

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



October 2017

Clairton City School District  
Dr. Hunt, Superintendent

## For a successful parent-teacher conference, do your homework

Your attendance at a parent-teacher conference can make a big difference to your child's success in school, especially if you take some time to prepare. For the best outcome:

- **Set up an appointment.** If the available conference times don't work for you, contact the teacher to ask about alternatives.
- **Ask the school office** about getting an interpreter if you aren't comfortable speaking English.
- **Ask your child** about her experience in the classroom so far. What is going well? Is she concerned about anything? Let your child know you look forward to working with the teacher.
- **Write down your questions.** You may want to ask about your child's work habits, or how she gets along with the other students. Write down anything you want to tell the teacher about your child, too.
- **Listen attentively during the conference.** Keep an open mind as the teacher expresses her views, which may be different from yours. Ask about what to expect and how you can help, and share the teacher's ideas with your child.
- **Stay in touch** with the teacher throughout the year to see how your child is doing. Always let the teacher know if concerns arise.



## Perseverance is worth it

Kids today are used to instant gratification. But most school skills take time to develop. Teach your child the word *perseverance*. Continued effort over time may not be easy. But sticking with a task and trying different solutions is the best way for students to learn and overcome obstacles.

## Promote math and science

Studies show that belief in the myth that "girls aren't good at math and science" affects students as early as in kindergarten.



But research says that engaging girls and boys in the same exciting math and science activities gives them equal confidence in their abilities. To encourage your child to see herself as someone who is good in math and science:

- **Explore technology.** Look for apps that let your child try coding. For ideas, visit [www.common sense media.org/lists/coding-apps-and-websites](http://www.common sense media.org/lists/coding-apps-and-websites).
- **Play math games.** In the car, have your child add numbers on license plates.
- **Challenge her to design** an invention that will make your family's lives easier at home.

Source: K. Eckart, "Can early experiences with computers, robots increase STEM interest among young girls?" *UWToday*, University of Washington, [nswc.com/stemgirls](http://nswc.com/stemgirls).



## Don't let failures sidetrack your child

No child succeeds at everything all the time. When failures or setbacks occur, help your child deal with them in positive ways. Here are some strategies:

- **Let your child know** you will always love him for who he is.
- **View mistakes** as learning experiences. Help him think of what he can do differently. If he "forgot" he had homework, talk about strategies to help him remember.
- **Help him see** the plus side. "Your soccer team lost, but you made a great assist for that goal in the second half."
- **Don't ask teachers** or coaches to change a grade or a call. Your child must learn to respect their decisions.
- **Be a role model.** Handle your own mistakes in positive ways. Never call yourself "stupid."
- **Be realistic.** If your child is doing his best but his grade is still low, don't show your disappointment. Contact his teacher to discuss other solutions to try.

## It's OK to study with a pal

Studying with a friend can be a great way for students to learn and remember material.

Help your child choose a responsible friend. They should agree that they will meet to study, not socialize. Have them set goals and a schedule for their meetings. Working together can teach collaboration and make learning fun!





## How can I help my child want to read and learn?

**Q:** My second grader is always negative about school. I'm especially worried because he doesn't like to read. What can I do to help him see how important reading and learning are?

**A:** It's not unusual for kids to feel unmotivated about subjects they don't love. But there are things you can do to turn your son's attitude around:

- **Start a conversation.** Talk with your son about why you value education. Tell him he will use reading to learn all kinds of different subjects. You can also ask him about jobs he might like to do someday. Then help him see how doing well in school can help him achieve his dreams.
- **Set up a contract.** Establish a regular reading time and set limits on screen time. Then, consider awarding your child one point for every day he does his reading without a fuss. Once he gets a certain number of points in a row (at least two weeks' worth), he earns a small reward.
- **Give him enticing things to read.** What does he love? There are bound to be books and websites about it. Ask the librarian for ideas. You might also encourage your child to write his own article on the subject.
- **Praise his efforts.** "You hit an unfamiliar word and kept on reading. And you figured the word out from what was around it. Great strategy!"



## Are you nurturing your child's integrity?

Your child's values and sense of right and wrong will affect her choices and her relationships with others in and out of school. Are you encouraging her to develop strong principles and be true to them? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you talk** about the importance of honesty? Do you thank your child for being honest even when you don't like what she says?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you talk** with your child about family and school rules and why they are needed?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you keep** your promises to show your child that it is important to honor commitments to others?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you model** good sportsmanship for your child when playing games?

- \_\_\_ **5. Do you expect** your child to be responsible for her actions and hold her accountable for her choices?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are raising a person of character. For each no, try that idea.*

*"Be true to your word and your work and your friend."  
—John Boyle O'Reilly*

## Everyone's help is wanted

Family involvement in education takes many forms. It can be as simple as asking your child to tell you about something he figured out in class today. It can involve volunteering at school, or working with other parents. All primary caregivers—mothers, fathers, grandparents and others—have valuable contributions to make. For ideas on how to get involved, ask your child's teacher.

## Talking can help kids write

Elementary schoolers are often asked to write about personal experiences. But many children struggle when faced with a blank sheet of paper. To help your child get over a case of writer's block:



- **Have him tell you** about the experience he is going to write about.
- **Ask questions** to help him focus on the points he wants to make and the order they should come in. Why were he and his dad building a shelf? Did they read the directions before or after they began?

Source: S. Goodman, "11 Ways to Help Students Overcome Creative Blocks," Edutopia, [niswc.com/block](http://niswc.com/block).

## Make rules unforgettable

When kids are used to following rules at home, they follow them at school—and that makes learning easier. To make your house rules memorable, see if you and your child can dream up a catchy phrase that sums up each rule and its consequence. For example:

- **If you hit, you sit.** Any physical action toward someone results in a time out.
- **If you partake, you take part.** Everyone contributes at mealtime—by cooking, wiping the table, etc.
- **Pick up or pay up.** Belongings left out of place get put in time out. Your child can redeem them for a small "fee."

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