

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Peter Cooper School
Michael Sutcliffe, Principal

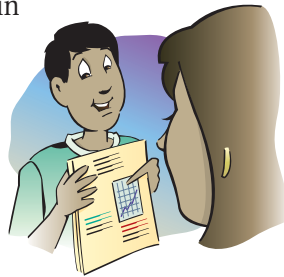
February 2010

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

Your child can be your teacher!

Research shows children are more motivated to learn when they feel capable, connected and in control. Letting your child teach *you* nurtures these feelings. Teaching you also helps your child understand assignments better. It reinforces what he knows and reveals gaps in understanding. To have your child teach you:

- **Show an interest** in what he's learning in class. Have him show you something, explain how something works or read aloud to you.
- **Let him quiz you.** See if you can name the state capitals or presidents. Spell a vocabulary word, or use it in a sentence. Test your knowledge of a science or math fact.
- **Encourage your child** to make flash cards when he's learning new things—new words, definitions, dates, multiplication, etc. Or do this before a test. You read the question on one side and try to answer. He can check your answer on the other side.
- **Ask your child** to help you solve a problem or create something. What should you do first, second, next?
- **Be a good student.** Be curious. Ask lots of *why* and *how* questions.
- **Be impressed.** Compliment your child on what he knows!



Source: Stacy DeBroff, *The Mom Book Goes to School: Insider Tips to Ensure Your Child Thrives in Elementary and Middle School*, ISBN: 0-73432-5754-5 (Free Press, www.simonandschuster.com).

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Good behavior in school starts at home

Every child is special, but a teacher with 25 students can't always accommodate each child's wishes. To promote cooperative behavior, expect your child to:

- **Put things away** after she has used them. Kids who take responsibility at home will also take care of school items.
- **Do some chores.** Could she help clear the table? Take out the trash? Teachers also need children to help the classroom run smoothly.
- **Follow rules.** Kids who follow family rules such as "no TV before homework" are more likely to follow the rules at school, too.
- **Listen when others speak.** Teachers appreciate students who show respect for others.
- **Stick to a schedule.** Children who have regular bedtimes and mealtimes at home often find it easier to fit into a school schedule.

Source: Toni S. Bickart, Diane Trister Dodge, and Judy R. Jablon, *What Every Parent Needs to Know About 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Grades*, ISBN: 1-402-20138-9 (Sourcebooks, Inc., www.sourcebooks.com).

TESTING TIPS

Three questions help your child review tests

Your child studied hard, but she still did poorly on an exam. To try to figure out what happened, ask three questions:

1. **What was** your biggest problem on this test? Did a certain type of question give you trouble? Did you have enough time?
2. **What caused** your problem? Did you follow the directions? Did you spend too much time on one section?
3. **What could** you do differently next time?

Source: Laurie Rozakis, *Super Study Skills*, ISBN: 0-439-21601-X (Scholastic Reference, www.scholastic.com).

WELLNESS

Restock tissues, supplies

At the beginning of the year, you provided your child with school supplies.

During the flu season, provide him with *health* supplies. Make sure he has plenty of tissues.



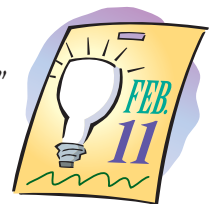
And don't forget to tuck a bottle of hand sanitizer into his backpack (if allowed). Talk about how he can help keep everyone in his classroom healthy.

Source: "Information for Schools/Parents/Students on CA-MRSA," American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org/NEW/MRSA.HTM.

BUILDING CHARACTER

Perseverance pays off

Thomas Edison once said, "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration." He tried and failed many times before he invented the light bulb. Celebrate his birthday on February



11th by talking about the value of hard work and perseverance with your child.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Where has my happy child gone?

Q: My daughter seems to be unhappy and grouchy all the time. She doesn't like school. She doesn't like her teacher. Last week, I asked her to go out to breakfast with me—just the two of us. She didn't want to talk. What can I do to get my happy child back?

A: It's normal for parents to want kids to be happy. And it is draining to be around someone who is always down in the dumps. Here are some suggestions:

- **Listen.** Your daughter has told you that she doesn't like her teacher and that she doesn't like school. Ask her to describe specific situations that upset her.
- **Talk with her teacher.** Ask what she has observed. Is your daughter struggling with a specific subject? What can you do to help your child? You can also consult her school counselor.
- **Be aware of her friends.** Sometimes not liking school has more to do with social relationships than academic struggles. Encourage her to invite a friend to join your family for an outing.
- **Make sure she gets enough sleep.** If she's tired all the time, she is more likely to be grouchy. Establish a regular bedtime.
- **Visit the library.** Ask for a book on coping with preadolescent girls.



PARENT QUIZ

Does your family have clear limits?

Parents who set clear limits actually have to do *less* disciplining—everyone knows where the boundaries are. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're setting effective limits:

- ___ **1. Do you have** clear limits? Have you talked about them with your child?
- ___ **2. Does your family** follow routines, like a regular bedtime and study time?
- ___ **3. Do you plan** ahead? (For example, a tired kid can be a cranky kid—so try to avoid a trip to the grocery store when he's worn out from school.)
- ___ **4. Does your child** know the consequences when he breaks the rules? Are they enforced every time?
- ___ **5. Do you try** to reinforce good behavior? "I like it when you come to dinner without being called."

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're setting clear limits and following through. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment."
—Jim Rohn

WHEN YOU NEED HELP

School counselors help with family problems

All parents want their children to succeed in school. But students from families struggling with a job loss, a divorce or a death in the family may need extra help. If you're concerned about how your child is coping, contact the school counselor for help.

Source: Brenda Melton, M.Ed., "Understanding the School Counselor-Parent Connection," American School Counselor Association, www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=532.

HOMWORK

Supervision is required during homework time

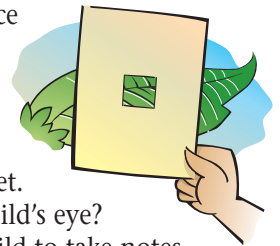
Do you monitor your child's homework? That doesn't mean you actually *do* his homework, but it does mean that you:

- **Ask your child** about his homework.
- **Review directions** to make sure your child understands what is expected.
- **Turn off the TV** and limit other distractions during homework time.
- **Have your child** put completed homework in his backpack to take to school.

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Look in a new window

Scientists often explore the world through a microscope. Have your child cut a 1" square out of a piece of paper. Then put this "window" over interesting things, such as a tree trunk, plant or piece of carpet.



What catches your child's eye?

Encourage your child to take notes, draw what she sees or jot down questions to research. Explain that this is the kind of careful work scientists do every day.

Source: Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Cool Science for Curious Kids, "The 1" Square Project," www.hhmi.org/coolscience/forkids/inchsquare/.

Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editor: Rebecca Miyares. Writer: Pat Hodgdon.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2010, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1013