

Elementary School Parents

Sample Issue

make the difference!



Engage your child in reading for pleasure to boost skills

If your child gets “engaged” in what he reads, he’ll be more motivated to read and become a better reader.

Being engaged means being totally absorbed. Engaged readers enjoy reading for its own sake. In fact, research from the Center for Applied Special Technology says your child can’t become engaged unless he enjoys reading.

To make reading more enjoyable:

- **Provide a quiet, pleasant place** in your home for your child to read. Include shelves for books, a comfortable chair and good lighting.
- **Take your child to the library or bookstore.** Help him select books that interest him.
- **Get your child books** related to his favorite movies and TV shows.
- **Give your child reading material** that’s just for fun—joke books, baseball cards, newspaper comics.
- **Let your child subscribe** to a children’s magazine. Or join a children’s book club. It’s exciting for your child when these arrive in the mail.
- **Let your child stay up later at night** to read. He’ll view the extra 15 to 30 minutes of reading time as a treat.
- **Continue reading with your child.** Inspire him to tackle longer books by reading the first chapter with him.

Source: Kenneth Shore, *The Parents’ Public School Handbook: How To Make the Most of Your Child’s Education, From Kindergarten Through Middle School*, ISBN: 0-671-79498-1 (Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).

Use the six E’s to teach about responsibility



You can help your child develop the trait of responsibility by using the six E’s:

1. **Explain it.** Talk about what responsibility means. Give some examples.
2. **Examine it.** Look for examples of responsibility. Did a character on a TV show take responsibility for his actions? Point it out and talk about it.
3. **Exhibit it.** Your personal example is still the strongest way you teach.
4. **Encourage it.** Help your child think about ways she can be responsible. She could pick up her room every day. Be sure you notice and praise her. When she does her homework without nagging, say something.
5. **Expect it.** Set rules and consequences. Now that she knows what you expect, make sure she follows through. Make sure there are consequences if she doesn’t.
6. **Evaluate it.** How is she doing? After a few weeks, talk again.

Source: Thomas Lickona, *Character Matters*, ISBN: 0-743-24507-5 (Simon & Schuster, 1-877-989-0009, www.simonsays.com).

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.

Are you helping your child get off to a good start?



Help your child lay the foundation for a successful school year by getting off to a good start.

Answer *yes* or *no* to each statement below:

___ **1. I read with my child** every day. Research shows that children who are read to each day do better in school.

___ **2. I help my child** finish assignments on time. I help her make a chart and check off completed work.

___ **3. My child** has a routine for doing homework—same time, same place every day.

___ **4. I have met** my child's teacher.

___ **5. My child** has a regular bedtime so she gets enough sleep.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are starting this year on the right track. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

Elementary School **Parents** make the difference!

Elementary School Edition

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Ask your child to use a notebook to track homework assignments



“Do I have math homework? I can’t remember!”
Sound familiar?

Get your child off to a great start this school year by teaching him to use a homework notebook.

Any small notebook will do. When the teacher gives homework, your child should write answers to three questions:

1. **What is the assignment?** Finish problems one through 10, write a book report, learn spelling words.
2. **What do I need to do it?** Take home my spelling list. Bring home some graph paper. Bring home my history book.
3. **When is it due?**

Source: Bernadine Hoffman, *Successful Homework Habits: A Parent’s Guide*, ISBN: 1-420-83114-3 (AuthorHouse Publishers, 1-800-839-8640, www.AuthorHouse.com).

Help your child set attainable goals for a successful school year



Want your child to be a self-motivated learner?
To start a school project well before the due date?
To finish schoolwork on

time without your having to bribe or nag?

Then take time now to teach your child the “fundamental success skill” of goal setting. Take these steps:

1. **Explain what a goal is.** It’s something your child shoots for—like a football player trying for a touchdown. Goals often start as dreams or wishes. For dreams to come true, your child has to work hard.
2. **Give your child a “Goal Notebook”** in which to record his goals, progress and achievements.
3. **Help your child make a “dream list”** of short-term goals—things he’d like to have, do, achieve or improve this day, week or month. Goals might be about friends, hobbies, sports, exercise, savings or new skills. Encourage him to also think of school—homework, behavior, reading, grades, etc.
4. **Select one goal** and write it down using this simple formula—I will (do) (what) + (when). For example,

I will spell at least eight of the 10 words right on my next spelling test. I will learn all the state capitals this month.

5. **Make sure the goal is achievable.** It should be within your child’s control and ability. He should have enough time and resources to do it.
6. **Plan for success.** Help your child decide what steps he’ll take and when to achieve his goal.
7. **Track progress.** Each time your child takes a step toward his goal, have him mark his effort in his goal notebook. Give him a sticker.
8. **Celebrate success.** Take pictures. Have a “victory dinner.” Say, “See what you can do when you try!”

Source: Michele Borba, *Parents Do Make a Difference: How to Raise Kids with Solid Character, Strong Minds, and Caring Hearts*, ISBN: 0-7879-4605-2 (Jossey-Bass, 1-888-378-2537, www.josseybass.com).

“All children with high self-esteem ... come from homes where there are guidelines and structure, enforced with love.”

—Dr. John Q. Baucom,
*Simple Secrets of Parenting:
Easy as ABC* (Child & Family Press)

Q: My daughter is in fifth grade. This year, her three best friends have another teacher. She says she has no friends in her class and she hates school. Should I ask if she can be moved to the other class?

Questions & Answers

A: Kids learn lots of lessons in school. One lesson your daughter will learn this year is that she won’t always get to choose the people she works with.

She may feel like it is the end of the world, but you can help ease her mind by:

- **Talking about your own life.** Have you ever had to work with someone you had to learn to like? Share that story with your daughter. Let her know that learning to make friends with new people is a skill she’ll need when she goes to middle school.
- **Talking with the teacher.** Will there be times when the two classes work together? Does she have any other ideas about ways your daughter can make friends in this class?
- **Spending some time in the classroom,** if you can. The teacher will be glad for your help—and you can see how kids interact. Perhaps your daughter will find another girl who loves horses as much as she does. Or there might be someone in the class who once played on a soccer team with her. Suggest that she spend some time with those students.

Remind your daughter of the old song: “Make new friends, but keep the old.” She’ll always be friends with the girls in the other class. But this year, she’ll have a chance to make some new friends, too.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Discipline

Try using logical consequences to teach your child



It's 9:00 a.m. when the phone rings. "I forgot my lunch," your fifth grader says. What do you do?

If it's the only time he's ever left his lunch at home, and if you know he has a big test that afternoon, you might take the lunch to school. But what if this is the second time this week?

You might try using logical consequences. Allow your child to learn from his mistakes. Stay calm and don't lose your temper. But don't take the lunch to school, either. "Honey, I told you that if you left your lunch again, I would not bring it to you. I'm sorry, but I can't do it today."

This statement works because it is:

- **Related to what your child did.** If he forgets his lunch, he may have to be hungry for a day.
- **Respectful.** You didn't tell your child he was an idiot. You didn't yell at him. You simply told him that you were not able to bail him out this time.
- **Reasonable.** Denying a child lunch for a week would not be reasonable. Letting him miss lunch for one day is. Have a healthy snack waiting when he walks in the door.

Remember, logical consequences help your child manage his behavior.

Source: H. Stephen Glenn and Jane Nelsen, *Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World*, ISBN: 0-914-62992-1 (Prima Publishing, 1-800-733-3000, www.randomhouse.com/index.pperl).

Keep cool, remain calm when your child talks back to you

In elementary school, children's complex thinking skills kick in. Your child may start questioning rules and wondering if she really needs to listen to you.

She might begin sassing or talking back to you. If you let your child sass you, she'll probably be rude to her teacher and other adults, too.

Don't let back talk become a habit. The next time your child has a quick retort like, "Duh!" "Yeah, right!" or "You can't make me!":

- **Don't snap back.** Your anger gives your child satisfaction. She gets attention for her antics.
- **Analyze the communication.** Is she responding in defense to something rude you said or did to her? Did she mean to be rude?
- **Don't get derailed** into a side argument. Acknowledge your child's feelings, but stick to your



initial request. "I know you'd rather play, but you need to do your homework—now."

- **Talk about back talk later.** Discuss ways people insult each other. Teach better ways to comment on what you don't like. Warn that future rudeness will have a consequence.

Source: Irene Daria-Wiener, "No More Back Talk," *Parents Magazine*, July 2002 (Meredith Corp., 1-800-727-3682, www.parents.com).

Work with your child's teacher to correct school behavior



When your child brought home the note from her teacher, you never expected to read: "She is disruptive in class."

Instead of getting angry with your child, try a Daily Behavior Chart.

Meet with the teacher. Let her know that you want to work with her to solve the problem and ask for her help. Most teachers are happy to work with parents who are trying to solve problems. Explain what you will do at home to follow through.

Together, draw up a list of three things she wants your child to work on. Then create a form for the teacher. Each day, she answers *yes* or *no* to questions like these: Homework turned in? Homework done correctly? Behavior in class acceptable?

Each day, have your child bring home a copy of a signed form from the teacher. Praise your child when the reports are good.

Source: Larry J. Koenig, *Smart Discipline: Fast, Lasting Solutions for Your Peace of Mind and Your Child's Self-Esteem*, ISBN: 0-066-21239-1 (HarperResource, 1-800-242-7737, www.harpercollins.com/hc).