

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



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Your input motivates your child

It's the start of a new school year. You want your child to do her best, but what works? Try these tips:

- **Be positive.** Children pick up their parents' attitudes about learning. When you think your child can achieve, she'll believe that, too. Encouragement and a "you can do it" attitude are great motivators.
- **Use repetition.** Teachers follow regular schedules in their classrooms. Put this to work for you at home, too. Knowing what to expect reassures children and creates an effective learning environment.
- **Break it down.** Big tests and projects can overwhelm children. When your child *thinks* she can handle a task, she's more likely to be successful. Teach her to break big tasks into smaller pieces. "You don't need to read the whole book today. Just read Chapters 1 and 2."
- **Teach the importance of a final check.** One of the best habits to instill in your child is the final look-over before handing in any work. Help her create a checklist. Consider including some of the following:
 - » I followed the directions.
 - » I included my name.
 - » My writing is legible.
 - » I double-checked my math.
 - » I corrected errors in spelling and grammar.



Get supplied for a good year

Kids get excited about new school supplies—and you can link that excitement to learning, too! To help your child make those new purchases effective learning aids:

- **Teach** him how to use his new planner. Write down due dates and school events.
- **Stock** a "study spot" with new pens, pencils, paper and a dictionary.
- **Use** folders to organize school papers.

Daily attendance leads to student success

Research shows that regular school attendance can be the key to your child's success in school. Absent students miss introductions to new skills, class discussions, hands-on learning opportunities and more. When they come back, they have to work harder to get caught up. So this year, make sure your child is in school on time—every day!



Source: H. Chang and M. Romero, "Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades," National Center for Children in Poverty, www.nccp.org/publications/pub_837.html.



Focus on how to read for information

When students read textbooks, they are reading for information. Your child can practice this skill by reading *nonfiction* books (true facts). Whether your child is already a nonfiction fanatic or just starting out, be sure to:

- **Look for books** about how things work. How does the wheat in a field end up in the pasta on your child's plate? How does the Internet work? Nonfiction books can help your child learn the answers to questions like these.
- **Talk with a librarian.** Ask for recommendations of nonfiction titles on popular topics. Or ask for help finding nonfiction books about your child's interests.
- **Consider magazines.** Many magazines for children include nonfiction articles.
- **Follow up.** If your child loves dinosaurs, read about them together. Then schedule a trip to a museum. Or read about constellations and then look for them in the night sky.

Source: "Why Information Books Are Important," West Bloomfield Township Public Library, www.growupreading.org/grade3/index.php?section=010.

Simple routines get school days off to a good start

Avoid "morning madness" by establishing evening routines. Your child should:

- **Choose** clothes for the next day.
- **Have** his lunch and backpack ready to go.
- **Set** an alarm clock. Make sure your child will have plenty of time in the morning.
- **Stick** to a regular bedtime.





When are children ready for more responsibility?

Q: I want my son to take on more responsibility around the house, but I don't want to overwhelm him. How can I tell when he's ready for new responsibilities?

A: Many parents dream of the day when they won't have to remind their child to do homework or prepare lunches. The start of a new school year is a great time to evaluate your son's growing maturity. Look for subtle signs of readiness, such as:

- **Complaints.** Your child might not know how to say, "I'm ready to do my own laundry," so it may come out as, "I can't find my P.E. uniform anywhere. Didn't you wash it yet?"
- **Bossiness.** "Mom! You have to water these plants!" If your child knows enough to criticize, he may know enough to help with the job.
- **Interest.** Kids are often excited about being responsible. ("Can I have an assignment notebook for school?") You could show your child how to make to-do lists, prioritize and check off tasks.
- **Developmental stage.** Sometimes teaching new skills is as easy as considering your child's maturity. For example, most six-year-olds can make a simple sandwich.



When your child seems ready for something new, work together at first. Stay relaxed and give him plenty of practice. Take it one job—and one step—at a time. Be patient (mistakes are bound to happen), and celebrate your child's success!



Are you using family time effectively?

Many families feel that there just isn't enough time to fit in the things that matter most. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to think about how your family uses time during the school year:

- ___ **1. Do you make time** to do things as a family—such as eating some meals together each week?
- ___ **2. Do you limit** the number of after-school activities? Kids need some quiet and unscheduled time each week.
- ___ **3. Does your child have** a regular time for studying?
- ___ **4. Do you set** limits on your child's screen time?
- ___ **5. Do you attend** important school events like conferences?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you are making the most of the time you have. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Time is amazingly fair and forgiving. No matter how much time you've wasted in the past, you still have an entire tomorrow."
—Denis Waitley

Perseverance encourages

High achieving students work hard. They may not always get the right answer the first time, but they don't give up. Talk with your child about *perseverance*. When she struggles with a homework assignment, recall how she learned to ride a bike or mastered another skill. Encourage her to try again. And when she succeeds, say, "I knew you could do it!"

Source: L. Davies, "Instilling Perseverance in Children," Kelly Bear, www.kellybear.com/TeacherArticles/TeacherTip58.html.

Let consequences teach

Children's brains are still developing. To help your child learn how to think ahead to the consequences of his actions:

- **Say** a simple sentence: "Joey didn't review his spelling words." Then ask your child why this might have happened. "Because he was watching TV."
- **Ask**, "What will the consequence be?" Your child might say, "He won't pass the spelling test."

When you see your child doing something without thinking ahead, ask "What could happen? What will be the consequence?"

Think carefully about rewards

Some parents reward their children for good grades. Others feel learning is its own reward. As you decide how to motivate your child, consider the following:

- **Tying** the reward to the activity gives the greatest effect. "If you're reading, you can stay up 15 minutes past your bedtime."
- **Give** praise when your child's efforts have positive results. "You got an A on your poster about giraffes. I'm proud of how hard you worked."



Source: S. Bartell, "What the Expert Says," education.com, www.education.com/question/parents-pay-child-good-grades.

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