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Elementary School Parents[®]

Quashnet School

make the difference!



Adjust homework time as your elementary schooler matures

The demands of school change a lot after kindergarten. That means study skills have to change, too. Instead of *learning to read*, for example, older students must *read to learn*. Preparing for tests also becomes tougher.

To help your child tackle these challenges:

- **Set the stage.** Pick a quiet, comfortable spot for studying. Stay nearby and make positive comments, such as, “You’re working so hard! You’ll do well on the test!” Research shows positive thinking really works.
- **Pay attention to timing.** When does your child focus best? When does he need breaks? Some kids need to decompress after school by exercising or talking about

their day. Others prefer to tackle homework right away.

- **Plan ahead.** When large projects are assigned (such as writing a report, reading an entire book or studying for a big test), divide them into manageable parts. With your child, create deadlines for each part and write them down on a calendar. Encourage your child’s success step by step.
- **Practice.** Taking practice tests can build confidence and relieve anxiety. If a test will be timed, use a timer at home, too. If spelling words will be read aloud, call them out to your child.

Source: K. Sunderhaft, “Study Skills for Elementary School Children with ADHD,” ADDitude, www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/2523.html.

Use the right kind of praise to motivate



It’s nearly an automatic reflex for parents: Your child does something good and you offer a word of praise.

Researcher Carol Dweck has spent years studying what motivates people to do their best. She suggests that sometimes the things you offer as praise actually end up discouraging your child.

The key for parents is to talk about success in a way that indicates, “You are a developing person. I know you can continue to make progress.”

So if your child brings home a good grade on a math test, don’t say, “You’re so smart in math.” Your child might be afraid you won’t think she’s smart if she brings home a lower grade in the future.

Instead, remind her of what she did to *earn* the grade. “You studied hard and this grade reflects that.” This shows your child that she can repeat what she did—study hard—and have even more success.

Source: C. Dweck, “Parents, Teachers and Coaches,” Mindset Online, www.mindsetonline.com/howmindsetaffects/parentsteacherscoaches/index.html.

Morning routines can help ease your family's 'rush hour'



In many families, “rush hour” begins before anyone even walks out the door. Your child doesn’t have time for

breakfast. She may race out the door while leaving homework and school supplies behind. And even then, she may miss the bus.

If this sounds familiar, it’s time for you to create a new “traffic pattern” for the morning. Here’s how you can create some morning routines to tame the chaos:

- **Let your child take responsibility** for setting her own alarm clock.
- **Make it a game.** Try playing “Beat the Clock.” If it took 20 minutes for your child to get ready for breakfast yesterday, can she do it in 18 minutes today? Let’s be honest. Some kids are late because they dawdle.
- **Prepare for the day** the night before. Set out basic breakfast foods, prepare lunches and make sure backpacks are by the door.

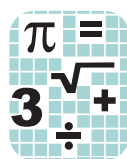
- **Motivate your child** to eat breakfast. Kids who eat breakfast do better all day. Make it easy and fun with themes: Muffin Monday, Waffle Wednesday.
- **Use charts and checklists.** Post a laminated list of all the steps involved in getting ready in the morning—brushing hair and teeth, getting dressed, making the bed. Post another checklist of things that need to go to school. If it’s Tuesday, where’s the library book? If it’s Wednesday, does your child have her shoes for gym?

Source: “Managing Morning Routines,” *Bermuda Parent*, www.bermudaparentmagazine.com/big-kids/82-manage-morning-routines.html.

“We are apt to forget that children watch examples better than they listen to preaching.”

—Roy L. Smith

Teach estimation and calculation by measuring with your child



Think of how you use math in your daily life. Sometimes, it’s important to get the answer exactly right. You need

exactly the right amount of cash to buy groceries, for example.

But sometimes, estimating is good enough. You guess that you’ll probably need about two gallons of paint to paint the bedroom.

Measuring can be a fun way to teach your child both skills — calculating exact amounts and estimating. You can make a game of measuring things around the house.

For example, you could get out the measuring spoons. “How many teaspoons do you think it will take to fill up this one-cup measure?” Have your child estimate, then check. Or show him a ruler and have him estimate how long his shoe is. After checking, ask, “How many shoes would it take to stretch from one side of the door to the other?”

On a day when you are indoors, come up with a scavenger hunt. Have him search for and then measure things around the house.

Source: R. Yablun, *How to Develop Your Child's Gifts and Talents in Math*, Lowell House.

Are you teaching your child to be a good citizen?



The same qualities that help people live together in families can help them live in their communities. Are you are

helping your child develop good citizenship? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you talk** about school and family rules with your child and why they’re important?
- ___ **2. Do you volunteer** as a family on a regular basis?
- ___ **3. Do you show** your child that it is important to honor commitments by keeping your promises?
- ___ **4. Do you model** good sportsmanship for your child when you are watching sporting events and playing games?
- ___ **5. Do you expect** your child to be responsible for his own actions and hold him accountable?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you’re doing your best to raise a good citizen.

For *no* answers, try those ideas to help your child learn to live well with others.

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Prewriting can make the writing process easier for your child



Ask any writer about the hardest part of writing anything and you're likely to hear the same answer: It's getting

started that's challenging.

What's true for the pros is even more true for an elementary school child who's staring at a blank piece of paper. What on earth will he write about? And how can he possibly fill all that white space? It can seem overwhelming.

In the prewriting stage, you can ask your child questions and offer comments to help him shape his thinking and get off to a great start. If your child is asked to write about a personal experience, follow these three steps:

1. **Help your child make a list** of his recent experiences: the day he put up the tent in the backyard (and

watched it fall down); the time he sprained his ankle; the day his baby sister arrived. Ask your child to pick one of these experiences to write about.

2. **Ask your child to tell you** about the experience. Telling a story is a good way to remember the key points. Why were he and his dad putting up the tent? Was it easy to find in the garage? Did they look for the instructions? He can even draw pictures about what came first, second and third.
3. **Ask him to answer** the basic newspaper reporter questions: *who, what, when, where, why* and *how*. These types of questions will help your child collect all of the details he needs for his writing.

Source: C. Fuller, *Teaching Your Child to Write*, Berkely Books.

Show your child how to deal with failure in positive ways



Sooner or later, your child will experience failure. The way you both deal with that failure can help shape

his character.

Here are ways to help you and your child deal positively with failure:

- **Think about the positives.** Mistakes are really opportunities for learning. What can your child learn from these experiences?
- **Praise what you can.** "Your team lost, but you made a great catch in the third inning."
- **Always let your child know** you love him unconditionally.
- **Be realistic.** If he's doing his best and he still doesn't bring up a

grade, then don't let him think you are disappointed.

- **Be a role model.** Handle your own mistakes and failures in positive ways.
- **Don't invest more** in the failure than your child does.
- **Don't argue with teachers** or coaches to try to get them to change a decision or a grade. This will teach your child that no decision has to be final.
- **Don't solve every problem** for your child. If he got a bad grade on homework, don't do the next assignment for him.

Source: D. Walsh, *No: Why Kids of All Ages Need to Hear It and Ways Parents Can Say It*, Free Press.

Q: Lately, all I hear from my daughter is, "Everybody's doing it." Sometimes, I feel confident saying *no*. But there are other times when I wonder if perhaps my child really should have a few more privileges. How can a parent decide when it's time to do what "everybody" is doing?

Questions & Answers

A: The decision of when to loosen up on the rules is always tough. Do it too early and your child can struggle without boundaries.

Still, there are going to be times when you realize that your child really is ready for some additional freedom. Or, sometimes, a friend or family member may point it out to you.

There are several things you should consider as you make your decision:

- **Be sure your rules** are reasonable. It's helpful to talk with other parents. What are they *really* allowing their children to do? Kids are not always completely honest in reporting what their friends get to do.
- **Think about your child.** Perhaps you have set her bedtime earlier than other kids because she just needs more sleep. Your family's rules should work for your family.
- **See if there are** some small steps you can take. Perhaps you could let your child have a sleepover at your house before allowing her to attend a slumber party? Could you let her decide whether she does her math or her social studies homework first?

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: The Home-School Team

Research shows the importance of involvement



Getting involved with your child's education doesn't just feel rewarding. It *is* rewarding! Hundreds of

studies link parent involvement—at home and at school—to kids' success. That means when you take small steps, such as reading with your child, helping with homework and attending school events, you get big results!

Parent involvement raises kids' chances of earning higher grades, getting along with others, finishing homework, graduating from high school and more!

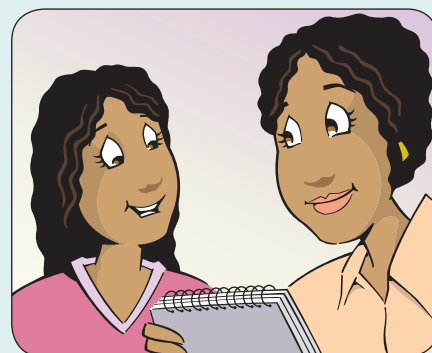
To get the most out of your involvement, be sure to:

- **Start early and stay involved.** When parents get involved early on, kids benefit more. And research shows parent involvement should continue right through middle and high school. The more involvement, the better. Remember: Your involvement shows your child you believe school is important.
- **Explore your options.** Getting involved can be as simple as asking, "What did you learn at school today?" Or it can be as complex as running a fundraiser. Ask about the school's needs and match them to your time and talents.
- **Be confident.** No matter how you get involved, remember that it makes a difference. All primary caregivers—mothers, fathers, grandparents and others—have valuable contributions to make.

How to get the most out of parent-teacher conferences

The first parent-teacher conference of the year is exciting—and often a little nerve-wracking. Follow these tips for a successful conference:

- **Prepare.** Talk with your child. What does she like and dislike about school? Is there anything she wants you to discuss with the teacher? Think about the most important topics to cover and write them down.
- **Be positive.** Start the meeting with a compliment, such as, "Sarah loves your reading corner. It's so cozy!" As you listen to the teacher's views and share your own, stay focused on collaborating to help your child.
- **Make plans.** While you and the teacher discuss ways to support your child, jot down things you



can do at home. Agree on how and when you'll stay in touch about her progress.

- **Celebrate.** When you get home, tell your child how well the meeting went. Show pride in her accomplishments! It's important for kids to see parents and teachers working together.

Source: "Making Parent-Teacher Conferences Work for Your Child," National PTA, www.pta.org/2532.htm.

Work with your child's teacher to resolve school problems



All kids struggle with school sometimes. How do you know when it's time to contact the teacher? Get in touch if

your child:

- **Won't do his homework**, even though you've tried your best to motivate him.
- **Finds schoolwork too hard or too easy.**
- **Needs school supplies** you can't provide.
- **Doesn't understand homework instructions**, even with your help.
- **Missed school** and needs make-up work or extra help.

- **Has homework** that seems unmanageable.

When you talk with the teacher, take a team approach. After all, you share the same goal: your child's success! Explain your point of view and keep an open mind when she responds.

Agree on solutions and make plans to follow up with each other. "We'll both sign Bill's agenda each day to ensure assignments are completed. We'll talk in a week about whether things have improved."

Source: "How to Help: Talk with Teachers to Resolve Problems," ED.gov, www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/homework/part8.html.