

# Forty-Four Proven Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Their Children Do Better in School

From the Pages of *Parents Make the Difference!* newsletter

## Making Time Count

- Put specific times on your calendar each week when you will spend time with your children. During that time, focus your love and attention on your child.
- Use car time to talk with your children. There's no phone or TV to interfere. No one can get up and leave. And kids know they really have your ear.
- Plan to eat at least one meal together as a family each day.
- Look for things to do together as a family. Get everyone involved in choosing how to spend your time together.
- Try giving children TV tickets. Each week, each child gets 20 TV tickets. Each ticket can be used for 30 minutes of TV time. Any tickets remaining at the end of the week can be cashed in for 25 cents each. Parents can still veto a certain program, of course.

## Reading to Your Child

- Try relaxing your family's bedtime rules once a week on the weekend. Let your child know that he can stay up as late as he wants—as long as he's reading in bed.
- Help your child start their own library—paperback books are fine. Encourage your child to swap books with friends. Check used bookstores. Give books as gifts.
- Want your children to be good readers? Let them see you read. More students than ever have reported that their homes contained few or no reading materials.
- Try holding D-E-A-R times at your house. "DEAR" stands for "Drop Everything And Read." During DEAR time, everyone in the family sits down for some uninterrupted reading time.
- With young children, try reading to them during bath time.
- Use the "Rule of Thumb" to see if a book is on your child's reading level: Have your child read a page of the book aloud. Have her hold up one finger for each word she does not know. If she holds up four fingers and a thumb before the end of the page, the book is probably too hard for her to read alone. But it might be a great book to read aloud.

## Building Self-Esteem

- Have your child make a "book" about themselves, with their own illustrations and wording. "A Book About Me" is a great way to help your child see herself as "somebody."

- Help your child discover their roots by talking with family members during holidays and other visits.
- Constantly look for ways to tell your children what you like about them, that you love them. There is no age limit on this. "When I do something well, no one ever remembers. When I do something wrong, no one ever forgets." Those words were written by a high school dropout.
- Let kids overhear you praising them to others.
- Try "King/Queen for a Day" for good report cards.
- Help kids learn from problems, not be devastated by them. Many parents don't ever use the word "failure." They may talk about a "glitch," a "problem," or a "snag." But even when something doesn't work out as they'd planned, successful people try to learn *something* from the experience.

## Discipline

- In good weather, put two angry kids on opposite sides of a strong window or glass door. Provide each with a spray bottle of window cleaner and a rag. Then let them "attack." Their angry words will turn to laughter . . . and your window will be clean!
- Try role playing to eliminate constant fighting. For five minutes, have the fighters switch roles. Each has to present the other person's point of view as clearly and fairly as possible. Odds are, they'll start laughing and make up. Better yet, they may come up with a compromise solution both parties like.
- For better discipline, speak quietly. If you speak in a normal tone of voice, even when you're angry, you'll help your child see how to handle anger appropriately. And if you don't scream at your kids, they're less likely to scream at each other . . . or at you.
- Try a "black hole" to keep toys and other belongings picked up. All you need is a closet or cabinet with a lock—the "black hole." When something is left out that should be put away, it gets put into the "black hole" for 24 hours. Once a favorite toy or something your child needs is locked up for 24 hours, there is greater incentive to keep it where it belongs. This works best when the whole family participates.

## Solving School Problems

- Try looking over children's study materials and making up a sample quiz as they study for upcoming tests.
- Talk with the school "in time of peace" before major problems develop.