

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Homework questions

If your middle schooler is stuck on a homework assignment, you can help her by asking questions. For instance, "Where could you look for more information?" or "What have you already tried?" Your prompting may be just what she needs to get back on track.

Taming paperwork

Field trip forms, sign-ups for extracurricular activities, picture orders... middle school parents sign a lot of papers. To keep paperwork moving, get two file folders or paper trays. Have your child put everything that needs your signature in one (the "inbox"). Check it daily, and move signed papers to the other (the "outbox").

Vocabulary booster

Your middle grader can learn new words just by having casual conversations with you. When you talk, agree to try to trade everyday words for more interesting ones. *Examples: mediocre instead of so-so, hysterical instead of funny.* You can both use a thesaurus to help you find words.

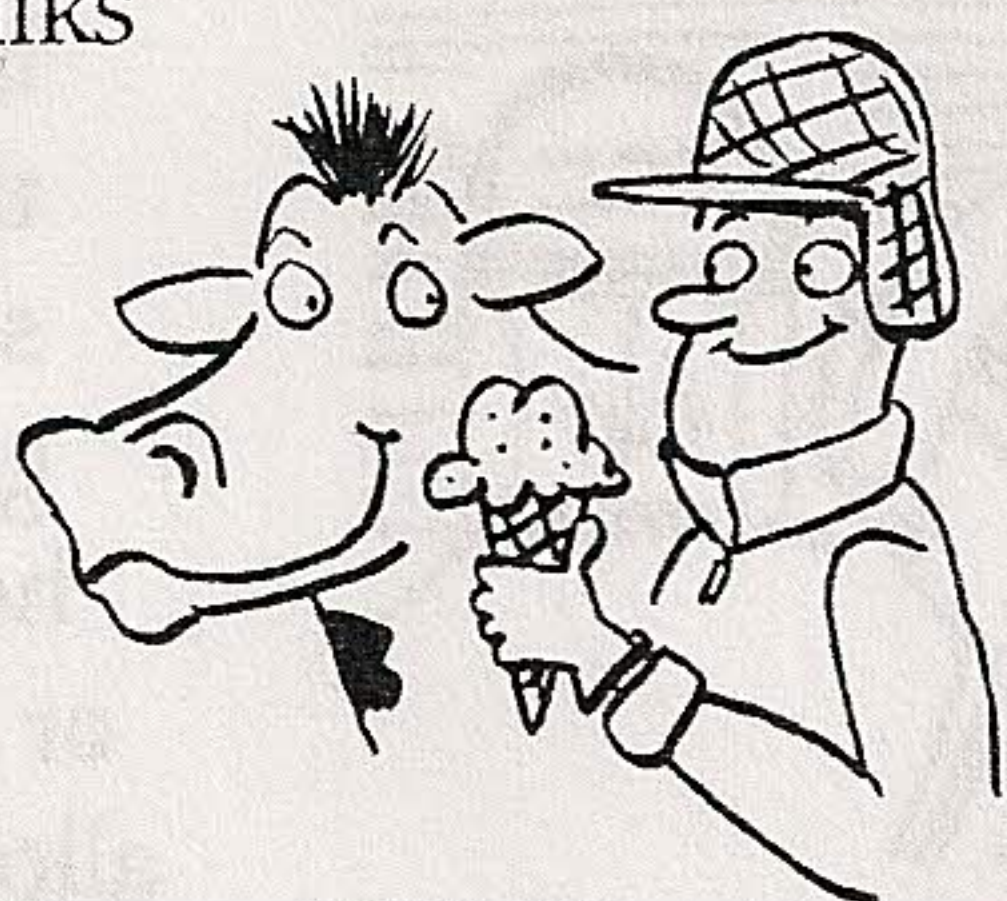
Worth quoting

"The secret of joy in work is contained in one word—excellence. To know how to do something well is to enjoy it." *Pearl Buck*

Just for fun

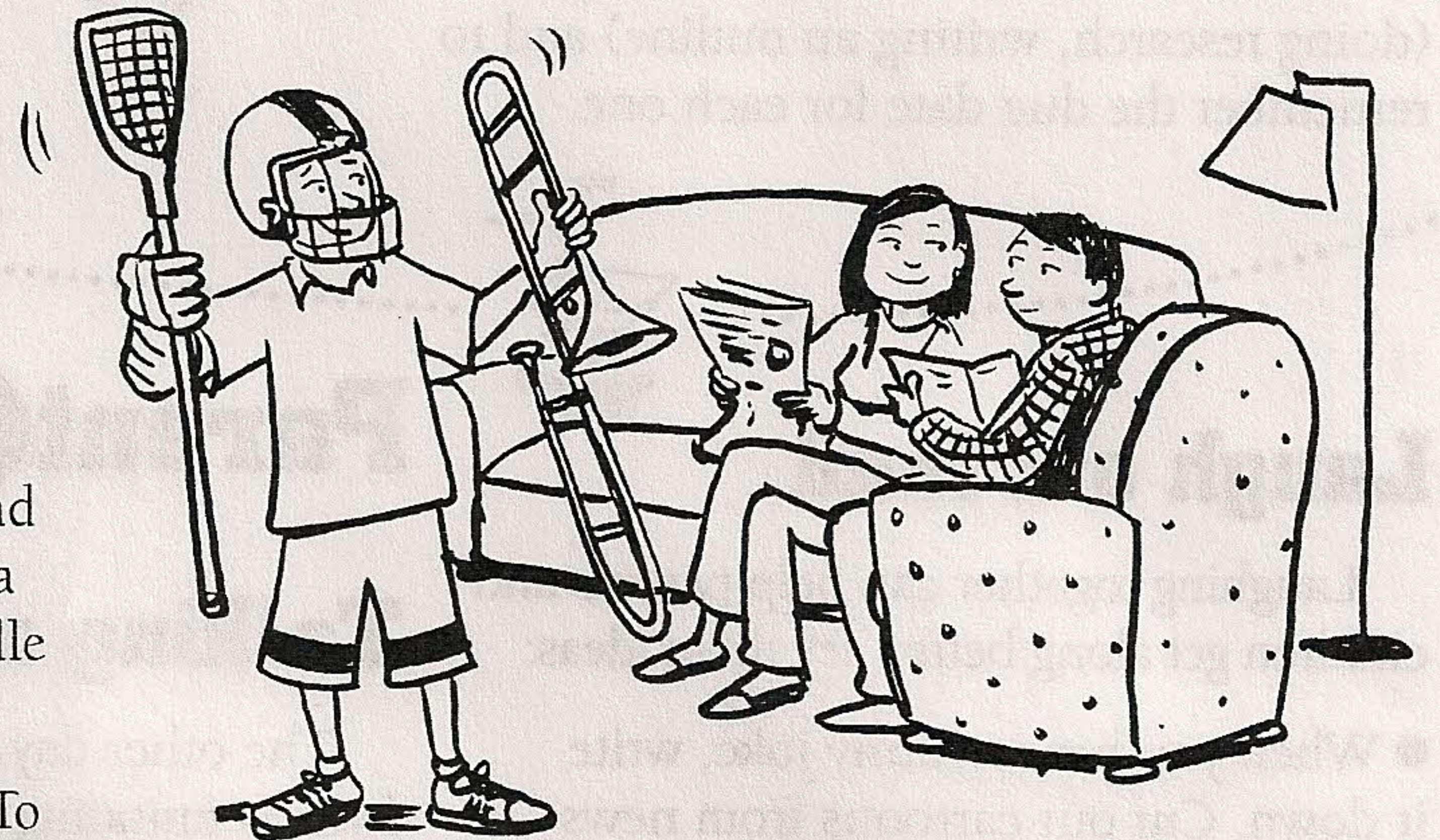
Q: How does a farmer know when it's cold?

A: When he milks a cow and gets ice cream!



Making wise decisions

Your child is deciding whether to stay in band or to play lacrosse. It's a tough choice—but it's also a good opportunity for him to practice making decisions. Considering different possibilities and picking the best one is a skill he'll need for middle school and beyond.



Gather information. To make an informed decision, your middle grader needs all the facts. What is the time commitment for each activity? How would he get home from after-school practices? Will there be travel to band competitions or to lacrosse tournaments? Suggest that he speak to the band director and the lacrosse coach to get answers to all his questions.

Consider pros and cons. Have your youngster list the benefits and drawbacks of each choice. For example, lacrosse would be a great way to exercise

and meet new friends, but it might take time away from homework and other activities. If he stays in the band, he could become a better trombone player and be in performances, but he'd need to find a way to work out.

Rate options. Which choice has more pros? How important are the cons? Suggest that your middle grader rate each pro or con with one to five stars. The more stars he awards, the more important a pro or con is to him. Looking at how the stars add up will help make the right decision clearer. 👍

Joy in poetry

Silly or serious, poetry can motivate your child to read. Here are ideas the whole family will enjoy:

- Read poems by candlelight or flashlight. Try a volume for middle graders, like *Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems* by Kristine O'Connell George or *The Dog Ate My Homework* by Sara Holbrook.

- Surprise each other with poems. Find ones you like in a book or on a Web site, and write down a favorite verse. Tuck it into your youngster's lunch, or she might tape one to your bathroom mirror.

- Hold a poetry scavenger hunt. Take turns naming a household object (quilt, plant) or favorite animal (panda bear, leopard). Each of you can search online or in the library for a related poem and read it aloud. 👍



