures out the correct number. Then, that person picks a new range (say, between 475 and 600) and a new secret number.

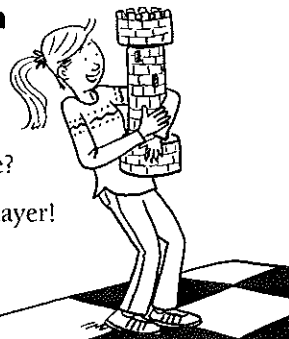
### Worth quoting

"Never mind what others do; do better than yourself, beat your own record from day to day, and you are a success." William J. H. Boetcker

### Just for fun

**Q:** Who is strong enough to move a castle?

**A:** A chess player!



## A+ organizing strategies

As the school year gets underway, your middle grader will be calmer and more confident if she knows she's on top of things. Strategies like these can help her get organized.

### Create "command centers"

Encourage your tween to keep school-related materials in specific places so she'll always know where they are. She could store homework supplies on a kitchen shelf or in a box on her bedroom desk. Have her choose a spot near the front door for items like her backpack, musical instrument, and gym shoes so they'll be ready to go when she is.

### Use "5-minute wonders"

Suggest these habits that take only a few minutes. Before leaving school each day, she can scan her planner to check dates and deadlines for tests, assignments, and forms. That way, she'll know which books and papers to take home. At home, she could quickly leaf through her folders and notebooks, then



file what she needs and throw away what she doesn't.

### Keep an estimate log

Knowing how long tasks actually take will give your tween an edge when organizing her time. Suggest that she time herself completing different types of schoolwork, such as doing research for a report or reviewing Spanish vocabulary. She could write the times in her planner and refer to them later to help her budget accurately in the future. 🍌

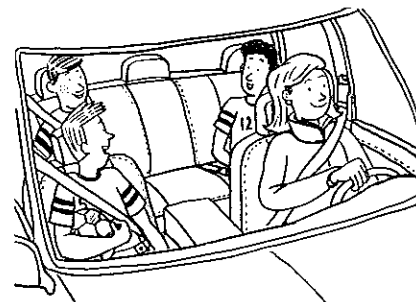
## Part of the group

Joining an extracurricular activity gives your child a productive—and fun—way to spend his free time. Try these ideas.

■ **Find a good fit.** Suggest that your middle grader listen to morning announcements or check the school website for a list of activities. He can ask the coach or advisor for more details about ones he's interested in.

■ **Arrange transportation.** Set up a carpool with other parents. Or have him find out whether there's a late bus he can ride and get the schedule.

■ **Show interest.** If he joins a sports team, cheer him on at games or meets. Or if he's in the science club, ask him to tell you about an experiment he enjoyed. 🍌



# Homework: Smooth sailing

In middle school, your tween is the captain of the ship when it comes to handling homework. He can sail smoothly with these tips.

**Discuss expectations.** Encourage your child to think about what he expects of himself. He might say he will turn in assignments when they're due and get in the habit of looking over math problems to be sure he didn't



make careless mistakes. Also, let him know what you expect when it comes to homework. Consider writing down your expectations, such as doing his best and turning assignments in when they're due.

**Step back.** Have your middle grader decide when to do homework, whether it's after school or after dinner. When it's time for him to start, be matter-of-fact.

You could say, "Looks like it's time to do homework. Let me know if you need anything." Then, allow him to work independently. This shows him you have confidence in his abilities and encourages him to take responsibility for his own work. 👍

## What is "vaping"?

The good news: Fewer middle schoolers are smoking cigarettes. The bad news: More tweens are vaping, or using electronic cigarettes. Here's what you need to know.

### What it is:

Electronic devices are used to inhale vapor that usually contains nicotine. Vaping appeals to kids because it comes in flavors like cotton candy or bubble gum. The devices are often small and easy to hide—some even look like flash drives and can be plugged into laptops to charge.



**Why it's dangerous:** Nicotine is addictive, and it harms growing brains and lungs. And the verdict is still out on what additional damage the chemicals could cause.

**What you can do:** Don't allow any type of smoking, and let your child know the consequences if she breaks this rule. Also, be on the lookout for signs of vaping, such as giant clouds of vapor or unexplained odors. And search for images of e-cigarettes online so you'll know what they look like. 👍

### 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 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540

## Parent to Parent

### Encourage initiative

I mentioned to my neighbor Jeanne what helpful kids she has, since I often see them getting the mail or working in their yard. Jeanne said they do a lot without being asked, so I wanted to know her secret to raising children who take initiative!

Jeanne explained that when her youngest started middle school, she went back to work and had less time to do things around the house. So she taught her kids that rather than waiting for her to change the trash bag or start the dishwasher, they needed to handle those things themselves. Eventually, they got used to taking on bigger roles in the household.

I decided to take a page from Jeanne's book and have my daughter start doing her laundry and packing her snack. After the first few days, I stopped reminding her—and when she didn't have clean clothes or a snack, she learned to remind herself. She may not offer to do the gardening overnight, but at least I'm sending the right message! 👍



## Q & A

### In school every day

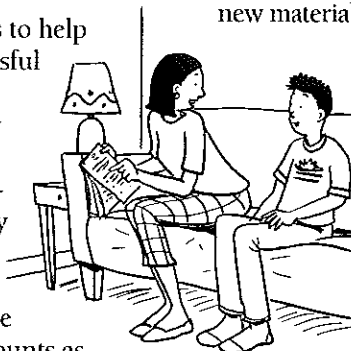
**Q** Last year, my son asked to stay home when he was tired or "needed a break." I know he has a lot to do—should I let him stay home occasionally?

**A** One of the best ways to help your child have a successful year is to make sure he attends school every day from start to finish.

Start the year by reading the attendance policy in the school handbook together. That way, you'll both be on the same page about what counts as

an acceptable reason for missing school, such as illness or a family emergency.

Then if he asks for a "day off," explain that learning is his job. To keep up with new material and participate in class, he has to be there. You can let him know that his days off come during winter break and spring break. Regular attendance at school now will create a habit that he'll continue throughout his school years—and one day, on the job. 👍



# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Get going with breakfast

Eating breakfast will help your tween start the day ready to learn. Together, come up with quick and nutritious breakfasts to make at home. Or encourage her to eat a healthy meal in the cafeteria with friends. *Note:* If she receives school lunch at a reduced price or for free, her breakfast will be reduced cost or free, too.

### Walk this way

Let your middle grader know it's important to keep his eyes on his surroundings as he walks. He'll avoid serious injury from falling, running into objects, or stepping into traffic. Explain that he shouldn't play electronic games, listen to music, or text while walking—including to and from the bus stop or school.

### Conserve resources

Ask your youngster to help your family be more environmentally friendly. Have her research ways you can conserve resources (switch to low-energy light bulbs, recycle more items, take reusable bags when you shop). Then, try to adopt one of her ideas each month.

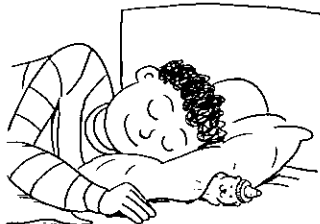
### Worth quoting

"Every strike brings me closer to the next home run." *Babe Ruth*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why did the boy put honey under his pillow?

**A:** He wanted to have sweet dreams.



## Tween discipline that works

Your middle schooler wants more freedom. You want to keep him safe and set age-appropriate limits. How do you balance his need for independence with the need for rules and consequences? Try these strategies.

### Let's review

Go over the rules you have in place and get his input. He'll be happier to comply if he has a say in them. Perhaps he thinks he should be able to go to friends' houses on school nights, and you agree to that for one night a week. Explain your reasons, and be clear you have the final word. Also, lay out consequences so he knows what will happen if he breaks the rules.

### Expect to be tested

Tweens tend to push the limits to see how serious parents are and may argue to get out of consequences. Stay calm and on point ("Nevertheless, we agreed you wouldn't eat in your bedroom"). Stick to the consequence you set (having him wash his bedding to get rid of food



stains). He'll see he can't slide by and will be more likely to follow the rules in the future.

### Reflect on actions

The goal of discipline is to teach your child good judgment. He can learn a lot by reflecting on his actions. Say he breaks a rule, like heading to a social outing without finishing his homework first. Ask what he *thought* would happen. Maybe he didn't think you'd notice. What happened instead? He has to miss an event this weekend as a result. How could he avoid this situation next time? 🍌

## Speak up!

Participating in class can help your tween get more value out of school and learn to express herself. Encourage her to contribute with these tips.

■ **Find your zone.** Suggest that she participate in ways she feels comfortable with and then expand her "toolbox." She might start off commenting on assigned readings she enjoyed. Eventually, she may speak up when she agrees with someone's viewpoint or to offer a different one.

■ **Mix it up.** Class-wide discussions aren't the only opportunity to participate. When your middle schooler works in smaller groups, she could ask and answer questions, make observations, or give opinions. These steps can build confidence for talking in front of the whole class. 🍌



## Real-world reading

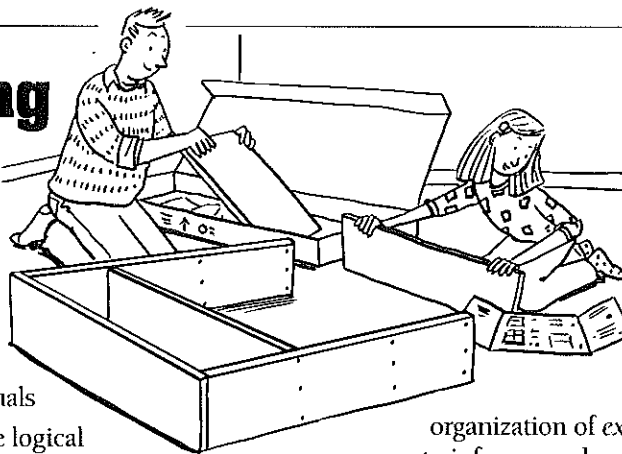
Nonfiction reading is a big part of everyday adult life—at work and home. To help your middle grader learn to pick out and analyze important information, encourage her to read more nonfiction texts now. Here are some easy ideas.

### Follow a process

**What:** Recipes, game directions, how-to manuals

**Why:** These texts teach youngsters to navigate logical sequences of steps and identify key details.

**How:** Let your tween read and share directions as family members cook or play a game. Or have her read instructions



as you put together a bookcase or figure out how to operate a new phone or microwave.

### Follow the facts

**What:** News articles, menus, travel guidebooks

**Why:** Your child will get familiar with the organization of *expository text*, which seeks to inform or educate readers.

**How:** Talk about news articles you read and what you learn, and inspire her to do the same. If you order carryout food, have her read menus and place the order. When you visit new places, ask her to scan guidebooks and share facts. She can play tour leader, suggesting sights and activities your family will enjoy. 🍌

## Notable notes

Good notes can help your tween remember what was taught in class, create study guides, and review for tests. Share these steps for being an excellent note taker.

**1. Prepare beforehand.** Your child will have an easier time keeping up with the teacher if he has read the assigned handouts or chapters. Why? He'll be familiar with the material and vocabulary.

**2. Learn each teacher's style.** To emphasize crucial material, one teacher may use hand gestures, while another may write phrases on the board. Your middle grader should write that information down and star or circle it.

**3. Ask questions.** If your child doesn't understand something, he could jot a question mark in the margin of his notes. Then, he can ask about it when the teacher invites questions. Most likely someone else has the same question and will be glad he spoke up. 🍌



## Learning to have grit

**Q** I've heard that kids need "grit" to be successful. What is it, and how can I teach it to my 12-year-old?

**A** Grit involves perseverance, courage, and resilience—basically sticking with tasks or goals until you see them through. Having passion will help your child to develop grit, enabling her to stay with something when the going gets tough and to overcome problems along the way.

You can foster grit in your middle grader by explaining it and pointing out examples, such as a coworker who learned to read as an adult. Or bring home library books about famous people who persevered. For instance, Dr. Seuss had his first book rejected by 27 publishers before it was accepted.

Setting up a family challenge can give everyone a chance to be "gritty." Have each person choose something they want to do that might be difficult but is possible. The key? No one is allowed to quit! 🍌



## Parent to Parent

### Get to know new friends

When my son was in elementary school, I always knew his friends. Once he got to middle school, he started hanging out with classmates I'd never heard of.

It worried me to let Jake spend time with kids I didn't know. I asked him to invite them over, and meeting them in person helped put me at ease and gave me a

way to connect faces with names. I asked for their phone numbers and their parents' numbers as well. That way, I could contact them if they were with Jake and I couldn't reach him. Calling the parents to say hello opened the door in case we ever need to get in touch.

I'm still getting to know Jake's pals. But at least I'm feeling more relaxed about his new middle school social scene. 🍌



## 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 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Conferences in middle school

A parent-teacher conference is the perfect opportunity to work with the school to support your child. You may meet with one of his teachers who will share information from all the others. Or you might spend a few minutes with each teacher. If you have questions for specific teachers or need more time with them, call or email to follow up.

### Fit in fitness

An hour of daily physical activity promotes good health. Suggest that your tween calculate how many minutes of exercise she gets each day. She could include walking to school and participating in PE. Encourage her to add more exercise, perhaps by meeting a friend to swim at an indoor pool or by following along with a Zumba video.

### Promptness, please

Being at his desk when the bell rings means your middle grader won't miss class instruction or important announcements. Have him add a five-minute "cushion" to his morning so he has time to deal with the unexpected (missing shoe, early bus).

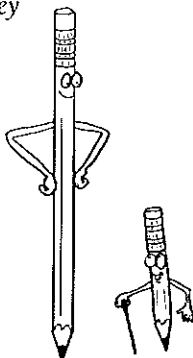
### Worth quoting

"I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions." *Stephen Covey*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What's tall when it's new and short when it's old?

**A:** A pencil.



## Study secrets—revealed

Anna knows what she needs to accomplish when she sits down to study. She stays focused and tends to remember the material. Her secret? Strong study skills! Share these strategies with your tween.

**Skill:** Set goals.

**Strategy:** Encourage your child to jot down specific goals for each study session and check off each one as she meets it. She should be as detailed as possible. *Example:* "Learn 30 vocabulary words before Friday's Spanish test." It may also help to make deals with herself. ("I can take a break after I've learned 15 words.")

**Skill:** Stay focused.

**Strategy:** Suggest that your middle grader eliminate distractions before she studies. For instance, she should silence her phone and put it in another room. Hunger and



fatigue can also make her mind wander, so she could eat a healthy snack or go for a quick jog before she buckles down.

**Skill:** Monitor understanding.

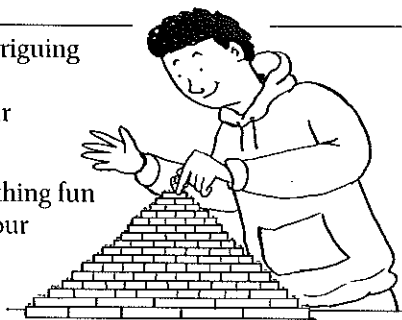
**Strategy:** After your tween reviews her notes, handouts, and textbook, she can make up a quiz. Taking the quiz and checking her answers will show her what she still needs to work on. Have her write anything she doesn't understand on a sticky note and ask her teacher for help. 👍

## Spotlight on history

History is full of fascinating places and intriguing people for your child to discover. With these ideas, he can step into the past—right in your living room:

■ Work separately or together to create something fun that represents a time period. For instance, your family might build a Lego model of an Egyptian pyramid. Or tape large sheets of paper to a wall, and draw or paint an Aztec mural.

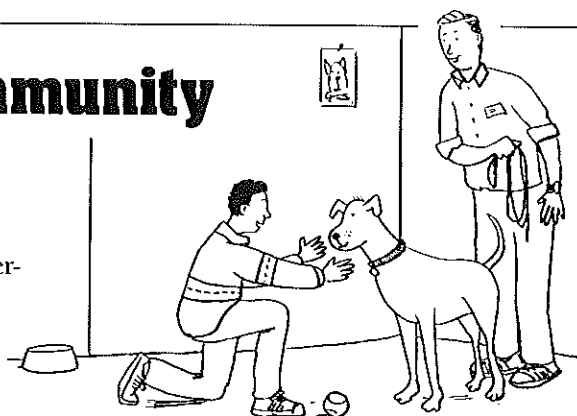
■ Have each person secretly pick a historical figure to research, maybe Benjamin Franklin or Amelia Earhart. Then, host a game show where everyone asks yes-or-no questions to guess each other's characters. 👍



## Serving our community

Volunteering as a family can teach your middle grader about empathy and helping others. Here's how to get started.

**1.** Have your tween research community service opportunities for families. He should list ideas that match the ages of family members, and also jot down the time involved for each job. He could visit websites such as [createthegood.org](http://createthegood.org) and [volunteermatch.org](http://volunteermatch.org). He might also call or email community centers, shelters, and places of worship to ask if they need help.



**2.** Review your child's list together. Talk about possibilities that interest everyone, and pick one to sign up for. If your family loves animals, maybe you could feed and play with dogs and cats in a shelter. Or if you like to cook together, maybe you'll volunteer at a soup kitchen or a fire station's spaghetti dinner.

**3.** Talk about those you'll be helping, such as people who don't have enough to eat or animals who need attention and comfort. Considering how others feel will show your middle grader how important it is to help out—and make your volunteer experience more meaningful. 🍷

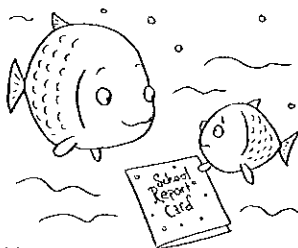
### Parent to Parent

### Report cards: Find the positives



My sixth-grade daughter just got her first report card with letter grades. In elementary school, she always received "Excellent" or "Good," so I was surprised to see a C in English.

I decided to focus on the positives first. I pointed out Chelsea's good attendance, an A in science, and a nice comment from her chorus teacher.



Then, we discussed her English grade. Chelsea said she had fallen behind on assigned readings. As a result, she struggled to answer comprehension questions and participate in class discussions. We brainstormed solutions, including reading a certain number of pages each night and jotting down points to make in class.

Chelsea said that when she gets her next report card, she hopes that one of the first things I can point out will be a B in English! 🍷

## Same answer, different strategies

There's often more than one way to approach a math problem. Try these tips for using family game night to help your tween talk through math strategies—and see that for herself!

**Monopoly.** When a player decides to buy (or not to buy) a property or add houses or hotels, have her share her thinking. Your child might calculate how many times an opponent would need to land on her properties to cover the cost. Or she could total her cash, subtract the cost of the hotels, and consider her liability (the rent she would owe if she lands on other players' properties before getting "paid" again).

**Yahtzee.** Let family members explain how they determine where to record their rolls of the dice. Say your middle grader gets four sixes and one five. Will she score it as four of a kind or as her sixes roll? Perhaps she'll consider the probability of rolling four of a kind again (unlikely) and decide to check off four of a kind rather than risk scoring zero in that spot. Or maybe she'll count it as sixes, which will put her on the path to earning a bonus. 🍷



## Q & A Concern about anxiety

**Q** Several of my friends and neighbors have mentioned that their kids have anxiety. My son gets stressed out sometimes—could he suffer from anxiety, too?

**A** It's normal for middle graders to feel stressed from time to time about school, friends, or growing up. But if they're excessively anxious for long periods of time and miss

out on activities because of it, that may signal a bigger problem.

Anxiety disorder symptoms include worrying persistently for weeks or months, trouble sleeping, frequent headaches or stomachaches, and avoiding school or friends.

If you notice any of these symptoms in your son, contact your pediatrician. She can refer you to a specialist if necessary. 🍷



### 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 • [rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com](mailto:rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com)  
[www.rfeonline.com](http://www.rfeonline.com)  
ISSN 1540-5540

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Getting the message

Let your tween know you're counting on her to keep you in the loop about school news. During morning announcements, she might jot down reminders ("Ask for a ride to basketball tryouts, Saturday 9 a.m."). Or have her post flyers on the refrigerator where you'll see them.

### Mealtime manners

Encourage your child to be polite when he's offered food. If he doesn't like something, he could take a small portion to try—maybe he'll enjoy it after all! If he has a food allergy or eats a vegetarian diet, he can mention it and say, "Thank you anyway."

### Turning in assignments

Your middle grader's homework isn't finished until she hands it in. Suggest that she take it out of her backpack as soon as she sits down in each class so it's ready to be collected. Or perhaps she'll keep homework in one folder to carry to every class so she doesn't leave any assignments in her locker.

### Worth quoting

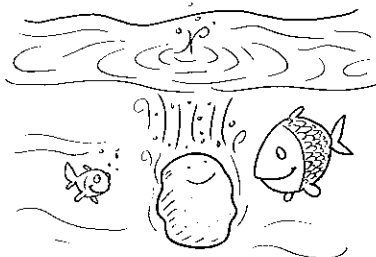
"Happiness often sneaks in through a door you didn't know you left open."

John Barrymore

### Just for fun

**Q:** If you throw a blue rock into the Red Sea, what will it become?

**A:** Wet!



## Growing responsibility

Picture your middle grader as a responsible young adult. How do you help him get there? Consider these ideas for planting the seeds of responsibility now so he'll grow into the dependable person you're trying to raise.

### Promote consistency

Sticking to routines makes handling responsibilities a natural part of your tween's day. For instance, if he needs a tablet for school, he might charge it on the kitchen counter every night. Or suggest that he bring his PE uniform home on Fridays so he can wash it.

### Pass the "baton"

Imagine you're in a relay race and you're passing the "responsibility baton" to your child. Make the handoff by switching from giving instructions to asking questions. Say he's getting ready for a chorus concert. Instead of telling



him to put on his dress shoes and find his sheet music, try saying, "What do you need to do to get ready?"

### Discuss accountability

Experience is an excellent teacher—and it can make your middle grader more responsible. Share an example from your own life ("I forgot about my doctor's appointment, so now I have to pay a no-show fee"). Then, explain what you learned ("I need to put appointments on my calendar right away").

## Brainstorm for project success

Your tween may have heard the expression "Two heads are better than one." That's especially true when it comes to brainstorming! Share these tips she can use the next time she works on a group project.

■ **Get organized.** Decide what the group will accomplish (say, picking a topic for a class presentation). Review the assignment guidelines, and appoint one person to record ideas.

■ **Consider all possibilities.** Encourage your middle grader to call out any idea that comes to mind, even if she's not sure it'll work. An off-topic or half-formed suggestion may lead others to think of ideas that will work.

■ **Read and evaluate.** At the end of the brainstorming session, look over all the contributions. Think of ways to combine or tweak everyone's favorites.



## Writing is fun!

Motivate your tween to write more often with these activities. She'll practice using parts of speech and descriptive language.

**Make up Mad Libs.** Your middle grader could create a silly story by leaving blanks for you to fill in. Encourage her to think carefully about where to put blanks and label each with the part of speech needed (noun, verb, adjective). For example, will



she leave out a noun so you can choose the character? ("I looked up to see a giant \_\_\_\_\_ walking down the street.") Or will she pick the character and let you supply an adjective to describe it? ("There was a \_\_\_\_\_ wildebeest on the loose.")

**Write shape poetry.** Can your

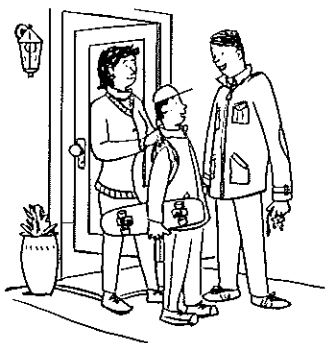
child write a poem in the shape of her topic?

With *concrete poetry*, she'll do just that. First, have her select an object to write about, such as an apple, and think about what it brings

to mind (baking apple pies with Grandma, visiting an apple orchard). She should draw an outline of an apple in pencil, write lines of poetry in pen to fit the shape, and erase the outline. 🍏

## Parent to Parent Peaceful co-parenting

After our divorce, my ex-wife and I used a co-parenting app to communicate because talking in person was awkward.



When I mentioned the app to my counselor, he suggested that it would be good for our son, Aiden, to see his parents getting along—in person.

I realized he was right, so lately I've started going to my ex-wife's door to pick up Aiden rather than waiting in the car. I caught my son smiling when he saw me talking to his mother about how he's doing in school and about our plans for the weekend.

We still use the app, but it's getting easier to set aside our emotions for Aiden's sake. He's realizing that we can work together even though we have our differences. 🍏

### 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 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540



## Q & A Avoid the gossip scene

**Q** I recently heard my daughter talking with her friends about a rumor that's going around at school. How can I encourage her not to gossip?

**A** First, talk to your daughter when her friends aren't around. You could suggest that she always assume rumors are false. Point out that people who start or share them often don't even know if they're true. They may gossip because they want attention or to get revenge, for example.

Then, have your tween think about how the person being talked about would feel if he overheard the gossip. Instead of staying silent, your middle grader might speak up and say, "That sounds like a rumor." She should also avoid spreading the rumor.

Finally, explain that sharing rumors can cause friends not to trust her. After all, if they know she's willing to gossip, they may wonder if she'll gossip about them one day, too. 🍏



## Creative tweens

Ever wonder what happened to your singing, doodling, spontaneous child? He's still there! Since middle graders are usually more self-conscious, they might need a little coaxing to express their creativity. Try these strategies.

**1.** Put an inexpensive art easel and supplies (drawing paper, paints, brushes, markers, colored pencils) in a corner of your home. When you're not looking, your tween may



decide to sketch a pet, paint a sunset, or try his hand at abstract art.

**2.** Put your middle grader in charge of making signs on the computer or on poster board for family members' birthdays. He can download pictures specific to the person (favorite food or movie star) and write a clever greeting. *Example:* "Happy birthday from the whole bunch" with a picture of bananas. 🍌

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Wait a minute

Tweens are used to getting things quickly, from online information to fast food. Learning patience will help your child cope with stress and frustration when things *don't* happen fast. For example, if his computer crashes and won't reboot, he could take a deep breath or drink a glass of water before tackling the problem.

### Eyes up front

How and where your middle grader sits in class may affect how well she pays attention. Suggest that she sit up straight and look at the teacher when he speaks. Also, encourage her to ask for a seat near the front if she finds herself distracted by other students.

### DID YOU KNOW?

When your tween wears earbuds to listen to music, he should be able to hear what's going on around him. If he can't, or if his ears ring afterward, he may be damaging his hearing. Share the 60/60 rule: Keep the volume at less than 60 percent, and listen for no longer than 60 minutes at a time.

### Worth quoting

"It isn't where you came from; it's where you're going that counts."  
Ella Fitzgerald

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why did the kid wear one boot?

**A:** Because there was a 50 percent chance of snow!



## Everyday math

What does shopping have in common with achieving fitness goals? Your tween can use math to do both more effectively! Here are situations where math is sure to come in handy.

### Find the bargain

Doing math may save your child money on craft supplies, snacks, and clothing. Have her calculate the best deals when you shop together. Say she has a coupon for 20 percent off if she buys more than one pack of colored duct tape. Should she buy one 6-pack for \$15.99 or two 3-packs for \$8.99 each?

### Make more space

Interior designers measure carefully and use spatial reasoning. Maybe your middle grader wants to rearrange her bedroom to make space for a desk she found at a thrift shop. She'll need to measure the walls and furniture to make everything fit. Is her bookcase narrow enough to go in



her closet? Will her bed fit against the wall?

### Finish the race

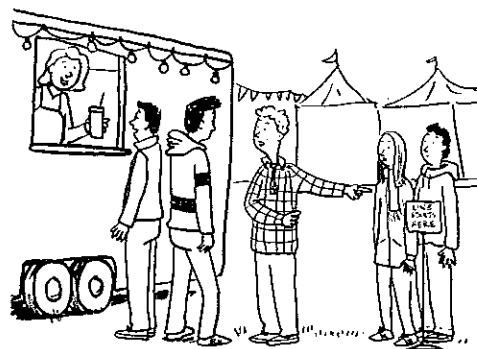
Your tween can do math to reach her workout goals, such as completing a 5K race (3.1 miles) in less than 30 minutes. First, she should figure out what her average pace must be ( $30 \text{ minutes} \div 3.1 \text{ miles} = 9.67$ , or about 9:40 minutes per mile). Now she can consider her current pace and how many weeks she has to train. Finally, she could plan practice runs so she shaves off enough time each week. 🍌

## Lessons in assertiveness

Assertive people know how to stand up for themselves firmly yet respectfully. Use these ideas to help your middle grader be assertive:

■ Explain to your child that he can be nice to others and speak up for himself at the same time. For instance, if someone cuts in front of him in line, he might politely point out where the line starts.

■ Have your middle grader practice saying no when necessary. Tell him that it helps to remember the 3 Cs: Show confidence by looking the other person in the eye, speak clearly, and stay calm. ("The party sounds fun, but I have a big project due Monday.") 🍌



## Protect your privacy online

Even the most tech-savvy child can share sensitive information online without realizing it. Share these ways to help your tween keep personal details safe.

- **Only interact online with people you know in real life.** Your child shouldn't accept chat invitations or friend requests from strangers. He'll need to use privacy settings on websites and apps to control who sees his posts.
- **Guard accounts.** Tell your tween to set a different password for each device and account. When he uses a shared computer



Also have him opt out of location sharing so strangers don't know where he is. 👍

(say, at the library, in school, or at a friend's house), he shouldn't store passwords, and he should log out of websites and apps after he's finished.

- **Avoid posting identifying information.** This includes your middle grader's full name, school, phone number, home address, and email address.



## Parent to Parent

### Motivated to learn

My younger daughter, Ava, seemed to care more about her social life than about learning and grades. I mentioned this to my older daughter, Erin. She thought a glimpse of college life might motivate her little sister in school, so on a recent Saturday, I took Ava to visit Erin on campus.

The girls had a great time. And Erin made sure to mention how much time she spends

attending classes and studying so she can land a teaching job after graduation. Ava came home talking about how she wants to study business one day and open her own "doggy day care."

I'm happy Ava is thinking about the future. When she shows me her assignments, we talk about how what she learns will come in handy one day when she's running her own business! 👍



## Family meals with tweens

Did you know that eating together can boost your tween's self-esteem and make her less likely to try risky behaviors? Consider these suggestions for making family dinners pleasant on busy days.

### Plan ahead

Have meals ready to go so you're able to focus on each other rather than on what to cook. On weekends, you and your child could make double portions of casseroles or soups. Freeze them to pull out and reheat on weeknights.

### Keep conversations light

While you eat, share an upbeat news story you heard or mention something funny your cat did that day. Save conversations about your tween's low test grade or missed curfew for another time. She'll look forward to coming to the table and chatting with you.

*Tip:* Put electronics in another room and silence them so you're not tempted to check messages or answer calls. 👍



## Managing ADHD in middle school

**Q** My son started middle school this year. Now that he has had time to settle in, I want him to take more responsibility for managing his ADHD. What should I do?

**A** At this age, children start moving into the driver's seat when it comes to learning—and tweens with ADHD are no exception. Suggest that your son make a list of the accommodations included in his IEP (Individualized Education Program) or 504 plan, such as having extra time to complete tests. He could hang the list inside his locker or tape it inside the front cover of his

binder to remind himself to take advantage of them.

Also, discuss strategies he can use at home to help himself. For instance, he might call a friend to double-check on assignments each evening or take a homework break every 20 minutes. Have him experiment with ideas and see what works best for him.

Finally, organization is important for all middle graders. Your child should use a daily planner or to-do list, and sort through his backpack and locker on a weekly basis. 👍



### 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 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Making up work

When your child returns to school after being absent, remind her to ask her teachers about make up work. She'll avoid missing out on learning, and she'll make sure she has material that may appear on a quiz or test. At home, have her set aside time to complete the assignments.

### Find the similarity

Play this game to stretch your youngster's thinking. Take turns naming two unrelated objects (flower, skyscraper). Encourage him to think about each object's attributes and come up with creative ways that they're alike (both stand up tall).

### Follow through

An apology means more if your tween follows up on it. When she makes a mistake, ask how she plans to avoid a repeat. For example, say your trash can overflows because she forgot to put it out on pickup day. After she says, "I'm sorry," she might tape a reminder on the fridge ("Trash: Tuesday and Friday").

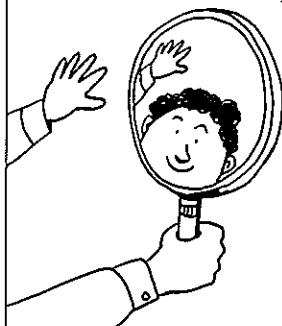
### Worth quoting

"There is nothing like a dream to create the future." Victor Hugo

### Just for fun

**Q:** When you look at me, I look at you. When you raise your left arm, I raise the right. What am I?

**A:** A mirror.



## Solid research skills

With so much information available, there's plenty for your tween to draw on when he does research for reports, essays, or presentations. The key is knowing how to dig through the material and determine what he needs. Share these tips.

### Stay on topic

Encourage your child to use specific search terms online so that what turns up will be closer to what he's looking for. Say he's writing a science paper on earthquakes. Simply typing "earthquakes" into a search engine may bring up news on recent quakes. He'll get better results if he instead tries "earthquake science" or "What is an earthquake?"

### Get organized

Suggest that your middle grader develop a note-taking system that works well for him. For instance, he might write each fact and its source on a separate index card. When he's finished, he



could sort the cards into categories. He'll be able to see holes in his research, such as main ideas that need more supporting evidence.

### Consider the source

Your tween should choose sites that are up to date, in-depth, and credible. Sites published by schools or universities (ending in .edu), government agencies (.gov), and nonprofit organizations (.org), tend to be more trustworthy. Also, it's important to verify facts by finding them in at least three places. 👍

## Mindfulness for middle graders

Tweens face stress from daily activities like handling homework and navigating friendships. Being *mindful*, or present in the moment, may ease the pressure. Help your child practice with these ideas.

■ **Create a "calming jar."** Let your tween fill a clear jar with water and sprinkle in glitter. Have her screw on the lid and shake the jar, focusing on her feelings as she watches the glitter settle. Point out that when the glitter is still, it's easier to see through the jar—much like being calm helps her see a situation more clearly.

■ **Take a walk.** Pay attention to what you and your middle grader feel, hear, see, and smell as you walk together. What sound do your feet make when they hit the ground? What does the breeze feel like on your face? What scents come from the homes you pass? 👍



## Is it bullying?

What does bullying look like, and what can you and your middle schooler do about it? Consider this advice to help her recognize and respond to bullying.

**Be aware of "silent bullying."** Some bullying is easy to spot, such as one student deliberately tripping another. But it can also be less obvious. A child might take another student's belongings or threaten a classmate when no one else is around. Encourage your middle grader to reach out to a classmate who seems fearful or withdrawn. A simple



she feels uncomfortable with how she's being treated. Together, you could decide how to handle it (for instance, talking to her school counselor). 👍

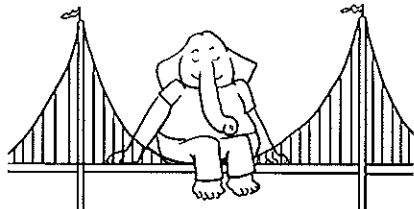
"Hey, is everything okay?" could give a person who is being bullied the courage to confide in her.

### Know when behavior crosses the line.

Your tween may not realize that she is being bullied. Say a classmate repeatedly makes unwanted comments about her appearance—that's a form of bullying. Let her know she can come to you if

## Engineer a suspension bridge

Suspension bridges rely on cables to support the weight of vehicles traveling across them. Your child can explore engineering by making his own model suspension bridge.



First, have him look for suspension bridges when you're on the road, in books, or online. What features does he notice? *Examples:* towers, cables, a deck.

Now let him select household materials and build the strongest suspension bridge he can. He might use paper towel tubes for the towers, fishing line for the cables, and heavy cardboard for the deck. How will he attach the cables to the towers and the deck?

He can test his bridge by counting how many toy cars it holds without sagging. Then, suggest that he redesign to build a stronger bridge that holds even more cars! 👍



**Q & A**

## Pleasant chats with tweens

**Q** Whenever I try to have a nice conversation with my son, he ends up getting annoyed. Why is he acting this way, and how can we communicate better?

**A** There are several reasons your son may become easily irritated. At this age, he wants to be more independent—yet he knows he still needs your guidance, which may feel annoying to him. Plus, he's dealing with changing hormones.

You might find that you have nicer conversations when you're doing something side by side, such as putting away groceries or shopping to find a gift for a relative. It could also help to talk when your middle grader is relaxed like at bedtime or on a weekend afternoon while you're sitting on the porch.

Finally, you're more likely to keep the conversation upbeat if you ask about things he's interested in, perhaps what happened in drama club today or in the last episode of his favorite podcast. 👍



**Parent to Parent**

## Foreign language: Learn together

My daughter Kelsey is taking French this year. While she was studying for a quiz recently, I recognized a couple of the vocabulary words from when I took French. So I asked Kelsey if she would teach me more words.

She had fun helping me pronounce the words and quizzing me on their meanings. I learned that *la pomme* means

*apple* and *l'oiseau* is *bird*. Throughout the week, she even tried to weave the words into our conversations to see if I'd remember them.

Then, for family movie night, I surprised Kelsey by downloading a movie in French with English subtitles. As we watched, we listened for words we recognized.

Kelsey is doing well in French class—I think speaking and hearing the language at home is really helping. 👍



### 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 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Write a poem

Encourage your tween to experiment with language by writing a family poem. Together, make up a title about something your family loves (*Tasty Tortilla Soup*). Agree on a format, such as a limerick or free verse (no rhyme or regular rhythm). Then, take turns writing the lines, and let your child read your poem aloud when you finish.

### Problem-solving pro

If your middle grader leaves for school without something she needs (book, graphing calculator), resist the urge to rescue her. Handling the situation herself will teach her to be a good problem solver. She might find alternatives like borrowing from a friend who has the same class during a different period.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Taking an opioid like oxycodone for as little as five days can lead to addiction. Share this fact with your teen, and explain that he should never take medication that isn't prescribed for him. If he is injured or has surgery, ask his doctor about alternatives to opioids. And if anyone in your home takes an opioid, keep it locked up, and discard leftovers immediately.

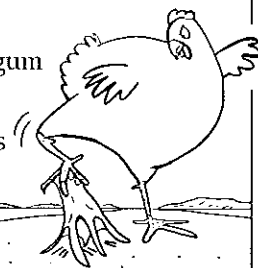
### Worth quoting

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony." *Mahatma Gandhi*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why did the gum cross the road?

**A:** Because it was stuck to the chicken's foot.

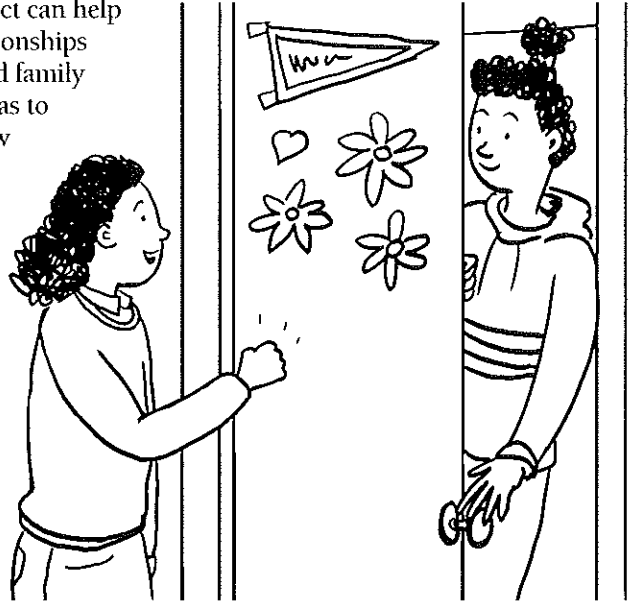


## Respect: The 4th R

Treating people with respect can help your tween form strong relationships with classmates, teachers, and family members. Consider these ideas to help your middle grader show consideration for others.

### Look for examples

Point out respectful behavior to your child, such as knocking on a closed door or being quiet while others are speaking or performing. Likewise, let her know what disrespectful behavior looks like. After a concert, you might say, "It was not nice when the people behind us were whispering. That was disruptive to the musicians—and the audience."



### Be a model

Middle graders are quick studies when it comes to life. What they see is what they learn. If you treat your child respectfully, she is apt to follow your lead. And if you embarrass her in front of her friends or invade her privacy for no reason, she will get the idea that actions like these are acceptable.

### Set limits

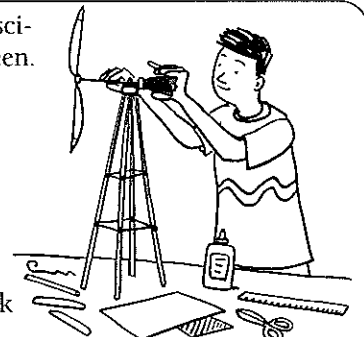
Make it clear that disrespectful language is never allowed. If your tween loses her cool and behaves rudely, suggest that she take a break. Tell her you'll listen when she calms down. Letting her know that you won't tolerate disrespect provides the guidance she needs to change her behavior. 👍

## Spring science

Warm weather brings opportunities to explore science outdoors. Share these activities with your tween.

**Design detective.** Georges de Mestral invented Velcro after noticing burrs stuck to his dog! Suggest that your child observe objects in nature, pick one, and invent something inspired by its structure. Maybe he'll watch a turtle emerge from its shell, then design a retractable phone case.

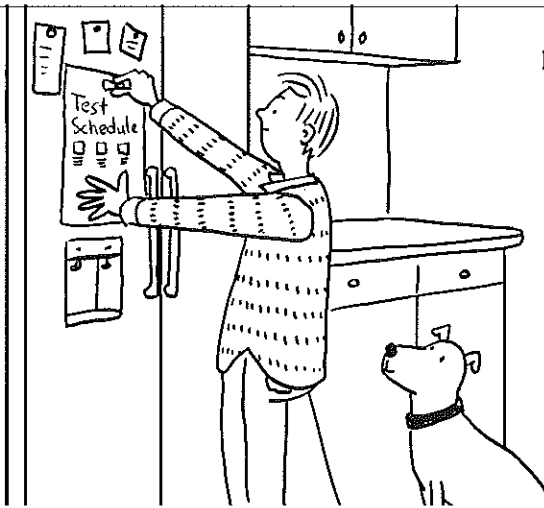
**Energy consultant.** Have your middle grader look closely at renewable energy sources like solar panels on buildings or wind turbines spinning in the March breeze. Based on his observations, perhaps he'll try making a model turbine that will spin in the wind. 👍



# Standardized test success

Your child may be gearing up to take standardized tests soon. Here are ways to support him so he can do his best.

**Plan ahead.** Have your tween post the school testing schedule on the refrigerator and highlight dates for the ones he's taking. Then, try to be sure he gets 9–11 hours of sleep and eats a healthy breakfast on test day (and every day).



**Ease nerves.** Talk calmly and positively about the tests to reassure your middle grader. Explain that effort is what matters most. Also, he'll feel well prepared if he's in class each day leading up to the tests, since teachers often review material or give practice tests.

**Follow up.** After each test, ask your tween how it went. Which parts did he find easier, and which were more difficult? Reflecting on a test can help him do better on the next one.

*Note:* When you receive the test results, go over them together. 🍌

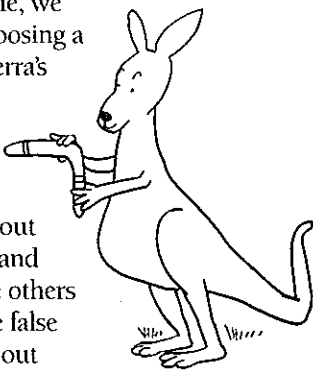
## Parent to Parent

### Wordplay

Our family loves games like Scrabble and Boggle. They're fun, and they help my daughter, Sierra—and all of us—build vocabulary. Recently, we've started adding variety by inventing our own word games.

In one game, we take turns choosing a word from Sierra's textbooks or vocabulary lists and writing three statements about it—two true and one false. The others try to spot the false fact. I figured out Sierra's incorrect fact for the math word *acute* ("A boomerang has an *acute* angle"), so it was my turn to pick a word.

We also made up a vocabulary version of 20 Questions. One player thinks of a word. Then we ask yes-or-no questions like "Is it a living thing?" and "Does it have fur?" The first person to figure out the word selects the next one. I wonder what new game we'll come up with next! 🍌



## Q & A

### A perfect image online

**Q** My eighth grader is new to social media. When she sees classmates' posts, she thinks they have perfect lives. Help!

**A** Suggest that your daughter compare scrolling through social media posts to watching a movie trailer. The trailer doesn't tell the whole story—it just shows scenes that will attract viewers' interest. On social media, children (and adults!) tend to share happy moments, not ones that are boring or embarrassing.

If your daughter feels jealous of a classmate's vacation pictures, for instance, have her think back to a trip she took, perhaps when you went camping last summer. Ask which moments from the trip she would and would not want made public.

Also, set limits on your child's social media use. Maybe she can check her accounts once after she finishes homework and then log off for the evening. Kids need time away from social media to experience real life—not the lives their friends are "creating" online. 🍌



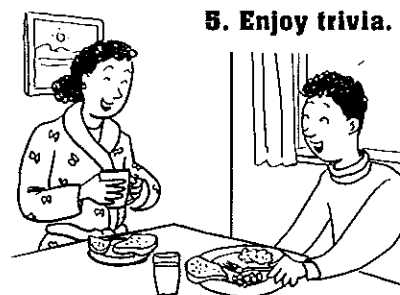
### "Sunny" mornings

Daylight saving time begins March 10. Even if it's still dark when your tween wakes up, you can make mornings bright and cheerful in your home—and send him off to school ready to learn. Try these tips.

#### 1. Turn on the lights.

Light sends signals to the brain that it's time to wake up.

**2. Play music.** Ask your middle grader to make a playlist called "Good morning!" He can include everyone's favorite upbeat songs.



**3. Laugh.** When you hear or see a funny joke, save it for morning. You could tell it at the breakfast table.

**4. Exercise.** Have sneakers and headlamps or reflective gear ready to go the night before, and head out for a quick run or to walk the dog together.

**5. Enjoy trivia.** Get everyone's brain in gear with a question of the day. Keep a deck of trivia cards on the table, or ask your smart speaker for today's Jeopardy question. 🍌

## 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 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540