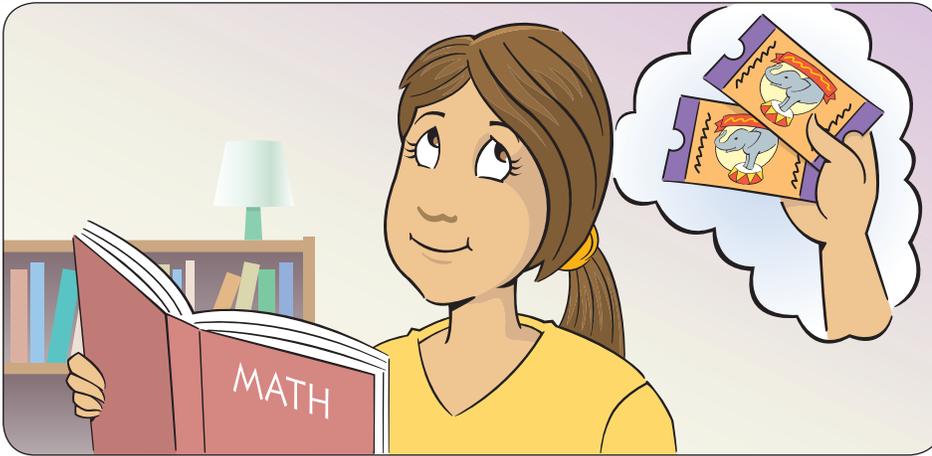


Elementary School Parents[®] make the difference!

Quashnet School



Strategies can help your child achieve 'school resolutions'

A new calendar year is a chance for a fresh start. It's a good time to talk with your child about how the school year is going. Is she happy with the progress she has made? Are there things she wants to change?

New Year's resolutions can be a good way to make positive change. But resolutions by themselves can't lead to change. Here are some ways your child can actually achieve the positive resolutions she makes:

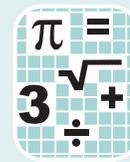
- **Start small.** Your child is probably not going to go from doing 10 minutes of reading a week to finishing an entire book each week. Instead, help her figure out smaller steps. "How about if you read for 15 minutes before bed?" Each small step builds her "reading muscles" for even greater success.
- **Think about the rewards.** Suppose your child says she'd like

to change the grade she's getting in math. Before she makes her plan for how to improve, help her focus on the rewards of getting a higher grade. Once she has a picture of that success, it will be easier to make the changes.

- **Plan ahead.** If one of her goals is to watch less TV but she always turns on the TV after school, help her think about what she can do differently. Perhaps she can have a snack or play with the dog instead.
- **Celebrate successes.** Change is not always easy. So celebrate every success. If she only reads for 30 minutes a day for four days this week, that's still a lot more reading than she was doing before!

Source: S. Schnellenbarger, "How to Keep a Resolution," Wall Street Journal, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703581204576033824100634278.html>.

Ask your child to talk through math problems



Solving a math problem often involves taking things step-by-step. But when

children are in a hurry, they may forget a step. That can lead to an incorrect answer.

So ask your child to solve the problem out loud. Suppose he's adding two-digit numbers, such as $37 + 16$. Once he writes the problem on his paper, ask him to tell you, step-by-step, what he's doing.

He might say something like this: "Seven plus six is thirteen. I'll write that down—no, I need to write the three in this column and then regroup."

You don't need to ask him to do this for every problem. But if he comes to you with a problem that he can't figure out, ask him to talk you through it. If he still can't figure out how to solve it, that is a good sign that your child needs to go back over that information again. Have him ask his teacher for help.

Source: K.A. Zahler, *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Raise a Child Who Loves Math*, ARCO Books.

Improve reading comprehension with simple drawings & diagrams



Good readers seem to *see* the story in their minds as they are reading.

Struggling readers don't always do this. One of the best ways you can help your child improve in reading is by helping her create a mental picture of the words on the page.

This is easy to do when she's reading a book without pictures, such as a longer chapter book. Stop and ask your child to tell you what's going on. Then give her a pencil and a self-stick note and let her draw a quick picture of the story. Choose just one thing for her to draw—a character, the setting or a conflict.

She doesn't need to be a great artist—stick figures or a diagram will do. This activity will train your child

to *listen* for details. Is the character tall or short? Is she confident or scared as she opens the door?

Have her stick the note to the book and keep on reading. When she gets to another stopping point, have her make another drawing.

Over time, this will help your child stop to think about the words she's reading. As she pays attention to the details, the story will come to life.

Source: C. Blachowica and D. Ogle, *Reading Comprehension: Strategies for Independent Learners*, The Guilford Press.

“If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders.”

—Abigail Van Buren

Practice tests may lead to higher test scores for your child



What is the best way to study for tests?

According to researchers, taking practice tests is the ideal way to study.

The act of remembering information over and over is a learning activity. By studying this way, kids may remember double what they would have otherwise. This can occur in several ways, including:

- **Taking quizzes in class.** Help your child understand that quizzes are opportunities to practice recalling information. Simply taking a quiz can improve learning and future grades. When class quizzes are returned, have your child correct any wrong answers and use them for further studying.

- **Working with others.** Consider allowing your child to invite classmates over to study and have them quiz each other. You can also help your child study by calling out questions.
- **Studying independently.** Your child can use flash cards and make his own practice tests. Discuss how to create questions by looking over textbooks and handouts. Notice the section headings, vocabulary words and review questions. And don't stop at one quiz. Research shows that quizzing five to seven times reinforces learning even more!

Source: S. Sparks, “Research Finds Students Short on Study Savvy,” *Edweek.org*, <http://tinyurl.com/d429bd5>.

Are you teaching and practicing listening skills?



The most important part of communication isn't talking. It's listening. And listening skills are crucial for your child's success in school.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are helping your child become a good listener:

___1. **Do you try to give your child your undivided attention when he's talking?** If you're busy, say, “I'd love to talk about this after I cook dinner.”

___2. **Are you patient when you listen?** Sometimes, it takes a while before the real issues come out.

___3. **Do you avoid interrupting your child when he is talking and ask him not to interrupt you?**

___4. **Do you “listen” to your child's behavior?** A child who is acting up is communicating a need.

___5. **Do you avoid chiming in with the “right” answer?** Instead, let your child try to sort out what to do.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you're raising a good listener. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Parents
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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1275

For subscription information call or write:
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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit our website: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2013 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Kristen Amundson & Susan O'Brien.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Teachers & parents work as a team to ensure school success



Parents can sometimes spot a school problem before the teacher does. Sometimes, your formerly happy child comes home silent and withdrawn. Sometimes, you see the frustration as your child struggles with homework. If you think there's a school problem, it's time to call the teacher.

Here are some tips on how you can make the most of that call:

- **Avoid calling right before or right after school.** These are times when teachers are busy and may not be able to give parents their full attention. Call the school and leave a message for the teacher to call you. Or, send the teacher an email asking her to call you.

- **Write down details.** When you are discussing a concern, it's best to be as specific as possible. Be sure to write down some notes and refer to them during your phone call.
- **Tell her what you've tried.** Let the teacher know what steps you have already taken at home to try and help your child with the problem.
- **Ask the teacher for her insights and her help.** Let the teacher know you want to work on this as partners.
- **Remember that you and the teacher have the same goal:** your child's success. Starting out on a positive note is a great way to end with a successful plan for your child.

Being overweight can create academic and social problems



Today, one in five children is obese (at least 20 percent above normal weight). And more than one-third of children are considered overweight.

You may have heard about all of the health problems for obese kids. They are at greater risk for joint and bone problems. They are at risk for diabetes and heart disease. They have sleep problems.

But what's less discussed is the impact that being overweight has on children at school. Overweight children often have low self-esteem and may become victims of bullying. Studies have shown that elementary schoolers who are obese tend to score significantly lower on math and reading tests than normal-weight

children. And the effects of obesity on school performance are worse for students who remain obese for many years.

Encourage your child to engage in physical activity—at least 60 minutes a day. Research shows a link between activity and academic success. Take a walk as a family. Or turn on your favorite music and jump around.

As a family, adopt healthy eating habits. Offer fruits or vegetables instead of chips and candy. These small steps can have a big impact on both health and school success.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Childhood Obesity Facts," www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm; *Childhood Obesity and Academic Outcomes*, The James B. Hunt Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy, www.hunt-institute.org/elements/media/files/Hunt_Obesity_Memo.pdf.

Q: I have two children. My older child is in middle school. She is a good student and very athletic—learning and sports have always come easily for her. Her younger sister is different. She's has some learning challenges, so school is harder for her. She's not athletic at all. She has begun to compare herself to her older sister and always says, "I'm the failure in this family." How can I help her realize that she isn't a failure and that we love her just the way she is?

Questions & Answers

A: Younger siblings often feel like they're running to catch up. But with your love and support, your younger daughter can find ways to grow into her own special self—and improve her grades at the same time!

Research consistently shows that positive self-esteem is linked to higher school achievement. And the best way to give your child's self-esteem a boost is to discover some areas where she can be successful. Success in one area truly does lead to success in another.

What are her interests? If her sister is a star soccer player while she, on the other hand, has two left feet, maybe she should try another sport. Or maybe she'd be happier playing an instrument or acting in a school play. Help her find activities that are different from her sister's and where she won't always be seen as the "little sister."

Point out the things she does well. Whether it's her sense of style or her kindness to others, remind her that these are important. And that you are just as proud of those achievements as you are of her sister's soccer goals.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Discipline

Use positive discipline for best results



The discipline strategies you use at home can increase your child's likelihood of succeeding in school. And experts agree that the best discipline methods are positive, not harsh. According to the research, harsh physical punishments may actually increase your child's risk for mental health problems.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents:

- **Develop loving,** supportive relationships with their kids. This gives them a strong foundation and motivates them to behave well. A child who is respected by her parents is more likely to cooperate at home and at school.
- **Focus on the positive.** Compliment what your child does right. Be specific. "You started your homework without my reminding you. Great job!"
- **Use time-outs** and other non-physical consequences when needed. A child who speaks disrespectfully may need some time alone in her room. A child who puts off homework may miss other fun activities.
- **Let natural consequences** do the work. If your child forgets to bring her lunch to school again, for example, she will likely be hungry. She will also be more likely to remember her lunch tomorrow!

Source: R. Jaslow, "Spanking, physical punishment may raise risk for mental health woes in adult years," CBS News, <http://tinyurl.com/cp2a2oe>.

Self-control can improve your child's academic achievement

Research shows that self-control is twice as important as intelligence in predicting your child's academic achievement. Kids who struggle with self-control, experts say, are more likely to face criminal, financial and other problems later in life.

What can parents do? Focus on self-control skills, such as working hard, behaving well and thinking before acting. Give your child opportunities to:

- **Take responsibility.** Think about what jobs your child can master, such as putting clothes in the hamper at night or setting the table for family meals. If your child is responsible for a routine, such as getting ready for school in the morning, post a reminder

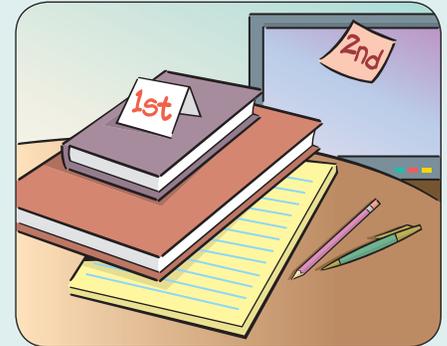


chart to help him through the steps.

- **Practice patience.** Make and enforce simple rules that encourage self-control. "Finish your homework before watching TV." "Save dessert for after dinner."

Source: N. Shute, "For Kids, Self-Control Factors Into Future Success," NPR, www.npr.org/2011/02/14/133629477/for-kids-self-control-factors-into-future-success.

Respect is an important ingredient for school success



Having respect for teachers and classmates creates the positive academic environment all children need in order to be successful.

To encourage respectful behavior in your child, it's important to:

- **Be a role model.** Do what you want your child to do. If you want him to say *please* when asking for something, remember to say *please* yourself.
- **Discuss respect.** What is it? Why is it important? How does it feel to be treated with respect or disrespect? Role-play situations

in which people ought to show respect.

- **Praise success.** Notice times when your child is respectful. "You listened to the coach even when other kids were joking around. I was impressed."
- **Criticize constructively.** When you need to correct your child, do it helpfully and respectfully. "Next time, please hold the door for Grandpa. That will make life easier for him."

Source: R. Silverman, "10 Tips on Teaching Respect to Children: You can't get it if you don't give it!" DrRobynSilverman.com, www.drrobysilverman.com/parenting-tips/10-tips-on-teaching-respect-to-children-you-cant-get-it-if-you-dont-give-it/.