

Elementary School Parents[®]

Education Service Center Region 15

make the difference!



Help your child get this new school year off to a great start

It's the beginning of the school year—the perfect time to set the stage for learning success. Help your child get off to a great start with these simple strategies:

- **Get a head start.** Many families find that organizing at night prevents morning “rush hour.” You can review school papers, pack and refrigerate lunches, set backpacks by the door and agree on outfits.
- **Establish sleep routines.** Choose reasonable bedtimes so everyone is rested when it's time to wake up. Make sure everyone sticks to their bedtimes.
- **Develop morning habits.** If your child does the same things (in the same order) each morning, it's less likely that she will forget a step. For example: make bed, get dressed, eat breakfast, brush teeth and put on shoes.
- **Choose a homework time.** With your child, pick a time when she will have the most energy and motivation to do assignments. Create a quiet study spot (complete with necessary supplies) where she can work at the same time each day.
- **Use tools for organization.** Teach your child how to use calendars, to-do lists and a filing system for schoolwork and important papers.
- **Set priorities.** Schedule things like schoolwork, family meals and even free time on a calendar. Treat them like appointments. If there are open blocks of time, your child can add activities.

Family meals can lead to school success



Busy schedules can make it hard to find the time for family meals. However, studies show that kids who eat meals regularly with their families earn better grades. They are more likely to talk with parents and are less likely to use drugs and alcohol.

This school year, strive to eat dinner as a family at least once a week. To get the most out of family meals:

- **Ask for help.** Get your child involved in planning and preparing the meal.
- **Turn off the TV** and keep cell phones off the table.
- **Talk about everyone's day.** Ask each family member to share something that happened that day.
- **Keep the conversation positive.** Don't use this time to lecture your child about something. Make family meals and dinnertime conversations something the family looks forward to!

Source: A. Dolin, M.Ed., “How Family Dinners Improve Students' Grades,” Educational Connections, Inc., niswc.com/elem-meals.

Teach your child to persevere when faced with challenges



If your child has a goal he wants to reach, such as earning an “A” on a project or making the travel soccer team, achieving it will probably take hard work. And there may be times your child will feel like giving up. That’s why it’s important to teach him to persevere, even when things are difficult. Here’s how:

- **Discuss past successes.** Did your child save to buy something with his own money? How did he do it? What did success feel like? What did he learn?
- **Choose a fun, realistic goal.** Make it something your child is likely to complete soon. If he wants to read an entire series of books, start small. Have him set a goal to read the first book. Achievement is a great motivator to keep going.

- **Listen for ideas.** Kids often mention goals without actually setting them. (“I’d love to be in the talent show” or “I hope I finish my report on time.”) Together, create a step-by-step plan for success.
- **Be a cheerleader.** Say things like, “You are really sticking with this. I’m very impressed!” Even if your child misses the mark, praise his efforts. Trying hard and learning from mistakes is a major accomplishment.

“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.”

—Thomas Edison

Keep the television out of your child’s bedroom to boost success



Would you like your child to sleep better at night and earn better grades? There’s a simple way to achieve this: Don’t allow her to have a television in her bedroom.

More and more researchers are finding that televisions in children’s bedrooms can cause real problems. It makes it easier for kids to watch more television—without parents even knowing. Time spent watching TV is time not spent on other activities, such as reading and playing outside.

Kids with TVs in their rooms score lower on math and reading tests. Researchers think it’s because these

kids are more likely to be distracted during homework time.

TV can also interfere with sleep. Kids may watch an extra program before turning off the set. The next morning, they’re tired and aren’t able to focus in school.

Start this school year off on the right foot. Take the TV out of your child’s room. And remember: Kids can also watch television shows and movies on laptops and tablets. So set firm limits on electronic devices and remove them from your child’s room at night. Your child will sleep better and her grades just might improve!

Source: C. Canapari, M.D., “Get That Television Out of Your Kid’s Room. Now.” Yale-New Haven Children’s Hospital.

Are you making read-aloud time the best it can be?



Time spent reading aloud is critical to helping kids become better readers. It’s also fun! Are you making the most of your read-aloud time? Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you have** a regular read-aloud time with your child that lasts at least 20 minutes each day?
- ___ **2. Do you make** read-aloud time fun for your whole family by taking turns picking books you want to read together?
- ___ **3. Do you sometimes stop** to talk about what you’ve just read or make predictions about what’s about to happen?
- ___ **4. Do you let your child** take a turn reading aloud to you?
- ___ **5. Do you stop reading** at an exciting place so you’ll both want to read again the next day?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you’re making the most of the time you spend reading aloud with your child. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

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Give your elementary schooler the right kind of homework help



Homework is a vital link between home and school. Teachers give homework to help children understand and review classwork. Parents find out what their child is studying by being involved in homework.

But being involved does not mean doing your child's homework *for* her. That gives the teacher a false reading of your child's progress. Plus, it prevents your child from building confidence in her ability to do the work herself.

Here are better ways to help your child do well with homework:

- **Make sure she understands** assignments. Look over the instructions together. Then

have her explain the assignment to you in her own words. Ask questions to check understanding.

- **Review homework every day.** Even if you're not present when your child does her homework, always ask to see it. Your interest sends the message that homework is important.
- **Don't let your child** become too frustrated. Encourage her to take a break if you notice she's struggling. Then help her with what is frustrating her.
- **Ask your child** to show you homework after it has been corrected at school. Praise her for correct work. Then notice where she's having problems and focus your help on those areas.

Q: My son struggled with math last year and now he says he hates it. I can't really blame him, because I'm not good at math either. How can I help him develop a better attitude?

Questions & Answers

A: Research shows that parents' attitudes about math have a lot to do with how well their children do in math. Kids who enjoy math do better in it. Kids whose parents tell them they didn't like math when they were in school, not surprisingly, often have trouble in math.

To help your child develop a positive attitude that will lead to success in math:

- **Be positive.** Let your child know you believe everyone can be successful in math. If you say this often to your child, he'll start to believe it!
- **Avoid stereotypes.** Women can be engineers. Children of all races can be successful in school. In fact, students who are successful in math can go a long way toward breaking the stereotypes that others may hold.
- **Talk about careers.** Young children may decide that being a Ninja Turtle or a Power Ranger is a great career choice. Expand their horizons. Talk about people who use math in their jobs—an airline pilot, a weather forecaster, an architect, an astronaut, etc.
- **Connect math** to the real world. When you and your child go to the store, bank, restaurant, etc., point out all of the ways people use math. At dinner, challenge family members to tell one way they used math that day.

Promote responsibility in your child with simple strategies



Young children are still developing their ability to store information. So they sometimes forget their books, their homework and even their lunches.

It's tempting to keep track of your child's things for him. But this won't help him in the long run. His success in school will depend on his ability to take responsibility for himself and his belongings.

Here are some things that will help him become more responsible:

- **Write down what you expect** your child to do. Post lists of his responsibilities, weekly chores, and items he needs for school.
- **Ask your child to check off** tasks when he completes them. He can put a question mark next to a task if he needs your help.
- **Help your child figure out** where to store his things when he's not using them.
- **Set a good example.** Have a designated spot for your keys and wallet. Check your calendar to prepare for the next day.
- **Show your child how** to keep track of activities and assignments on his own weekly calendar.
- **Let your child experience** the consequences of forgetting. Don't bring his homework to school if he forgets it.
- **Let your child experience** the consequences of losing an item. If he can't find his library book, expect him to pay the fine.
- **Praise your child** when he demonstrates responsibility and does what he's supposed to do.

It Matters: The Home-School Team

Make attending school a 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

that *only you* can do—get her to school every day.

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

How often a child is absent in elementary school sets a pattern for absences in later school years. Lots of absences often lead to students dropping out of school completely.

Let your child and her teacher know that you take attendance seriously:

- **Tell your child** how important school is. Attending school is her job and it is important that she arrive on time every day.
- **Discuss the consequences** of missing school: needing to do make-up work, missing friends, not understanding.
- **Make appointments** during non-school hours.
- **Schedule vacations** when school is not in session.
- **Keep your child home** from school only if she is sick or there is a family emergency.
- **Keep track** of your child's absences. Look for any patterns that need to be addressed.
- **Talk to the teacher** or the school counselor if your child regularly doesn't want to go to school.

Team up with your child's teacher for school success!

Research shows that parent involvement in education is connected to students' academic success. It's powerful when teachers, parents and students work together! But the family-school relationship is like any other—it requires good communication. Make it a point to:

- **Set the tone.** Introduce yourself to the teacher and exchange contact information. Ask questions respectfully and let her know that you appreciate her work.
- **Role-play.** Some parents are shy about talking with the teacher. Practice asking and responding to questions with a friend.
- **Choose words carefully.** Make polite requests rather than demands. A helpful tip is to use *we* instead of *you*. "How can *we* stay in touch to help Adam?" rather than "*You* need to tell



me if Adam is falling behind." The teacher is your teammate, not your opponent.

- **Be positive.** When you talk with the teacher later in the year, you will likely hear about your child's strengths. But prepare to hear about weaknesses and misbehavior, too. React calmly. Remember: You and the teacher both want your child to do well.

Busy parents can support their child's learning in many ways



Family life is so hectic these days that it may seem impossible to be involved in your child's education. But even on your busiest days, there are things you can do to support your child's learning:

- **Listen and respond** when your child is talking to you.
- **Read together.**
- **Stock your house with books** and other reading materials.
- **Quiz your child** on spelling, math and other facts.
- **Share favorite poems and songs** with your child.
- **Look up words in the dictionary** together.
- **Talk about the daily news.**
- **Find places** mentioned in the news on a map.
- **Review your child's homework.**
- **Go to the library together.**
- **Tell family stories.**
- **Engage in "word play,"** riddles and tongue twisters.
- **Play board games.**
- **Place limits** on your child's recreational screen time.