

Elementary School Parents

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make the difference!



Make attendance a priority for your child this school year

As students gear up for another school year, the lingering effects of COVID-19 continue to impact attendance—with rates still struggling to reach pre-pandemic levels. Over seven million students across the U.S. are missing out on three weeks or more of valuable class time annually.

Poor attendance damages academic success. When students miss school or arrive in class late, everyone suffers. Teachers spend time collecting makeup work and reteaching. Meanwhile, other students—who are ready to learn—must wait.

Teach your child that a student's number one responsibility is to start school on time every day. To support your child:

- **Stick to a schedule.** Establish evening and morning routines that help your child be prepared. Select outfits and gather materials needed for school at night.
- **Schedule carefully.** Make medical and other appointments during non-school hours when possible. School should be a priority when planning family trips, too.
- **Seek help when needed.** Many factors contribute to missing school. If your family struggles with health, transportation, work, child care or other issues, talk with school staff. Our shared goal is to help all students do their best in school.

Source: P.W. Jordan and R. Miller, *Who's In: Chronic Absenteeism under the Every Student Succeeds Act*, FutureEd.

Improve school performance with breakfast



It takes a lot of energy for students to concentrate in class. So it's no surprise that kids

who start the school day without breakfast often lack focus.

Studies consistently show that breakfast affects how well children do in school. One study looked at how breakfast affected students' attendance and academic performance. They found that children who ate breakfast had:

- **Better attendance.**
- **Fewer episodes of tardiness.**
- **Higher math scores.**
- **Improved concentration,** alertness, comprehension, memory and learning.

Whether your elementary schooler eats breakfast at home or at school, try to have a few healthy grab-and-go options available. An apple and a piece of cheese will get your child off to a good start. So will a whole-grain bagel and cream cheese. In a pinch, even a piece of last night's pizza will do!

Source: K. Baildon, "Breakfast and the Brain: How Eating Breakfast Impacts School Performance," USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Three simple ways to nurture your child's love of science



In one national survey, only about half of moms and dads felt “very confident” about their ability to help their children learn science. But you don’t need to know a lot of science in order to boost your child’s scientific know-how. You only need to be willing!

To promote your child’s interest in science and help build skills:

- 1. Investigate together.** There’s no shame in admitting that you don’t have all of the answers. So, if your child asks a question like, “Why is the sky blue?” or “Where does rain come from?” you can simply say, “I’m not sure. Let’s find out together.” Help your child go online or visit the library to discover the answer.
- 2. Watch educational programs together.** There are many

kid-friendly science shows on TV. If you’re not sure where to start, ask the teacher for suggestions. Afterward, talk about the shows. “Wasn’t it neat when they explained how fish breathe through their gills?”

- 3. Go online.** There are lots of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) websites, games, videos and apps available. Visit www.common sense media.org to find one that looks interesting and check it out with your child.

Source: M. Silander and others, “What Parents Talk About When They Talk About Learning: A National Survey About Young Children and Science,” Education Development Center.

“Science is a way of thinking much more than it is a body of knowledge.”

—Carl Sagan

Keep your child safe while navigating the online world



Technology has changed how students learn and how they socialize. Millions of kids in all age groups are online every day—at home, at school, at friends’ homes, at the library—and many are creating online content.

To promote online safety:

- **Discuss rules and expectations.** Use software that helps protect children, but supervise carefully, too. Allow your child to communicate online only with people you both know.
- **Set guidelines.** Establish times when technology is not allowed, and set a time when all devices must be turned off for the evening.
- **Remind your child** not to reveal personal information online, such as phone numbers, school name, passwords or your home’s location.
- **Keep internet use** out in the open. Have your child use computers and digital devices in common areas where you can supervise.
- **Learn about the websites** and apps your child wants to visit or download. Make sure you approve of the content.
- **Encourage your child** to tell you about any inappropriate content, messages or experiences online. Report concerns to the authorities. For more safety tips, visit the Family Online Safety Institute at www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting.

Are you helping your child live a healthy lifestyle?



Health and well-being help students learn their best. Are you setting your elementary schooler up for success by establishing and reinforcing healthy habits? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

- 1. Do you insist** on a regular bedtime? Being well-rested will help your child focus in class.
- 2. Do you make sure** your child starts the day with a nutritious breakfast? See the article on page one for more information on the effect of breakfast on learning.
- 3. Do you limit** your child’s snacks to nutritious items, including fruits and vegetables?
- 4. Do you teach** your child that smoking and substance abuse damages health and ability to learn?
- 5. Do you help** your child find outlets for stress, such as listening to music, exercising or writing in a journal?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your child establish healthy habits. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

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to Help Their Children.

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Navigating social challenges leads to increased confidence



When adults are overly involved in children's social lives, kids can't develop the confidence and resilience they need

to thrive. Swooping in and saving your child from every social challenge won't help in the long run—and it might actually hurt your child.

Your elementary schooler is more likely to establish healthy friendships and feel more confident when prepared with social skills. And these skills won't just help your child navigate the playground successfully. They'll make your child feel more confident in the classroom, too.

To strengthen social skills:

- **Empower your child** to take action. Listen closely when your child comes to you with a problem.

Say, "That sounds frustrating. What did you do next?" Then, give your child a chance to think of a solution. Sometimes, all kids need is someone to listen to them.

- **Model resilience.** Talk about your own social struggles and how you faced them. When children hear stories about how family members overcame obstacles, they become more resilient in the face of challenges.
- **Teach your child to be assertive.** Show your child how to speak up. Ask your child to make a strong case for why you should grant requests for desired items or activities. Or, have a family debate night. When children are encouraged to speak up at home, they find their voice at school and in the world.

Make your family read-aloud time a success with these tips



Some families stop reading aloud together as soon as their children learn to read. But reading aloud can continue to be

fun, and it builds reading skills, too.

To make your read-aloud time successful:

- **Do it every day.** When you read aloud with your child daily, you demonstrate that reading time is much too important to miss.
- **Pick a regular time.** When reading is already part of your daily routine, you won't have to think about trying to fit it into a hectic day. Choose a time when your child will be most receptive, such as after playing outside or before bed.
- **Read the book first**—before you read it aloud. Reading aloud is

performing. You'll do a better job if you're familiar with what you're going to read. Previewing a book may also keep you from getting bogged down in a book that neither you nor your child enjoys.

- **Read books you like.** If you like a book, odds are your child will, too. Start by reading books you enjoyed as a child. Often, your enjoyment will be contagious!
- **Emphasize the first line.** The first line of any great story will grab the reader's attention.
- **Use facial expressions.** Widen your eyes to show surprise. Squint a bit to show you're thinking.
- **Leave your child wanting more.** Stop your day's reading at a point where you are both eager to hear what happens next.

Q: Last year, my child put off a large project until the very last minute. Trying to get finished on time stressed out our child and our entire family. What can we do to make sure this year is different?

Questions & Answers

A: Long-term projects teach students—and sometimes families—valuable lessons. Last year, you learned what *not* to do.

Your child is obviously a person who understands deadlines. So this year, help your elementary schooler set *a lot* of deadlines before the project is actually due.

Encourage your child to:

1. **Select a topic early.** The sooner your child has a topic, the sooner the work can begin.
2. **Make a list** of all the steps that must be taken to complete the project. Your child should include the trip to the store for supplies and the time it will take to assemble everything. Suggest building in at least two days for unexpected issues that often seem to happen.
3. **Set a deadline** for each part of the project. Make sure your child knows the consequence for missing a deadline. (If your child hasn't completed the work, for example, there certainly isn't time for recreational screen time.)
4. **Post the list of deadlines** in a place where you'll both see it every day. Then, after achieving each step, your child can cross off that deadline.

By following these steps, your child will not only learn from a long-term project, but will also develop valuable time management skills. Best of luck for a successful school year!

It Matters: The Family-School Team

Set the stage for effective communication



Family-school communication is crucial to students' success. Whether your child is a stellar

student, an average student or has special needs, it's important to establish a meaningful relationship with teachers and the school. To nurture a beneficial connection:

- **Stay in touch with school staff.** Attend meetings and follow up to see how things are going. Always contact the teacher if you have questions or concerns.
- **Arrive prepared.** Before meetings, write down notes so you can be sure to remember everything you want to say and ask.
- **Be optimistic.** Remind yourself that you and the school have the same goal: your child's success. A positive attitude makes conversations more productive.
- **Listen attentively.** Keep an open mind as you hear the teacher's views, which may be different from yours. Ask for clarification about anything you find confusing.
- **Remain calm.** It's natural to feel defensive if your child is criticized. But the goal is to help your child, so focus on solutions.
- **Offer suggestions.** You know your child best. Explain factors the teacher may not know about and what you think would help your child most.
- **Never give up.** If an initial meeting doesn't get results, try again. You can also ask for another staff member to join you.

Family engagement supports students' academic success

Getting involved with your child's education doesn't just feel rewarding. It *is* rewarding! Hundreds of studies link family engagement—at home and at school—to student success.

Family engagement raises students' chances of earning higher grades, getting along with others, finishing assignments, graduating from high school, and more!

To support your child:

- **Start early and stay involved.** When families get involved early on, kids benefit more. And research shows family engagement matters throughout middle and high school.
- **Explore your options.** Involvement can be as simple as asking your child, "What did you learn at school today?" or 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.

Stay informed by reviewing your child's schoolwork daily



Schoolwork is a vital link between home and school. In addition to helping students master concepts, schoolwork gives families a sneak peek into what their children are learning.

Experts say that reviewing your child's work is important—even if you don't understand it. Expressing interest sends the message that learning is important.

Set aside time each day to:

- **Review classwork** and assignments. Before your child turns in an assignment, always ask to see it and check that it is complete.
- **Ask about upcoming projects.** What is your child looking forward to about them? Will they be easy or challenging? How can you support your child's effort?
- **Praise your child's effort** and progress along the way. Don't wait for the final result.