

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Peter Cooper School
Michael Sutcliffe, Principal

March 2010

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Work together to solve problems

If you have a concern about your child's progress in school, your child's teacher will want to help. Call now to make an appointment. Then, keep these tips in mind to make the most of your meeting.

Before the meeting:

- **Talk to your child.** Ask how she thinks she's doing. Does she understand the concepts being taught? Can she finish work in class? Does she have problems with friends?
- **Take notes** about your conversation with your child. Also write down any additional questions you want to ask the teacher.



During the meeting:

- **Be confident.** You and your child's teacher both want the same thing—for your child to succeed in school.
- **Develop an action plan.** What steps can you take to address the problem? How can you and the teacher work together to help your child? What can you do at home to encourage your child?

After the meeting:

- **Try the teacher's suggestions** for helping your child at home.
- **Stay in touch.** If you are working on a particular issue, meet with the teacher again in a few weeks. Monitor how your child is doing.

BUILDING CHARACTER

'Teachable moments' build character

You've heard it said that you are your child's first and most important teacher. It's true! From measuring ingredients in the kitchen to reading directions for a game, every activity of your day can be turned into a teaching opportunity. That applies to teaching character traits, too.

Suppose you are watching a TV show with your child. Two characters get into an argument. Take a moment to ask your child how the

situation could have been handled differently. How could the characters have resolved their disagreement without shouting? What would your child have done differently?

Use the newspaper, too. Read articles relating acts of kindness and heroism. Ask your child about ways he can help others.

Stay alert for teachable moments. You'll find ways each day to transmit your values to your child.

DISCIPLINE

Timers make tasks easier

Kitchen timers aren't just for cooking. Use one when your child needs to share. ("You can have a turn for five minutes. When the timer beeps, it's your cousin's turn.") They're also good in a rush. ("Let's see if we can clean up before the timer dings!")

Source: Rona Renner, RN, "Using the kitchen timer as a discipline tool," http://abclocal.go.com/kg/story?section=view_from_the_bay/parenting_babies&id=6686728.

ENCOURAGING READING

Choose appealing books

Want to motivate your child to read? Ask yourself three questions:

1. **What are three** things that interest my child?
2. **What are three** adult activities she might like to try some day?
3. **What were the last three** books or magazines that my child enjoyed?



Share your answers with the librarian at your local library. Ask her to recommend books and magazines that will appeal to your child.

TESTING TIPS

A test checklist can focus your child's study time

Preparing for a big test may make your child anxious. To reduce his stress, make a checklist of what to study. It may include:

- **Textbook.**
- **Workbook.**
- **Class notes.**
- **Handouts.**
- **Quizzes.**

Once he knows *what* to study, help him make a schedule of *when* he'll review. Don't let him wait until the night before the big exam.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What can you do about cheating?

Q: My child's teacher called to say my son was caught cheating on a test. I'm very upset and I don't know what to do. What's your advice?

A: It's hard to hear that your child cheated, but it's a temptation faced by most students. It doesn't mean you have a bad child, it just means your child made a poor decision.

Ask your child why he felt he needed to cheat. If he says:

- **He didn't have time to study**, examine his daily schedule. Consider cutting back on one or more of his after-school activities.
- **He didn't understand the material**, talk with his teacher. Ask about your son's behavior in class. Does he listen to the teacher? Does he ask questions? Does he need extra help in the subject? What can you do at home to help your child?
- **He wanted a good grade**, tell him that good grades are important, but not if he needs to cheat. Tell him firmly that cheating is wrong.
- **Other kids cheated, too**, say that you expect him to think for himself and do what's right.

Make sure your son knows that he can tell you if he is struggling with schoolwork. If he has a problem, you and his teacher are ready to help him.



PARENT QUIZ

Are you nourishing learning at home?

Learning opportunities are everywhere. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're making the most of everyday experiences that can build school success:

1. **Do you have** a regular place for homework (maybe the kitchen table)?
2. **Do you demonstrate** basic math skills while cooking? "If the recipe calls for $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of flour and we are making a double recipe, how much flour should we add?"
3. **Do you use** the kitchen to teach science? "If we put a cup of cold water and a cup of boiling water in the freezer, which will freeze first?"
4. **Do you talk** about fractions when folding napkins, slicing apples and dividing a pizza?

5. **Do you read** with your child every night before bed? Do you encourage your child to guess how the story might end?

How did you score? Each yes answer means your home is a learning place. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Always walk through life as if you have something new to learn and you will."

—Vernon Howard

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

Encourage curiosity

Albert Einstein once said, "I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious." Celebrate his birthday on March 14th by taking time to be curious with your child. Read a new book together or try a science experiment with her.

Source: "Albert Einstein," bio4kids, www.biography.com/bio4kids/bio4kids-einstein.jsp.

BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Questions help with math

You may not have been a whiz at math, but you can still help your child with math homework. If he's struggling with a word problem, ask these questions:

- **What are you trying to find?** Have your child read the problem aloud before he responds. He might then say, "I need to find the price for one pie."
- **What are the facts?** "The baker took in \$150.00. He sold 60 pies."
- **What is the math problem?** In this case, $\$150 \div 60 \text{ pies} = \text{price per pie}$.
- **What is the answer?** Your child should be able to say, "Each pie sold for \$2.50."

Source: Ronald J. Dietel, *Get Smart!* ISBN: 0-787-98334-9 (Jossey-Bass, www.wiley.com).

HEALTHY HABITS

Exercise contributes to school success, memory

Studies show that fit children do better in school than their sedentary classmates. They have greater attention and memory skills.

They're faster when completing tasks. They make fewer errors. So build exercise into your child's schedule. Take time for a walk, a bike ride or a jog around the block.

Source: Vanessa Richardson, "A Fit Body Means a Fit Mind," www.edutopia.org/exercise-fitness-brain-benefits-learning.



Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

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