

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Peter Cooper School
Michael Sutcliffe, Principal

October 2009

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

Help link effort to achievement

Two students sat down to do their math. "This is hard," the first one said. "I'm not good in math. I might as well give up now."

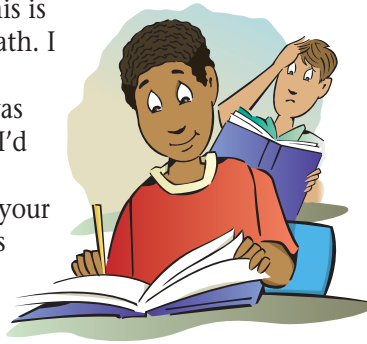
The second child also thought the work was hard. "I can do this if I stick to it," he said. "I'd better get started."

One of the greatest lessons you can teach your child is that putting in time and hard work is worth the effort. Research shows that kids who think they can do something hard if they just stick with it are usually right.

To help your child see the link between effort and outcome:

- **Be a role model yourself.** "Assembling this desk may be difficult, but if we work hard, I'm sure we can do it."
- **Recall times when your child's effort paid off.** "You memorized the state capitals last month and did well on the test. Your work paid off."
- **Celebrate progress.** "You got a B on your math test. That's a big improvement!"
- **Teach your child that hard work is an investment.** "It takes time to learn math facts. But once you master them, you'll know them forever."

Source: Jere Brophy, *Motivating Students to Learn*, ISBN: 978-0-8058-4772-7 (Routledge, www.routledge.com).



DISCIPLINE

Effective parents discipline consistently

You told your child to turn off the TV and start getting ready for bed. But she's still parked on the couch. You may wish a super nanny would come to your rescue, but *you* can modify your child's behavior. Remember these tips:

- **Lectures don't work.** Save your breath. You can be more effective if you use as few words as possible. "Kelly—TV off. Bed—now."
- **Make consequences immediate.** Let your child know exactly what to expect if she misbehaves. Then enforce that consequence, even if you're in public.
- **Be consistent.** How many times has your child begged you to change your mind? "Can't I watch just one more show?" Know what you expect and don't give in. When "no" *always* means "no," your child will stop whining—and start behaving appropriately.

Source: Suzanne H. Stevens, *Classroom Success for the LD and ADHD Child*, ISBN: 0-8958-7159-9 (John F. Blair, Publisher, www.blairpub.com).

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Bolster observation skills

In elementary school, kids begin to observe details they once overlooked. This is the basis of scientific inquiry. Practice together:

1. **Take a close look** at something familiar with your child. It might be your car, the refrigerator or a tree, for example.
2. **See what each of you notices** about it, such as sparkles in the car's paint, a scratch on the refrigerator or ridges in the tree's bark.
3. **Take turns describing** the details you find. Be as specific as you can.

Source: Samuel J. Meisels, *Winning Ways to Learn: 600 Great Ideas for Children*, ISBN: 0-9666-3976-6 (Goddard Press, Inc.).

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Promote school bus safety

October 19 – 23 is National School Bus Safety Week. Have you reviewed guidelines for behavior on the school bus with your child?

Have you observed your child at the bus stop? Teach her to stay at least five giant steps away from the road.

Remind her to wait until the bus driver says it's okay to get on and off the bus.

Source: "National School Bus Safety Week," National Association for Pupil Transportation, www.napt.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=7.



YOUR CHILD AND YOU

Use a pumpkin to review geography with your child

Use a pumpkin "globe" to make learning geography fun. With a magic marker, have your child draw the equator and the continents. The North Pole can be the stem. The pumpkin's natural grooves can be lines of longitude. Ask him to tell you about what he's drawn on his "globe."



October 2009

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents help kids cope?

Q: My daughter is having a hard time. Her best friend moved away over the summer. My husband is on active duty overseas, so things at home are different. What can I do to help her?

A: Your daughter is coping with two significant changes in her life. And there's no question that some kids deal better with stress than others. But you can help.

Remember, she needs your love and support. She shouldn't have to deal with life's stresses alone. Talk with your daughter about how you're dealing with her dad's absence. "I miss Daddy a lot. I know you do, too. I think it would help if we planned something fun to do together."

Talk with her teacher. Ask if there are things you can do at home to boost your daughter's skills and confidence. Be sure your school knows that your daughter's father is on active duty. When teachers know about family changes, they understand why a child may act out at school.

Finally, help your daughter make some new friends. See if she can join a team or club. Not only will she make new friends, but a coach or a leader can be a positive influence in her father's absence.



PARENT QUIZ

Are you building a home-school team?

Research shows that when home and school form a strong team, kids learn more and do better in school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're doing your part to build a home-school team:

- ___ **1. Have you met** your child's classroom teacher at least once this year?
- ___ **2. Do you talk** with your child about school each day? Do you talk about the importance of working hard and doing your best?
- ___ **3. Do you have** a regular time for homework each day? Is the TV turned off during that time?
- ___ **4. Do you make sure** your child gets to school on time each day?

- ___ **5. Do you read** to or with your child every day?
- How did you do?** Each yes answer means you are building a strong home-school team. For each no answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

"What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the soul."
—Joseph Addison

BUILDING CHARACTER

Teach your child how to learn from mistakes

When your child makes a mistake, does he make excuses or blame others? To help him learn from mistakes:

- **Say**, "No one is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes and can learn from them."
- **Ask** him what happened. Did he forget to check his work?
- **Help** him write a story about a problem caused by a mistake he made. How did the mistake happen? If the problem was solved, how? What did he learn from the mistake?

Source: Sandi Sirotowitz, Leslie Davis & Harvey Parker, *Study Strategies for Early School Success*, ISBN: 1-886941-55-6 (Specialty Press, www.addwarehouse.com).

AFTER SCHOOL

Avoid overscheduling

It's natural to want to structure your child's life so she's on a pathway toward success. But too often today, this means signing your child up for one activity after another. To be healthy and happy, every child needs some down-time—time just to play, reflect and imagine.

HOMEWORK

Do a daily homework check

To help your child make the most of homework time, have a daily chat before he gets started. Have him tell you about each assignment. Go over directions in his textbooks. Look at sample problems together. Ask him if the teacher gave him any additional handouts. Make sure he has all the supplies he needs. Then say, "Sounds like you're ready. Time to get started!"



Helping Children Learn[®]

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Erika Beasley & Rebecca Miyares.

Writer: Pat Hodgdon. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.

Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2009, 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