

By Skip Forsyth

The song, *School Days*, was written in 1907.

The chorus is still familiar to some,

School days, school days

Dear old [Golden Rule](#) days

'[Reading and 'riting and 'rithmetic](#)

Taught to the tune of the [hick'ry stick](#).

The school days are once again upon us, and thankfully the hick'ry stick has been long removed from our classrooms. Yet, lines two and three hold true.

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" continues to be a powerful way to think and act. Yes, character counts. Parents and educators need to work together to model and reinforce positive character, such as: respect, empathy, justice, kindness, loyalty, responsibility, and self-control. These virtues can be taught but are more frequently caught when children see these demonstrated consistently by their adult role models.

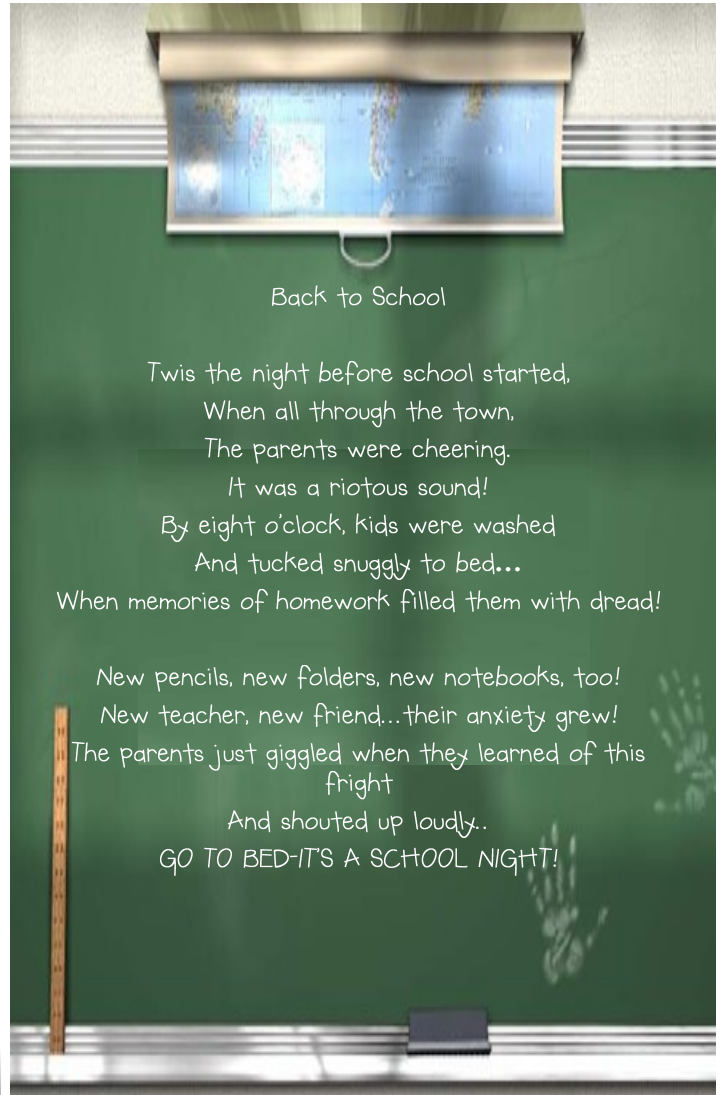
According to research 75% of all the information that comes into our brain is visual. A child is bombarded with visual images daily from social media, video games, the Internet, electronic devices, and television. Parents and educators are competing against highly engaging visual images. Therefore, it is imperative that families carefully monitor and limit a child's exposure to electronic stimuli. It is amazing how adept even young children (3-5 year olds) are at operating cell phones and iPads. Although it may be cute, be aware of the visual messages they are receiving. Call me old school, but I prefer that parents and grandparents and families cement life-long values in a child's life rather than values depicted by "holly-weird."

What can a parent do? **Spend time with your child.** Explain to your child that Internet access, except as needed for educational purposes, is a privilege not a right. Talk with them about the safe use of social media. Agree with your child about allowable time limits for computer games, such as: 30 minutes in the evening after the homework is complete but before bedtime. Play family-friendly video games with your children, and don't be upset when they win.

**Teach your child personal responsibility.** Ask them to help you to set the table and prepare the meals. Ask them to sweep the floor or take out the trash. Ask them to walk the dog. Ask them to help you fold the laundry and put it away. After meal time, check to make sure they have completed their homework. Help them organize their school supplies for tomorrow in a backpack tonight and place it by the exit door.

School is still a place for teaching and learning, for 'reading and 'riting and 'rithmetic. Formal instruction happens in the classroom, and parents need to understand what is expected of the students. Parents, talk to the teacher regularly about your child's progress. Informal instruction happens at the home. Teach your child how to read a recipe or compare prices at the grocery store. Look at the sports page and talk about win-loss percentages and batting average and yards per play. Review newspaper or television advertisements and talk about what is being marketed, what is honest advertising, and what is good value. Play card games or dominoes that require counting points, which is good for math while learning to win and lose graciously. Read with your child, or at least be in the same room reading at the same time (with TV off).

The 2014-15 school year will be filled with challenges. Nevertheless, live your values. Limit electronic visual images. Reinforce the importance of teaching and learning. Follow this approach and you will enjoy a highly successful school year.



"The more you **read**  
the more **things** you know.  
The more that you **learn**  
the more **places** you'll go."  
-Dr. Seuss

## Getting Involved at Your Child's School

**W**hether their kids are just starting kindergarten or entering the final year of high school, there are many good reasons for parents to volunteer at school. It's a great way to show your kids that you take an interest in their education, and it sends a positive message that you consider school a worthwhile cause.

### Reasons to Get Involved

Parent volunteers offer a huge resource and support base for the school community while showing their kids the importance of participating in the larger community.

Not only will the school reap the benefits of your involvement - you will, too. By interacting with teachers, administrators, and other parents on a regular basis, you'll gain a firsthand understanding of your child's daily activities. You'll also tap into trends and fads of school life that can help you communicate with your kids as they grow and change (all without intruding on their privacy or personal space).



Here are just some of the ways a parent volunteer can help:

- ◆ act as a classroom helper
- ◆ mentor or tutor students
- ◆ help children with special needs
- ◆ volunteer in a school computer lab
- ◆ act as a lunchroom or playground monitor
- ◆ help to plan and chaperone field trips, track meets, and other events that take place away from the school
- ◆ help to plan and chaperone in-school events (dances, proms, or graduation ceremonies)
- ◆ work as a library assistant or offer to help with story time or reading assistance in the school library
- ◆ sew costumes or build sets for theatrical and musical productions
- ◆ supervise or judge experiments at a science fair

Remember that not everyone is suited for the same type of involvement - you may have to "try on" a number of activities before you find something that feels right. If you're at a loss for how you can help, just ask your child's teacher, who will likely be glad to help you think of something!

### Getting Started

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when signing up to volunteer:

- ◆ **Make it clear before you begin just how much time you're willing to volunteer.** Even stay-at-home parents don't have an unlimited amount of time to volunteer. Many parents have other activities and interests, as well as other kids to care for.
- ◆ **Start Small.** Don't offer to coordinate the holiday bake sale, the band recital, and a swim meet all at once. If you've taken on too much, find out if you can delegate some duties to other interested parents.
- ◆ **Don't give your child special treatment or extra attention when you're volunteering at the school.** Follow your child's cues to find out how much interaction works for both of you. Make it clear that you aren't there to spy - you're just trying to help out the school.
- ◆ **Get frequent feedback from the teachers and students you're working with.** Find out what's most and least helpful to them, and ask what you can do to make the most of the time you spend on school activities. It's important to keep the lines of communication open among teachers, administrators, students, and volunteers, and to be flexible and responsive as the needs of the students and the school change.

Remember that volunteering not only benefits your kids, but will enrich the classroom, the whole school, and the entire community by providing students with positive interaction, support, and encouragement.

And don't underestimate the students. You may feel that what you have to offer might not interest them or might be above their heads, but you'll probably be pleasantly surprised. You'll help build skills, confidence, and self-esteem that will last beyond their school days.

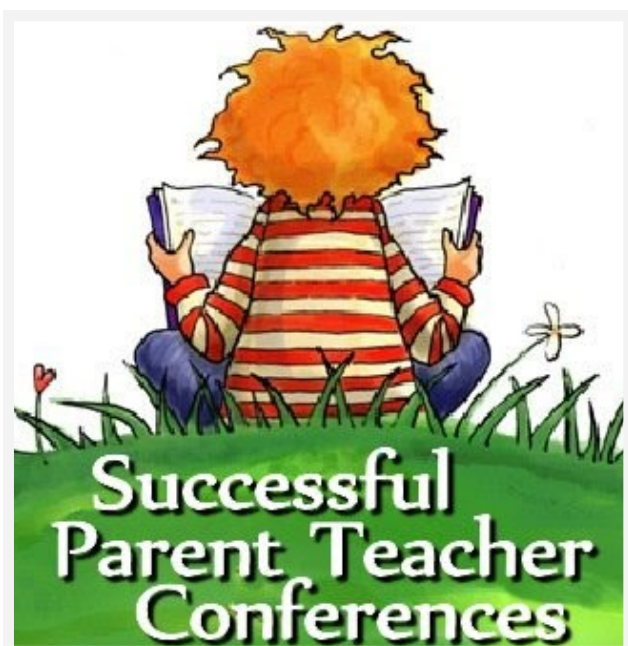
Reviewed by: D'Arcy Lyness, PhD

<http://kidshealth.org>

# Parent-Teacher Conferences: A Tip Sheet for Parents

## What should you expect?

- ⇒ **A two-way conversation.** Like all good conversations, parent-teacher conferences are best when both people talk and listen. The conference is a time for you to learn about your child's progress in school. Find out whether your child is meeting school expectations and academic standards. When you tell the teacher about your child's skills, interests, needs, and dreams, the teacher can help your child more.
- ⇒ **Emphasis on learning.** Good parent-teacher conferences focus on how well the child is doing in school. They also talk about how the child can do even better.
- ⇒ **Opportunities and challenges.** Just like you, teachers want your child to succeed. You will probably hear positive feedback about your child's progress and areas for improvement. Be ready to ask questions about ways you and the teacher can help your child with some of his or her challenges.



### 'BE HEARD'

Keep these principles in mind for a great parent-teacher conference:

- B**est intentions assumed
- E**mphasis on learning
- H**ome-school collaboration
- E**xamples and evidence
- A**ctive listening
- R**espect for all
- D**edication to follow up

## What should you talk to the teacher about?

- ⇒ **Progress.** Find out how your child is doing by asking questions like: Is my child performing at grade level? How could he or she improve?
- ⇒ **Assignments and assessments.** Ask to see examples of your child's work. Ask how the teacher gives grades.
- ⇒ **Support learning at home.** Ask what you can do at home to help your child learn.
- ⇒ **Support learning at school.** Find out what services are available at the school to help your child. Ask how the teacher will both challenge your child and support your child when he or she needs it.

## How should you follow up?

- ⇒ **Make a plan.** Write down the things that you and the teacher will each do to support your child.
- ⇒ **Schedule another time to talk.** Communication should go both ways. Ask how you can contact the teacher. And don't forget to ask how the teacher will contact you too.
- ⇒ **Talk to your child.** The parent-teacher conference is all about your child, so don't forget to include him or her. Share with your child what you learned.

For more resources on family involvement, visit [www.hfrp.org](http://www.hfrp.org)

### Checklist: Before the conference

- ✓ Schedule a time to meet. If you can't go at the scheduled time, ask the teacher about other times.
- ✓ Review your child's work, grades, and progress reports.
- ✓ Talk with your child about his or her progress in school.
- ✓ Talk with others, family members, after school staff, mentors, etc., about your child's strengths and needs.
- ✓ Make a list of questions to ask during the conference.
- ✓ Think about ways you would like to be involved in your child's learning so that you can discuss them with the teacher.

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher. You and your child's school have something in common: you both want your child to learn and do well. When parents and teachers talk to each other, each person can share important information about your child's talents and needs. Parent-teacher conferences are a great way to start talking to your child's teacher.

A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom in the pupils.

# 5 Ways to **Bully**-Proof Your Kid

**D**id you know that 25% of public schools report that bullying among kids occurs on a daily or weekly basis? And that 1 in 5 high school students report being bullied in the past year?

The good news is that because bullying has made national headlines, schools and communities (and even celebrities) are taking a strong anti-bullying stance.

You can do your part at home, too. Here are five smart strategies to keep kids from becoming targets and stop bullying that has already started:

- ✓ **Talk about it.** Talk about bullying with your kids and have other family members share their experiences. If one of your kids opens up about being bullied, praise him or her for being brave enough to discuss it and offer unconditional support. Consult with the school to learn its policies and find out how staff and teachers can address the situation.
- ✓ **Remove the bait.** If it's lunch money or gadgets that the school bully is after, you can help neutralize the situation by encouraging your child to pack a lunch or go to school gadget-free.
- ✓ **Buddy up for safety.** Two or more friends standing at their lockers are less likely to be picked on than a child who is all alone. Remind your child to use the buddy system when on the school bus, in the bathroom, or wherever bullies may lurk.
- ✓ **Keep calm and carry on.** If a bully strikes, a kid's best defense may be to remain calm, ignore hurtful remarks, tell the bully to stop, and simply walk away. Bullies thrive on hurting others. A child who isn't easily ruffled has a better chance of staying off a bully's radar.
- ✓ **Don't try to fight the battle yourself.** Sometimes talking to a bully's parents can be constructive, but it's generally best to do so in a setting where a school official, such as a counselor, can mediate.

## Warning signs

### Possible warning signs that a child is being bullied:

- ⇒ Comes home with torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings;
- ⇒ Has unexplained cuts, bruises, and scratches;
- ⇒ Has few, if any friends, with whom he or she spends time;
- ⇒ Seems afraid of going to school, walking to and from school, riding the school bus, or taking part in organized activities with peers (such as clubs);
- ⇒ Takes a long "illogical" route when walking to or from school;
- ⇒ Has lost interest in school work or suddenly begins to do poorly in school;
- ⇒ Appears sad, moody, teary, or depressed when he or she comes home;
- ⇒ Complains frequently of headaches, stomachaches, or other physical ailments;
- ⇒ Has trouble sleeping or has frequent bad dreams;
- ⇒ Experiences a loss of appetite; or
- ⇒ Appears anxious and suffers from low self-esteem.

<http://kidshealth.org>



### Conversation Starters

- ◆ What's the hardest part about going to school?
- ◆ If you were the parent, what lesson would you like to help your mom and dad learn?
- ◆ What embarrasses you the most?
- ◆ What is the hardest thing about being \_\_\_ years old?
- ◆ What is the best thing about being \_\_\_ years old?
- ◆ What job would you never want to have?

# What is a School-Parent Compact

The school-parent compact is a written agreement between teachers and parents and provides an opportunity to create new partnerships in your school community. It is a document that explains what families and schools can do to help children reach high academic standards of excellence. Each campus receiving Title I funds is required to develop a compact. The compact serves as a clear reminder of all stakeholders' responsibility to take action at school and at home so that children can attain the state's academic achievement standards. It is a written commitment indicating how all members of a school community – parents, teachers, principals, students, and concerned community members – agree to share responsibility for improved student achievement.

The underlying assumption is that a student's academic success will improve when the home and school work together. Overall, if the compact is taken seriously and implemented effectively, it will assure that there will be support for the academic success of the student by enhancing effective communications between school and home. When developed with the input of all concerned parties, the compact can serve as a valuable tool to effectively and meaningfully engage the school and the home in supporting the academic development and needs of the students.

If you are interested in serving on the committee to write the compact or simply want to provide input, don't hesitate to call the school. You have a voice and the compact is a great opportunity to get involved.

For more information go to: [http://www.esc16.net/preview.aspx?name=title1swi.compliance\\_compact](http://www.esc16.net/preview.aspx?name=title1swi.compliance_compact)

## 7 Principles to Highly Effective Parenting

**Principle #1: Your child is a Separate Being.** Parents often fall into the trap of trying to mold their children into exact images of themselves, but children need to be allowed to have their own personalities and identities.

**Principle #2: You Have Been Entrusted with the Sacred Task of Helping Your Children Become Everything They are Capable of Becoming.** Help your children discover their own unique talents and strengths. Listen to your children when they tell you their interests, their hopes and their fears. Nurture their talents and give your child the opportunity to develop them.

**Principle #3: Vital to Your Child's Development Will Be a Consistent Experience of Being Loved Unconditionally.** Your child needs to know that they will always be loved by you, regardless of their behavior, performance or achievement.



**Principle #4: Every Child Needs Carefully Determined and Consistently Maintained Limits.** While many parents struggle with discipline, it is crucial to set limits. Consistent limits not only make the children feel more secure, but also helps the parent in having better behaved children.

**Principle #5: Parents Must Decide How to Discipline Their Children in the Most Effective Way.** Parents need to decide how to best discipline their children, and to keep that plan consistent. And while punishment is necessary at times, parents should also praise their children for the things that they do right.

**Principle #6: A Child Should Be Helped to Dream a Great Dream for His or Her Life.** Help your children realize their dreams and their potential for their life.

**Principle #7: Assisting a Child to Develop Character and Adopt Values is Crucial.** Developing character in your children is crucial to them turning into adults of integrity. Make sure your children are treating others with respect.

This article is based on the book, *Learning to Live With the Love of Your Life...And Loving It!* By Dr. Neil Clark Warren.

### Title I Statewide School Support & Family & Community Engagement Initiative



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Go to [www.esc16.net](http://www.esc16.net) and click on the Parents tab

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## 10 Solutions for Morning Madness

**Have a productive p.m.** "Do as much as you can the night before," says Sissy Biggers, a time-management expert in Fairfield, Connecticut. Pack your child's lunch and her backpack, and have her pick out her clothes.



**Forgo 15 minutes of sleep.** By waking up earlier than the rest of the family, you'll have a sliver of quiet time to soak in the bathtub or savor a cup of coffee. No doubt, you'll feel less rushed and better prepared to handle the day.

**Let routines rule.** Have your child do the required activities, such as brushing teeth and getting dressed in the same order every morning, so he knows what comes next. Help him create a morning to-do list so he can check off each job without being reminded.

**Don't hesitate to delegate.** Avoid arguments over who does what by assigning your kids regular morning chores, such as feeding the pet or clearing the table.

**Prepare for breakfast.** At night, lay out cereal boxes, bowls, and spoons on the table. Make enough pancake batter on Sunday evenings for several days.

**Keep the TV off.** This may cause grumbling, but watching cartoons or videos definitely distracts from the tasks at hand, says Lawrence Cohen, Ph.D., a child psychologist and author of *Playful Parenting*.

**Lighten up.** "If you're tense in the morning, your child will pick up on it," Dr. Cohen says. Instead of nagging her to get dressed, have a playful race to see who gets finished first.

**Stick to a strict bedtime.** "If your child is hard to wake up and takes a long time to get ready in the morning, make his bedtime earlier," Dr. Cohen suggests.

**Learn from your mistakes.** If you have a frustrating morning, think about why it was so stressful. "By examining what went wrong today, you can figure out how to do things better tomorrow," Biggers says.

Taken from the August issue of Parents magazine.

## General Homework Tips for Parents

- ◇ **Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework.** Avoid having your child do homework with the television on or in places with other distractions, such as people coming and going.
- ◇ **Make sure the materials your child needs, such as paper, pencils and dictionary, are available.** Ask your child if special materials will be needed for some projects and get them in advance.
- ◇ **Help your child with time management.** Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don't let your child leave homework until just before bedtime. Think about using a weekend morning or afternoon for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.
- ◇ **Be positive about homework.** Tell your child how important school is. The attitude you express about homework will be the attitude your child acquires.
- ◇ **When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers.** Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches your child that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for him or her.
- ◇ **If homework is meant to be done by your child alone, stay away.** Too much parent involvement can prevent homework from having some positive effects. Homework is a great way for kids to develop independent, lifelong learning skills.
- ◇ **Stay informed.** Talk with your child's teacher. Make sure you know the purpose of homework and what your child's class rules are.
- ◇ **Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework.** Help your child do the hard work first. This will mean he will be most alert when facing the biggest challenges. Easy material will seem to go fast when fatigue begins to set in.

Download Homework Tips for Parents at:

<https://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/homework/home>

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### PRE-CONFERENCE SPEAKER

J. Michael Hall  
Thursday, December 4  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Jose Hernandez  
Opening General Session  
Thursday, December 4  
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Billy Riggs  
Closing General Session  
Saturday, December 6  
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon

### FEATURED SPEAKERS

Thursday, December 4

(Educator Session)  
Carrie Jasper, USDE  
Director,  
Outreach to Parents and Families

Vicki Myers, USDE  
Assistant to Arne Duncan,  
Commissioner of Education

Anita Villarreal,  
Texas Education Agency

(Parent Session)  
Patty Bunker & Carlos Huerta

For information about the conference visit our website at <http://www.implanners.com/parents/>

## Moms



### WAYS TO BOND WITH YOUR CHILD

We parents spend the majority of our waking hours working toward shaping our children into the kinds of adults we want them to be. We campaign to have them be more organized, better students, courteous, etc. But sometimes our objective should be to simply relate to our kids and enjoy them so they don't go through life feeling like a project you've undertaken.

Flawed, fragile, wonderful little people, and sometimes they need a relationship with us that is more about nurturing and bonding than about checking something else off the to-do list.

Life doesn't have to be all long division and how to make your bed. Have some fun by teaching your kid something less serious, like how to grill the perfect burger or how to bake cupcakes. Make it low-pressure and full of laughs- even if it's a disaster.

Your kids may have trouble thinking of you as anything but a mom. Tell them a funny story about something funny you did when you were their age, or about something embarrassing that happened to you (like that time you got a rip in the seat of your pants in gym class). Laughter shall ensue.

Slow down and just be together- -with no agenda.



<http://www.imom.com/8-great-ways-to-bond-with-your-child/>



## Dads



### BOYS & ANGER: TEACHING BOYS HOW TO HANDLE THEIR EMOTIONS

Boys need to remember one thing most of all when it comes to their feelings (especially anger)- they always have a choice for how to respond.

When boys are still young, they need to learn that while their feelings can be intense, they do not need to be ruled by them. In fact, you should put it this way to your son, "Are you going to allow your feelings to dominate your decisions, or are you going to take charge of them?"



Here's how to teach your son to handle his emotions in a constructive way.

**Put a name on them.** Before your son can deal with his emotions, he needs to identify them. So while it may seem like he's angry at his father about being late to his ball game, the actual feeling underneath the surface is sadness. Teach him to look beyond the surface emotion to what lies deeper.

**Green light the feeling.** Try not to make your son feel guilty for his emotions. They can feel strongly about something, but then must choose how and how not-to respond to those feelings. Don't teach your son to suppress anger, jealousy, or other strong emotions. All of those are part of the human experience.

**Call him to action.** Once the feeling is identified and acknowledged, boys must then decide what to do with it. First, encourage your son to talk about what he is feeling. He doesn't have to over-analyze it, but if he can verbalize it to you, that's huge. You can then guide him not to be confused with giving him advice on how to sort out his feelings through a filter that takes into account his moral beliefs.

**Put him in charge.** Your son needs to know that, ultimately, he is the one in charge of how he reacts to his feelings. Teach him that physical force is unacceptable and that he should never use that type of force with others.

<http://www.imom.com/boys-and-anger-teaching-boys-how-to-handle-their-emotions/>

## Top 10 Reasons Children Should Exercise

In the past parents worried more about their children being home by the time the street lights came on than whether or not they got the recommended amount of daily activity. Today parents are advised to monitor their children's body mass index (height-to-weight ratio) as the obesity epidemic among children ages 6-19 has reached 15 percent, almost quadruple what it was in the late 1960's. Physical activity will not only help today's children by preventing them from becoming obese or helping them to lose weight if necessary, it will also teach them healthy habits that can last a lifetime. Here are 10 reasons kids should get plenty of exercise:

- 1) Exercise helps kids achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.
- 2) Regular physical activity helps build and maintain strong, healthy muscles, bones and joints.
- 3) Exercise aids in the development of important interpersonal skills. This is especially true for participation in team sports.
- 4) Exercise improves the quality of sleep.
- 5) Research shows that exercise promotes improved school attendance and enhances academic performance.
- 6) Kids who exercise have greater self-esteem and better self-images.
- 7) Participating in regular physical activity prevents or delays the development of many chronic diseases (e.g., heart disease, diabetes, obesity, hypertension) and promotes health.
- 8) Children who are active report fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression and a better overall mood.
- 9) Exercise helps improve motor coordination and enhances the development of various motor performance skills.
- 10) Kids who exercise are more likely to keep exercising as an adult.



[http://www.acefitness.org/updateable/update\\_display.aspx?pageID=638](http://www.acefitness.org/updateable/update_display.aspx?pageID=638)

## Helping Your Kids Eat Healthier

### NUTRITION FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

Healthy eating can stabilize children's energy, sharpen their minds, and even out their moods. While peer pressure and TV commercials for junk food can make getting kids to eat well seem impossible, there are steps parents can take to instill healthy eating habits without turning mealtimes into a battle zone. By encouraging healthy eating habits now, you can make a huge impact on your children's lifelong relationship with food and give them the best opportunity to grow into healthy, confident adults.



### TOP TIPS TO PROMOTE HEALTHY CHILDHOOD EATING

- ◆ **Have regular family meals.** Knowing dinner is served at approximately the same time every night and that the entire family will be sitting down together is comforting and enhances appetite. Breakfast is another great time for a family meal, especially since kids who eat breakfast tend to do better in school.
- ◆ **Cook more meals at home.** Eating [home cooked meals](#) is healthier for the whole family and sets a great example for kids about the importance of food. Restaurant meals tend to have more fat, sugar, and salt. Save dining out for special occasions.
- ◆ **Get kids involved.** Children enjoy helping adults to shop for groceries, selecting what goes in their lunch box, and preparing dinner. It's also a chance for you to teach them about the nutritional values of different foods, and (for older children) how to read food labels.
- ◆ **Make a variety of healthy snacks available instead of empty calorie snacks.** Keep plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grain snacks, and healthy beverages (water, milk, pure fruit juice) around and easily accessible so kids become used to reaching for healthy snacks instead of empty calorie snacks like soda, chips, or cookies.
- ◆ **Limit portion sizes.** Don't insist your child cleans the plate, and never use food as a reward or bribe.

[http://www.helpguide.org/life/healthy\\_eating\\_children\\_teens.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/life/healthy_eating_children_teens.htm)

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is posted on our web site four times a year for parents and educators of Texas.

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<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>



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