

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

PS 101 School in the Gardens
Randy St. Germain/Parent Coordinator

November 2009

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents prevent teasing?

Q: In the past, my daughter was teased and excluded at school. Now her teacher says she has joined a group of “mean girls.” What can I do to stop this unkind behavior?

A: Ouch. It hurts nearly as much to watch your child being mean as to watch her being a victim. Your daughter is typical, though—most girls will be in both roles at some time.

Here are some things you can do:

- **Talk with your daughter.** It was wrong for other girls to pick on her in the past. It’s just as wrong for her to do it now. Someone has to take a stand—and she’s the one. After all, she knows how the other girl is feeling.
- **Review the school’s policy** on bullying with your daughter. She may face consequences if her mean behavior continues. Bullying does not only refer to hitting other children—mean words count as well.
- **Talk with her teacher.** Let her know what you’re doing at home. Ask about the classroom rules regarding this kind of behavior.

Right now this mean behavior is distracting your daughter and others in her class. Working with her teacher, you will be able to come up with a plan to get your daughter’s focus back on learning—and away from being mean to others.



ENCOURAGING READING

Reading for fun builds literacy skills

Some kids seem to *inhale* books. They always have a book handy. But other kids just never seem to find a book they like. To make your child a reader:

- **Build on success.** If your child loved one book by an author, suggest trying another. For example, if he loved *Charlotte’s Web*, give him *Stuart Little*.
- **Ask an expert.** Have your child ask a librarian to recommend books that match his reading level and interests.
- **Look at lists.** Check out reading lists sent home by the school. Or look at lists of recommended books on the American Library Association website (www.ala.org).
- **Read together.** Find a chapter book that appeals to your child. Then read a chapter aloud together each night before bed. A mystery that leaves him wondering what will happen next might be a great choice for your first read-together book.

BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Help with math homework

Your child says, “I can’t do this math problem.” Don’t be tempted to give him the answer. Instead, look at the textbook together. Have your child solve a sample problem. Make sure he includes each step of the process. Then have him try doing the difficult problem again. He may say, “Oh, now I understand!”

TALKING AND LISTENING

Make time to talk about school with your child

You read all the handouts sent home from school. You check out the website and you attend parent-teacher

meetings. Don’t forget to consult another expert—your child. Look at her homework papers together. Ask what classroom activities she enjoys.

When your child knows you’ll give her your full attention, she’ll be more likely to open up and tell you about her day.

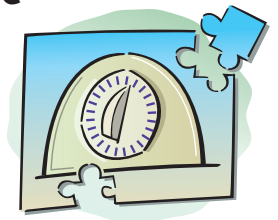


BUILDING ATTENTION SPAN

Learning to stay focused begins at home

To build your child’s attention span, do a quiet activity (like putting a puzzle together) with him every day. Set a timer for 15 minutes.

Gradually decrease the amount of time you participate—but continue to have him work for the full 15 minutes. You’ll find that your child will learn to stay focused on his own.



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BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Doing chores builds responsibility

Does your child do chores? It's a great way to promote responsibility. Expect your child to pick up toys and keep his room neat. He can also feed a pet, set the table or dry dishes. He can take out trash or fold laundry.

It's also important to:

- **Show your child** how you want a chore done. Don't just say, "Clean your room." Teach him step-by-step.
- **Comment positively** when your child does well. "Jack, your room looks so nice. Good job!" Don't immediately criticize your child if a chore isn't done perfectly. Ask how he might do a better job.
- **Avoid redoing a chore.** If your child isn't capable of doing the task yet, assign a more appropriate chore.
- **Set a time** for the chore to be completed. "Jack, please fold the laundry by six o'clock. Thanks."
- **Don't nag.** With your child, set a consequence for when a chore's not done.
- **Praise your child** for effort and improvement.
- **Help your child** make a weekly to-do chart for his chores. Then every day have him place a sticker or make a check when a task is finished.



Source: Gary D. McKay and others, *Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World: Teaching Your Children the Power of Mutual Respect and Consideration*, ISBN: 0-7615-2811-3 (Prima Publishing/Random House, www.randomhouse.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Is the school year moving right along?

It's a few months into the school year—time to see if you're still encouraging your child on the path to school success. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to check your progress:

- ___ 1. **Are you still enforcing** a regular study time?
- ___ 2. **Does your child have** a quiet, comfortable study spot?
- ___ 3. **Do you make** time to take your child to the library regularly?
- ___ 4. **Do you remember** to ask your child about school every day?
- ___ 5. **Do you stay** up to date on school events?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you're helping your child do well in school. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

“Education is not received. It is achieved.”
—Author Unknown

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Visit your child's school

Schools across the country celebrate American Education Week from November 15 to 21. It's a great time to think about how important your involvement is. If your schedule doesn't allow time for you to get to the school, ask how you can reinforce learning at home. Check out volunteer opportunities that work for you.

Source: "American Education Week," National Education Association, www.nea.org.

BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Promote writing with daily journal entries

Many teachers have students keep a daily journal. Try this at home. Put a spiral notebook on the kitchen counter. Each day have your child write about an experience at school, a reaction to a news story or about a friend. In years to come, this will become a treasured keepsake.

REINFORCING LEARNING

Ask about graphics in texts

Illustrations in textbooks are designed to give students a clearer idea of what the chapter is about. They can also help keep kids interested in what they are learning.

After your child reads a chapter, point to a photo or illustration and ask:

- **Why** did the author include this?
 - **What** does it show about the topic?
- If a graph or diagram is included, ask:
- **What** labels are included in this chart?
 - **Can** you explain what this chart shows?



Source: Betty D. Roe, *The Content Areas*, ISBN: 0618-0429-38 (Houghton Mifflin, www.hmco.com).

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