

Elementary School Parents[®] make the difference!

Sample Issue

Study finds three ways to help your child succeed in school

Parents want their children to do their best in school. But what works? A study by researchers at Indiana University found that children do better in the classroom when parents:

- 1. Are positive.** You know that your child is sensitive to your emotions. Not surprisingly, the study found that to also be true for parents' attitudes about schoolwork. Parents who thought their child could do an assignment successfully had a child who believed that, too. In addition, the study found that encouragement from a parent led a child to be more motivated. Model positive attitudes, and your child will copy them.
- 2. Break it down.** A long assignment can overwhelm your child. One of the easiest things you can do to help is to break that big task into smaller pieces. The study found that when children worked at a task they thought they could handle, they did better at it.
- 3. Teach the importance of a final check.** One of the best habits to



instill in your child is to look over his work before handing it in. Oops—he added when he should have subtracted. He wrote *their* instead of *there*.

Correcting these minor mistakes can lead to a much better overall grade. In addition, the study found that children who were in the habit of checking over their work were more likely to volunteer to answer questions in class.

Source: Anne Dopkins Stright and others, "Instruction Begins in the Home: Relations Between Parental Instruction and Children's Self-Regulation in the Classroom," *Journal of Educational Psychology* (American Psychological Association, www.apa.org/journals/edu).

Be specific when talking about respect



The best way to get your child to show respect is not by talking about an abstract idea that

may be hard for her to understand. Instead, try talking about very specific actions she can take to show her respect.

For example, when your child interrupts, you might say, "When someone else is talking, it's respectful to listen until the person is finished. Then you can take your turn."

You can also ask if your child can come up with specific behaviors that would show respect. "What can you do to show your teacher respect?" Your child could raise her hand, complete homework on time and pay attention in class.

Later, when your child has done something respectful, help her make the link. "I loved the way you showed respect when Mr. Jones called. You carefully wrote down the message so I knew when to call him back."

Source: Paula Denton, "The Power of Our Words," *Educational Leadership*, September 2008 (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, www.ascd.org).

Set aside 'parent-kid' time every day to stay connected as a family



Make a commitment to carve out a little time that is "parent-kid" time each day. If you have more than one child, look for time alone with each.

Think about your day. If your child catches the school bus, turn that short walk to the bus stop into your regular time together. Could you spend a little extra time as you

tuck each child into bed? Could you have a "tea party" with your child after school? Invite one child at a time to help you prepare dinner. You can chat while you chop the lettuce.

These small chunks of time, when you're relaxed and have no agenda, will become very important. They may be the time when your child opens up and tells you what's really going on in her life.

Make sure attending school is a top priority for your child



Your child's teachers will do their best to help your child learn and succeed in school. But there's one thing *only you can do*—

get him to school every day.

Children who don't attend school regularly fall behind and score lower on tests. They can have a hard time making and keeping friends—especially in elementary school.

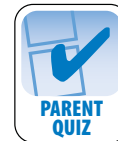
A study of the nation's fourth graders, conducted by The U.S. Department of Education, showed that almost one in four (19 percent) had been absent from school three or more days in the last month.

Show your child and his teachers that you know attendance counts:

- **Tell your child** how important school is.
- **Make dental** and other appointments during non-school hours.
- **Don't let your child** skip school for reasons that wouldn't prevent you from going to work.
- **Avoid taking your child** out of school on exam days.
- **Keep track** of your child's absences. See if there are any patterns that need to be changed.

- **Discuss the consequences** of missing school. Not understanding. Needing to do make-up work. Missing out on friends.
- **Talk to the teacher** if your child regularly doesn't want to go to school.

Do you encourage your child to work independently?



Does your child need your help with homework everyday? If so, you may need to help her become more independent.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are fostering self-reliance:

- ___ **1. Do you tell your child** that you believe she can do it?
- ___ **2. Do you help her break big** projects down into smaller pieces?
- ___ **3. Do you remind her** of the importance of effort?
- ___ **4. Do you ask her questions** when she gets stuck?
- ___ **5. Do you sometimes offer** small treats to keep her motivated?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your child learn how to work on her own. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

Elementary School **Parents** make the difference!

Elementary School Edition

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Help your child to work through challenges for school success



It's hard to get anywhere without perseverance. In fact, many of the world's most admired people (including Albert Einstein

and Abraham Lincoln) could not have succeeded without it. To help your child develop a work ethic that will last through school and life:

- **Talk about perseverance.** List examples of not giving up, such as finishing a tough homework assignment, learning to ride a bike or continuing to play a game when you're losing.
- **Find role models.** Name people who exemplify perseverance. They might be friends, relatives or famous people, such as Benjamin Franklin. Discuss their lives. Describe their traits.
- **Act it out.** What does it look like to persevere? Role play stories, such as *The Little Engine That Could*.

- **Draw a picture.** Have your child think of a time when he persevered even though it was tough. Suggest that he draw a picture of what worked for him.
- **List "success stoppers."** What keeps people from pushing forward? (Negative attitudes are a good example.) How can you and your child avoid these pitfalls?
- **Admit being human.** No one is perfect. Everyone must work through challenges. Help your child see that he has what it takes, no matter what.
- **Make a plan.** Choose sensible goals with your child. Believe that he'll succeed. Be supportive, and turn mistakes into lessons. He may need to start over, and that's okay!

Source: Leah Davies, M.Ed. "Instilling Perseverance in Children," Meet Kelly Bear, www.kellybear.com/TeacherArticles/TeacherTip58.html.

Q: Homework is a hassle—for me! First my fourth grader and I argue about when to start. Then he says he did his reading at school. Next he "doesn't understand" the math. What can I do to reduce both my son's frustration and mine?

Questions & Answers

A: Homework hassles can affect the entire family. You can eliminate them using these four simple steps:

1. **Establish a homework time.**
Don't fight about when he'll do his homework. He will benefit from a routine. Some kids work best right after school. Others do better if they work right before or after dinner. Give him some choice in the matter—but once he picks a time, that's it. Homework is as routine as brushing his teeth.
2. **Insist that homework time happens every day.** This will solve the problem of "I did that at school." What if he says he really, truly has nothing to do? He can read ahead. He can do extra math problems for practice. But he will spend that time doing something that will help him do better in school.
3. **Ask your child questions** when he says he doesn't understand something. For example, instead of explaining the math, ask, "How did you solve that last math problem? Could you do that here, too?"
4. **Don't ever do his work for him.** One way the teacher sees how much your child is actually learning is by checking his homework. If you do the work, she may not know if she needs to reteach something.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

Teach your child to think about the consequences of behavior



Children often don't think about the results of their actions. So they don't see how leaving trash for someone else

to pick up is disrespectful.

Here's an easy game to play with your child to help her understand that all behavior has consequences:

You think of a sentence about a simple event. For example, "The baby cried." Now have your child think of the reason this might have happened. "Because her sister yelled."

Then you (or another player) tell what could happen next. "They had

to quiet the baby down, so everyone was late for school."

This is a good game to play when you're in the car or waiting in a line. It should help your child think about two important questions: What came *before*? What will happen *after*?

Then when you see your child doing something without considering the consequences, you can ask the questions: "What do you think will happen if you just leave your trash sitting there? What will be the consequence?"

Source: Deborah M. Plummer, *Anger Management Games for Children*, ISBN: 9781-8431-0628-9 (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, www.jkp.com).

It Matters: Working With Your School

Engage in your child's learning to be involved



Your child's class needs field trip chaperones, and you can't go again. Or the teacher asks for classroom volunteers, and you have to work.

Your child is disappointed, and so are you. "How can I be part of my child's education?" you wonder.

Thankfully, there are countless ways to engage meaningfully in your child's learning—right at home. You can:

- **Communicate with the school.** Many schools have websites through which you can email the teacher and others. Keep up to date with school events and talk with the teacher about progress, questions and concerns.
- **Learn with your child.** Review and discuss assignments and school activities. Relate school-work to real-life interests and experiences, such as figuring out how to save allowance for a toy. Try new things, such as visiting a museum or critiquing a television show.
- **Set personal and family goals.** What would your child like to achieve this year? Consult the teacher for ideas and make step-by-step plans.
- **Volunteer.** Ask the teacher about volunteer work you can do at home. Consider how your skills might benefit the school and your child's class. If you're a great organizer, you might recruit or schedule other volunteers.

Source: "100 Ways for Parents to be Involved in Their Child's Education," Connecticut PTA, www.ctpta.org/parenting/100_ways.htm.

Support your child's school by encouraging your child to read

Reading is so important that most elementary school teachers assign it every day for homework. Supporting your child's reading is an excellent way to support the school, too.

To encourage daily reading:

- **Read together.** Your child may enjoy reading to you or taking turns reading chapters. Make reading part of your after-school routine.
- **Use the library.** Have your child sign up for a library card. Each week, she can browse and check out new books.
- **Offer suggestions.** Think about your child's interests. Find books or articles about them. Ask the librarian for help.
- **Create a reading nook.** Some kids love to read anywhere. But a cozy reading spot can make reading more appealing.



- **Start a series.** When there are several books about the same character, kids may keep reading, book after book.
- **Discuss books.** Show interest in your child's opinions. Join—or start—a book club.
- **Talk with the teacher.** Ask about your child's reading progress and suggestions for improvement.

Source: Elizabeth Kennedy, "How To Encourage Your Child to Read," About.com, <http://childrensbooks.about.com/cs/forparents/ht/encourageread.htm>.

Do you know what teachers really need from parents?



It's the little things that can make a big difference. Especially when it comes to supporting your child's learning.

Here's what teachers say they wish parents would do:

- **Build your child's confidence.** Before he leaves for school, give your child a hug. Give him praise when he makes you proud.
- **Send your child to school with a healthy lunch.** A well-balanced diet fuels your child's brain.

- **Ask about your child's day** when he comes home from school.
- **Help your child with homework,** but never do it for him!
- **Schedule some peaceful time** for your child in the evenings. Your child can use that time to read.
- **Partner with your child's teacher.** Share concerns with the teacher in private. Never criticize the teacher in front of your child.

Source: Mimi Doe, "10 Ways for Parents to Help Teachers," National PTA, www.pta.org/2543.htm.