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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Your School Name Here
Your Name and Title Here

Sample Issue

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Encourage responsibility at home

Kids who learn to be responsible do better in school. They get along better with teachers and peers. They make better decisions. They're more apt to try, follow through and succeed. To teach your child responsibility:



- **Practice what you preach.** Be a role model for your child. If you want him to speak respectfully, for instance, talk to him with respect, too.
- **Discuss consequences.** Ask questions like, "How do you think Jose felt when you said that?" "When someone insults you, how do you feel?"
- **Enforce key rules.** Be clear about what will happen when your child does certain things. Then follow through.
- **Learn from the past.** For example, "Remember when Shelly pushed you? We talked about walking away. Later, you told her how you felt."
- **Allow freedom.** Let your child take minor risks as you guide his experiences and ensure his safety.
- **Develop understanding.** Pose questions that help your child think. "What did you do?" "Why do you think that happened?" "Are you happy with your decision?"

Source: Beth Tucker, "Building Responsibility: How do I teach my children to be more responsible?" Cooperative Extension, University of Arizona, <http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/family/az1037.pdf>.

ENCOURAGING READING

You can make reading a social activity

In elementary school, many kids get wrapped up in organized activities, such as sports teams and dance classes. Yet free-time reading is also important. It builds reading skills and appreciation for books. To add reading to your child's schedule, try creative ideas such as:

- **Book swaps.** These allow kids to exchange and discuss favorite books.
- **Book clubs.** Some clubs even focus on popular series.
- **Mystery book parties.** Stage a mystery or play Clue[®].
- **Write-a-story parties.** Let each child write at least one sentence of the story. Then read it aloud!
- **Play-reading parties.** Give a copy of a short, easy-to-read script to all attendees. Encourage kids to be dramatic and ham it up.

Source: Mary Leonhardt, "Bringing Books to Life," *Family Fun* (Disney Publishing, <http://familyfun.go.com>).

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Good attendance is key

Attending school regularly is the best way for your child to do well—she can't learn if she's not there! Research reveals some common family factors that affect attendance:

- **Sleep routines.** Have your child go to bed at a regular, reasonable hour each night. Otherwise she'll be tired—and possibly late—the next day.
- **Transportation.** Help your child arrive at school on time. If she takes the bus, be sure she gets to the bus stop a few minutes early.

Source: "Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from Research and Practice," Northwest Regional Educational Library, <http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/692>.

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Promote high achievement

Researchers looked at thousands of studies on learning and found something that parents should know. The best students have parents who keep track of schoolwork.



(This mattered more than parents' education levels or incomes.) Reviewing your child's work for just a few minutes a day can help.

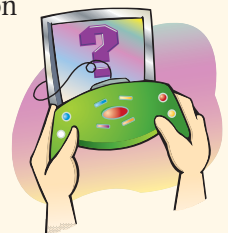
Source: Eugene M. Schwartz, *How To Double Your Child's Grades in School*, ISBN: 0-7607-1193-3 (Barnes & Noble, www.barnesandnoble.com).

SCREEN TIME

Adjust the idea of 'TV time'

Many parents set limits on "TV time." But today, parents need to think in terms of "screen time."

Keep track of how much time your child spends watching TV, playing video games and going online. If it's more than ten hours per week, consider making adjustments.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

When should you contact your child's teacher?

Q: My daughter is falling behind in math, but I don't want to bother the teacher about it. I think I can help her catch up. Am I taking the right approach?

A: It's wonderful that you're aware of your daughter's problem, but there's no reason to face it alone. Chances are her teacher has noticed, too, and she'd appreciate your input.

Consider these steps:

- 1. Make an appointment** with the teacher. Let her know what you'd like to talk about.
- 2. Plan ahead.** Write down your thoughts and concerns so you can make the most of conference time.
- 3. Focus on the problem.** Rather than blaming anyone (the teacher, your daughter, yourself), work with the teacher to find a solution.
- 4. Listen openly.** You may be surprised by the teacher's point of view.
- 5. Make a plan.** Note the specific things that you, the teacher and your child will do.
- 6. Follow up.** Decide how you'll monitor progress. Discuss ways to keep in touch.



Source: Michael H. Popkin and others, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, ISBN: 1-880283-15-8 (Active Parenting Publishers, www.activeparenting.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Are you teaching respect at home?

Children who understand the importance of having respect for themselves, others and authority are more likely to be successful in school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're raising a respectful child:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>___ 1. Do you treat your child with respect?</p> <p>___ 2. Do you teach your child to respect rules by following them yourself?</p> <p>___ 3. Do you model polite behavior, such as saying <i>please</i> and <i>thank you</i>?</p> <p>___ 4. Do you explain the reasons behind rules to your child?</p> <p>___ 5. Do you encourage your child to be honest by admitting your own mistakes?</p> | <p>How did you do? Each <i>yes</i> answer means you're promoting respect at home. For each <i>no</i> answer, try that idea from the quiz.</p> |
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"All children behave as well as they are treated."
— Anonymous

Set and enforce limits

When it comes to setting limits, you may sometimes give in to your child. That's easier than arguing. But setting limits is one of your most important jobs. Here's how:

- **Start** with a behavior that matters to you. If seeing clothes on the floor drives you crazy, start there.
- **Talk** with him about what you expect.
- **Set up** consequences. "If you don't pick up your clothes, then I won't wash them when I do laundry."
- **Stick** to your rules. Enforce consequences every time. Otherwise, your child will learn that you don't mean what you say.

BUILDING CHARACTER

Teach your child by example

It's a beautiful afternoon. Your child begs to go to the park. But you promised to visit a relative in a nursing home. This is a "teachable moment"—an opportunity to show your child values. Be a role model. Say, "I'd love to play at the park, too. But Uncle Jack is counting on us. We promised to visit, so that's what we'll do."

WELLNESS

Make exercise exciting

Exercise can increase your child's energy. That helps in a lot of areas, including school. Try these fun ideas:

- **Have a silly contest.** For example, who can hula hoop for the longest time?
- **Travel in new ways.** Instead of driving to the store, consider walking.
- **Do something new.** You might try yoga or bowling. Ask your child for suggestions.



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