

Elementary School Parents[®] *make the difference!*

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Parker-Varney School
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Teach your dawdling child to be more responsible with time

It's a busy morning. You have to leave the house exactly on time. But your child seems to be set on super-slow-motion.

Adults live in a time-oriented world. You check the time on your wrist watch. You glance at the clock on the bank to be sure you're at the office on time. But kids? Their views of time seem to be a lot more flexible.

You can help your child become more responsible about getting places (like school) on time, if you:

- **Are a good role model yourself.** If you're in a mad dash to get out the door, you're not likely to be able to help your child get ready early.
- **Build in routines that help.** Take five minutes in the evening to prepare for the next day. Create a "launch pad" by your door where you put all those things (keys, gym

shoes, permission slips) that your child will need.

- **Don't nag.** You'll make your child anxious—but you probably won't make her hurry up. Instead, look for concrete actions that will actually make a difference. Help her put on her coat. Pick up her backpack.
- **Make it a game.** Most kids love competition. So challenge your child to put on her shoes before you count to 20.
- **Keep your child on a predictable schedule as much as possible.** It's the best way to help her develop a sense of time. Say, "In five minutes, it will be time for your favorite show." Or, "After breakfast, we'll read a story."

Source: Paula Spencer, *Parenting Guide to Positive Discipline*, ISBN: 0-345-41183-8 (Ballantine Books, 1-800-726-0600, www.randomhouse.com).

Studies show missing school affects success



At the end of the year, it may be tempting to keep your child out of school for a few days. But studies show that missing days in elementary school can lead to problems.

When kids miss school, they miss out. They aren't there when the teacher explains how to multiply fractions. Or they miss the first chapter of the book the class will read.

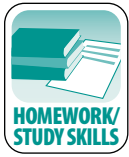
When they come back, they have to work hard to catch up. Sometimes, they feel like they can't get back to where their classmates are. So they give up. Or they drop out.

A research study at Johns Hopkins University found that sixth graders who miss about one day of school a week have a 75 percent chance of never making it to graduation.

Make every effort to get your child to school every day—even as the school year winds down. You could be heading off big trouble later.

Source: Kim Nauer and others, "Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families," Center for New York City Affairs, www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/nyregion/20081021_ATTEND.pdf.

Reinforce the sequence of events with a ball, index cards and tape



Whether your child is reading a story or learning about history, he needs to remember the sequence of events.

This can be a challenge if the author leaves out some details so that readers will have to figure out what happened.

Here's a fun way to help your child remember what happened in the beginning, the middle and the end of a story. You'll need a beach ball, four index cards and some tape. You'll also need to choose a book you want to read together.

On each card, write one of these words: *beginning*, *middle*, *end* and *whole story*. Tape the cards to a beach ball.

Now read the book together. Then play catch. You toss the ball to your child. As he catches it, he reads the

card that is facing him. If it says *beginning*, he has to tell something that happened at the beginning of the story.

He tosses the ball back to you. You share something from the part of the book that is on the card. If either player gets the card reading *whole story*, he has to tell the events of the story in order.

Playing this game all summer is a great way to reinforce reading skills.

Source: The Princeton Review, *Cracking the Second Grade: Reading & Math*, ISBN: 9780-3757-6603-9 (The Princeton Review, a division of Random House, 1-800-273-8439, www.randomhouse.com/princetonreview).

“Live so that when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you.”

—Jackson Brown

Look for signs of bullying and encourage your child to open up



He says he doesn't want to go to school. Sometimes, he comes home with clothing torn. His attitude seems to have changed—he's sad and withdrawn.

Kids often “tell” you they're being bullied long before they can put it into words. But if you suspect your child might be the victim of a bully at school, here are ways to get him to open up about it:

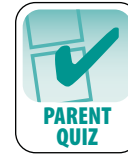
- **Make talking about school** a regular part of your day. Sit down with your child and have him tell you everything that went on. He needs to get into the habit of talking about the good things as well as the bad.

- **Ask questions.** Find out who he sits with on the bus. Who does he play with at recess?
- **Ask him if he's ever seen** any other child being picked on or bullied.
- **Take your child seriously** if he tells you he's being bullied. Tell him that no one deserves to be bullied and assure him that you will help him.

If you learn that your child is being bullied at school, make an appointment to talk with his teacher as soon as possible. Working together, you will be able to solve the problem.

Source: Allan L. Beane, *Protect Your Child from Bullying*, ISBN: 9780-7879-9517-1 (Jossey-Bass, a division of John Wiley & Sons, 1-877-762-2974, www.josseybass.com).

How would you grade your school work this year?



The end of the year is drawing closer. Soon, your child will be bringing home her final report card. Perhaps it's time to take a few minutes to grade your own school behavior.

Kids learn best when schools and families work as a team. Did you do your share? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

- ___ **1. Did you attend** at least one parent-teacher conference this year?
- ___ **2. Did you stay in touch** with your child's teacher? Did you let her know if there were issues or concerns that might affect your child in school?
- ___ **3. Did you help your child** be responsible? Did you have a regular time for homework?
- ___ **4. Did you talk about school** with your child at home?
- ___ **5. Did you encourage your child** to do her best and try her hardest?

How did you score?

Give yourself an A for each *yes* answer. If you didn't earn straight A's, that's okay. Set some goals for the next school year.

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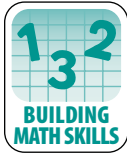
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Look for the math in daily tasks and share them with your child



Most parents read every day. They probably do math, too, although they may not realize it. Math is a natural part of life, and it's important to include your child in daily math activities.

With your child, you can:

- **Take a trip.** Before leaving, measure the air pressure in your car or bike tires. Also calculate how many miles you'll go. If you're driving, how much gas will you use? In the car, say a number between one and 10. Who can find a license plate with numbers that add up to the number you called out?
- **Follow recipes.** When preparing meals, let your child help with weighing and measuring. Discuss sizes, shapes and fractions. Find answers to questions such as, "How could we double this recipe?" and, "When we add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, what do we get?"

- **Go shopping.** Bring a calculator with you and keep a running tally of purchases. Use coupons to inspire math problems also. "If we use this coupon, will the product cost less than other brands?" "Which of these items is really the best deal per pound?"
- **Save money.** Help your child choose a goal, such as saving for a toy. Make a chart to help. How much does he need to save each week? How long will it take to reach the total? Keep track of how well he is doing. Then have fun shopping together!
- **Play math games to relax.** There are lots of fun math games you can play together online. You can also play a few classic games with cards and dominoes.

Source: "Report to Parents: Everyday Activities to Reinforce Math Skills," National Association of Elementary School Principals, www.naesp.org/resources/2/Report_to_Parents/2007/rtp11-07.pdf.

Deal with your child's behavior, avoid yelling in three easy steps



Kids know how to push buttons. They can leave you so frustrated that you want to scream. But you shouldn't.

Your goal in disciplining your child is to get her to change her behavior. You want her to stop throwing the ball inside, or start her homework, or pick up her room. But when you lose control of your emotions, you make it easier for her to ignore you.

The words you use and your tone of voice make all the difference. When you can keep your own behavior calm and under control, you are

dealing with your child from a position of strength.

So before you find yourself in a power struggle, follow these steps:

1. **Take a deep breath** and address the behavior you want changed.
2. **Remind your child** of the consequences.
3. **Offer your child a choice:** She can make the change—or accept the consequences.

By following these steps, you'll stay in charge. And you'll stay in control.

Source: Cynthia Ulrich Tobias, *"You Can't Make Me" (But I Can Be Persuaded)*, ISBN: 1-578-56193-0 (WaterBrook Press, a division of Random House, 719-590-4999, www.randomhouse.com/waterbrook).

Q: My daughter is starting middle school next year. She won't attend the same school as most of her friends. She's very anxious about this move. What can I do over the summer to help her make the adjustment?

Questions & Answers

A: Middle school is a really big adjustment for any child. Instead of having one teacher, your daughter will have several. Instead of staying in one classroom, she will have to move from room to room. Instead of being in the highest grade level in the school, she will be in the lowest.

It is completely normal for your daughter to feel anxious about this transition. You can help her feel a little more confident if you:

- **Sign up for a tour** of the middle school. Just walking around the building and seeing students will give her a better idea of what to expect (and what to wear) on her first day.
- **Buy a combination lock** and have her practice opening it. Lockers are a big source of anxiety. Even if she has to learn a new combination when school starts, she'll feel confident that she can open and close her locker.
- **Remind her** that she won't be the only new kid in her school. Everyone will be starting over. She'll still be able to see her old friends, even if they're at a different school.
- **Check out school activities.** If she can get started on a team (or in the band) over the summer, she'll start school knowing some kids.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Summer Learning

Keep your child reading over the summer months



Research shows that students' reading skills often slip over the summer. But that doesn't need to happen.

Research also shows that when kids keep reading, their skills improve!

To motivate your child to read this summer:

- **Make reading a family event.** Try a variety of fun places to read during the summer—at the pool, the beach, the park or the air-conditioned library. Find one every day and relax with a good book.
- **Listen to stories.** Before leaving on a trip, stop at the library for audio books. These are also great for “No TV” nights. Gather the family and listen to a book on CD. Discuss it afterwards.
- **Visit the library regularly.** Each time your family returns books or magazines, check out new ones. Also ask for a summer schedule. Libraries plan many events that encourage summer reading.
- **Keep reading materials handy.** Leave irresistible items around the house, such as cartoons, kids' magazines and funny jokes. Bring books to pass the time in waiting rooms and in line.
- **Create a scrapbook.** Attach mementos, such as ticket stubs and photos, to pages, and let your child write the captions. Read the scrapbook all summer and for years to come.

Source: “Summer Reading Tips for Parents,” National Center for Learning Disabilities, www.ncl.org/content/view/333/456063.

Inspire journal writing this summer with creative ideas

Your child has an empty journal, just waiting to be filled with incredible summer memories. But he doesn't know where to start. Suggest that he keep:

- **A travel log.** Each time he goes somewhere special—whether it's far away or close to home—he can keep a record by taking pictures, drawing or writing notes. What did he see? Who did he meet? What did he think?
- **An observation log.** Suggest that your child observe something over a period of time, such as a summer vegetable as it grows. Or he can pick something to describe in great detail, such as a bug or an animal.
- **A research log.** Have your child pick a subject he loves, such as skateboarding. Over the



summer, he can research and write about it. What are some cool skateboard tricks? How long are skateboards? Who holds records for skateboarding?

Source: Nereida Llorch, “Writing Through the Summer: 9 Ways to Keep Your Child's Brain Focused (K-5),” MSN Encarta, <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/departments/elementary/?article=summerbrainboosters>.

Don't let your child waste the summer in front of a screen



The lazy days of summer can lead to lazy hours in front of the TV, computer or portable game system. But experts say it's important to limit “screen time.” A good rule of thumb is two hours a day or fewer. To fill other hours in the day:

- **Be the entertainment.** Instead of watching a show, your child can create one! Encourage her to choose an exciting storyline and act it out with friends or stuffed animals.
- **Play classic games.** Fill a bucket with traditional summer toys, including sidewalk chalk, balls, bubble stuff and water sprayers. When the weather is right, take it outside for hours of fun.
- **Go somewhere new.** Become a “tourist” in your area. Imagine you are just visiting for a day, and you want to see the most important local sites. What would you choose?
- **Plan a treasure hunt.** Hide lots of clues, with each one leading to the next. This can be done outside or inside. The last clue should lead to a treasure, such as fruit-juice popsicles or a fun activity.