

Elementary School Parents[®] make the difference!

Quashnet School



Tap into your child's learning style for academic success

All kids are born ready to learn. But not all kids learn in the same way. One child can read something and remember it easily. Another may need to hear it. And the child who taps her pencil may actually be helping herself stay focused. So it's important to know how your child learns best.

Watch how your child tackles a new task. You will get some clues about how she learns best. That way, you can help her design a study program that builds on her strengths.

- **If your child is a visual learner**, she learns from looking at images. A visual learner does best when she can make charts or flash cards of things she needs to memorize. Drawing a picture can also help her remember important facts.

- **If your child is an auditory learner**, she takes in information through her ears. She does well in a class where the teacher presents information verbally. You can help your auditory learner do better by encouraging her to read aloud when she studies. That way, she will actually *hear* the information. She can practice spelling words by saying them aloud.
- **If your child is a physical learner**, she needs to get her body involved. To support your physical learner, encourage her to get involved with her reading. She can act out the history lesson. She can put on a puppet show with characters from her chapter book.

Source: "Discover Your Child's Preferred Learning Style," Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/pdf/LearningStyle.pdf.

Review sheets help your child prepare for tests



Your child has a math test on Chapter 13, but his math assignments are crumpled up in his book bag ... or somewhere in his room. How can you help a disorganized child get organized to do well on a test?

Have him:

1. **Create a review sheet.** Ask him what the teacher emphasized during math class. He should look through the chapter and write down the things that are most important. He should also look over some of his homework math problems.
2. **Make his own test** using the information on his review sheet. What problems would he ask?
3. **Take the test he created.** Actually doing the problems again will help him remember how to solve them. This will give him confidence when he gets to school on test day.

Source: A. Homayoun, *That Crumpled Paper Was Due Last Week*, Perigree Books.

Remain positive when talking with your child about grades



The report card came home—and it was disappointing. You know your child has the ability to do well. Her teachers have told you that every year. But she doesn't work up to her potential. What's a parent to do?

The most important thing to remember is to keep your emotions in check. Getting angry or showing your disappointment just won't work—or help. Instead, you want to find a way to encourage your child to do the best she can do.

After you have had time to “digest” your child's report card:

- **Ask your child to talk** about her grades. What does she think is going on? Does she do her class work in school? Is she turning in homework? Are there things she can do differently?
- **Talk with her teacher.** Ask her if she has noticed any issues at school. Discuss ways you can

work together to support your child.

- **Set up a time each day** when your child will do her homework. During that time, the TV will be off and the computer will be used only for studying. Set a timer for 20 minutes and let her take a short break before getting back to work.
- **Offer support.** Provide help if it's absolutely necessary. But don't do your child's homework for her. Let your child take responsibility for completing her work. It's the only way she will get the practice she needs to succeed in school and in life.

“It's one thing to show your child the way, and a harder thing to then stand out of it.”

—Robert Brault

Language doesn't have to be a barrier to parent involvement



If English is not your first language, you may hesitate to get involved at school. But studies show that there are many ways you can still play a big role in your child's education. Here are some ways you can play a part:

- **Ask the school what you can do** at home. Many of the most important ways you can be a partner are things you can do in your home. Turn off the TV. Schedule regular homework time. Be sure your child reads daily.
- **Attend conferences** and other events at the school. Don't be afraid to request translated documents. Or ask a friend who speaks your language and English to come with you to interpret what's being said.
- **Talk with other parents.** Perhaps you can form a group to share ideas and opportunities for better communication. Meet regularly and talk about how to partner with the school to meet the needs of all students and their parents.

Are you helping your child develop 'word power'?



Knowing just the right word to use can give a child real power. The number of words a child knows is actually related to his ability to think. Helping children learn new words will help them succeed in school.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are giving your child “word power”:

- ___ **1. Do you talk about words?** When reading books, discuss the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- ___ **2. Do you use new words** for familiar ideas? “Let's clean your room by *categorizing* your toys.”
- ___ **3. Do you play word games** such as Scrabble together as a family?
- ___ **4. Do you have** a “Word of the Day” when everyone tries to use that word at least three times during that day?
- ___ **5. Does your child have** a personal dictionary where he writes new words and their meanings?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are giving your child word power. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

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Set the stage for a successful transition to middle school



If your child will graduate from elementary school this year, congratulations!

The move to middle school is exciting and rewarding—and will be easier by preparing now.

At school, teachers are already getting students ready for this big transition. At home, you should do the same thing. After all, research shows there's a strong connection between parent involvement and student success!

To support your child's progress and independence:

- **Learn about the middle school** ahead of time. Visit the school. Read its website regularly. Ask for a tour. The more comfortable you and your child are at the school, the easier it will be to adjust.
- **Build school spirit.** Learn about the school's clubs, teams, classes, colors and mascot. Talk about

your child's interests. What exciting things will he learn and do in middle school?

- **Encourage important habits.** Your child should stick to a daily homework routine and practice staying organized. These skills will be critical in middle school and beyond.
- **Ask for advice.** Research summer activities for rising middle schoolers, such as library reading programs. Ask the school for suggestions before the school year ends.
- **Stay informed.** Attend events for new students and families. Join the parent-teacher organization and ask about volunteer opportunities. Introduce yourself to staff and other parents.
- **Keep communicating.** Talk with your child about his concerns and hopes. Solve problems together. When middle school begins, keep in touch with teachers, too.

Is your child being bullied? The time to take action is now!



It's hard to learn math facts if you're worried about what's going to happen to you during recess. You can't concentrate on reading skills if you're thinking about the mean thing someone just said about you.

Kids who are being bullied often struggle in school. So if you suspect your child may be a victim, here are some tips:

- **Don't wait.** Although about half of all kids are victims at one time or another, bullying has a real impact on a child. If you suspect something, talk with your child about it.

- **Learn as much as you can.** Ask your child who she sits with at lunch. Who does she play with at recess?
- **Teach her how to respond.** Help her practice saying something like, "That's bullying and I want you to stop." If she can, have her stick with friends. It's harder to pick on a whole group.
- **Contact the school.** Let the teacher know what's going on. Bullies often wait until they are away from adults to take action.
- **Boost her self-esteem.** Get her involved in activities that make her feel good about herself.

Q: I am a single parent and I work full-time. My fifth grader is asking for a cell phone. I must admit I would feel better if I knew he could reach me in a crisis. Still, a child in fifth grade seems really young for a phone. What do other parents do?

Questions & Answers

A: For those who remember the days when a family had one phone (and it was wired to the wall), today's cell phone culture can be unnerving. But more than one-third of kids in elementary school already have cell phones.

The key is to decide whether your son needs a phone, whether he can handle the responsibility, and whether it will work for your family.

Ask these questions:

- **Why might he need a phone?** Safety is a big reason many parents want their child connected. You might want your child to reach you if there's a problem. Remember, there are different kinds of phones—you could get one that is only programmed to call a few numbers, including yours.
- **What are the school rules** regarding cell phones? Many schools do not allow cell phones to be turned on during the day. They're just too distracting for learners. Be sure your child is willing to follow the school rules.
- **What limits will you set?** How much can your child talk? To whom? Is he prepared to have you check his phone to read his text messages? What happens if his minutes go over the limit for a month?

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Reading

Strategies can improve reading comprehension



Reading helps kids gain knowledge throughout school and life. And *how* your child reads makes a big difference.

Students need to persevere—even if reading is difficult—and think about what they read.

Encourage your child to:

- **Prepare.** Before reading, your child should scan the material. What does she think it will be about? What does she hope to learn from it?
- **Ask questions.** While your child is reading, she should ask herself questions such as, “Do I understand this?” “What is it about?” “What happened?”
- **Solve problems.** If your child doesn’t understand a word, sentence or concept, she shouldn’t give up. Rereading helps. So does sounding out words. Parents and teachers can offer hints, too.
- **Summarize.** After reading, your child can make a “map.” Write the story’s title and surround it with five circles. In each one, fill out the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* and *why* of the story.
- **Test herself.** She can use review questions at the end of chapters to reinforce information. She can even make her own practice test.
- **Discuss readings.** Quiz each other on facts—and share opinions, too. “Did you like the ending?” “Why or why not?” “What was your favorite part?”

Source: J. Light and D. McNaughton, “Reading Comprehension,” Penn State Literacy Instruction, <http://tinyurl.com/d329zrd>.

Research identifies five reading skills you can teach at home

Research shows there are certain skills children must learn for reading success. Teachers work on them at school, but it helps to practice them at home, too. They include:

1. **Recognizing** and using sounds. Talk about how words are made of parts. Separate them into pieces. For example, *bat* is made of “bbb,” “aaa” and “ttt.”
2. **Understanding** that letters represent sounds. Look at printed letters. Name their sounds. Also notice pairs and groups of letters, such as *br*. What sounds do the two letters make together?
3. **Knowing** a lot of words. The more words your child knows, the more he’ll recognize and comprehend. Try to use new words often—and repeatedly. Make sure their meaning is clear.



4. **Using** comprehension strategies. This involves thinking about reading materials. Ask your child, “What is the story about?” “Can you retell it in your own words?”
5. **Reading** quickly and correctly. Learning this skill takes time! The more experience your child has with reading, the easier this will become. Simply reading together will make a big difference!

Source: “The Five Essential Components of Reading,” U.S. Department of Education, www2.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/readingtips/part_pg5.html.

Take a trip to the library to transform a reluctant reader



Experts believe *all* kids can enjoy reading. It’s just a matter of finding the right materials. Before your next library

visit, brainstorm about:

- **Your child’s hobbies.** She might find an irresistible book about soccer, video games or cooking. Ask the librarian for suggestions.
- **Types of materials.** Would your child like a mystery? A how-to book? A biography? Consider everything!

- **Activities.** See if your local library hosts read-aloud times, or has reading-related computer games for kids.
- **Company.** Kids who “don’t like” to read often take pride in reading to others. Bring along a younger sibling, a grandparent, or a favorite stuffed animal.
- **Alternatives to books.** Your child might prefer shorter materials, such as articles, comics or recipes. All of these count as reading!