

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board

September 2005

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How important is parent involvement?

Q: I work full time and it's hard for me to attend school events. My child doesn't seem to care whether I'm there or not. How important is it for me to go?

A: Research is clear on this subject. Parent involvement in education makes a huge difference in your child's school success. So even if your child seems unconcerned about your presence, he's surely affected by it.

This doesn't mean you have to attend every school activity. You might not see a class play, for example, but send in cookies for a party instead.

In fact, many home tasks are associated with higher student achievement. The National Education Association (NEA) strongly suggests talking about school, helping with homework and monitoring your child's time.

According to the NEA, studies also show that the earlier you get involved, the better. You'll see improvements in attendance, behavior and grades. So find simple ways to contribute. Read to your child. Visit the class when you can. Talk with the teacher. Stay connected throughout the school years. Small investments now will yield a lifetime of rewards.

Source: "Getting Involved in Your Child's Education," National Education Association, www.nea.org/parents/index.html.



REINFORCING LEARNING

Help your child identify left & right

Is your child still confused about what is left and what is right?

These activities help:

- **Trace your child's hands** on paper. Help her label the drawings left and right.
- **Make a pattern of dots** on a piece of paper. Then have your child draw lines with a pencil as you tell her, "Move left two dots.

Move up one dot. Move right three dots."

- **Ask your child** what's on her left. What's on her right? Repeat in another part of the house.
- **Cut out pictures** that tell a story from a magazine or newspaper. Then mix them up and have your child put them in order from left to right.

Source: "About Dyslexia and Reading Problems," Child Development Institute, www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/dyslexia.shtml.

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

School attendance is a key factor in school success

When children miss school, they miss opportunities to learn. This can hurt their grades and confidence at school. Research reveals some common family factors that affect attendance:

- **Sleep routines.** Have your child go to bed at a regular, reasonable hour each night. Otherwise she'll be tired—and possibly late—the next day.
- **Transportation.** Help your child arrive at school on time. If she takes the bus, be sure she gets to the bus stop a few minutes early.

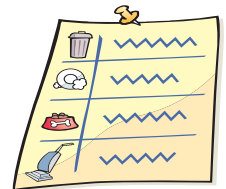
Source: "Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from Research and Practice," NW Regional Educational Library, www.nwrel.org/request/2004june/strategies.html.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Give appropriate chores

Chores help children become confident and responsible. But you have to choose the right ones. Pick tasks that are age-appropriate and easy to understand.

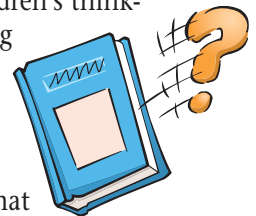
Make a chart with jobs and deadlines. Congratulate your child on his success!



DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Ask questions after reading

Parents can build children's thinking skills just by asking questions. After reading a story, get creative. Ask your child, "Why do you think that character made that decision?" "What would you have done?" "How else could the story have ended?"



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DISCIPLINE

Use classroom strategies to improve behavior at home

Can't get your child to finish homework on time?

Respond to requests? Stay out of mischief? Why not go to experts who help children all day, every day? Teachers! Here's what they suggest:

- **Divide big tasks into parts.** For example, "Look at your assignment sheet. Choose which homework to do first. Check off jobs as you do them."
- **Avoid abrupt transitions.** To help your child switch from one activity to another, set a timer. Explain how many minutes she has left before the next task.
- **Make the mundane fun.** Ask your child, "Can you put these toys away before the song ends?" Or, "How many books can you clean up in 20 seconds?"
- **Try silent signals** instead of verbal demands. A gentle touch on your child's shoulder could calm her down. Making eye contact might get her attention.
- **Provide meaningful things** for your child to do. Keep interesting books and art supplies handy, for instance, to occupy her.
- **Post a schedule for daily activities.** Your child will know what to do and when to do it. She'll also feel more independent. Compliment her self-discipline!



Source: Pamela Kramer, "Teachers' Best Discipline Tricks," *Parents*, October 2002 (Gruner + Jahr Publishing, 1-800-727-3682, www.parents.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Does your family have good habits?

When families have good habits at home, school life is much easier for children. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging important family habits:

- ___ **1. Do you have** at least one meal together as a family each day?
- ___ **2. Do you plan** plenty of time in your schedule for family fun?
- ___ **3. Do you encourage** morning, bedtime and homework routines?
- ___ **4. Do you enforce** important rules fairly and consistently?
- ___ **5. Do you show** love for your child in many ways, such as by

listening carefully and saying, "I love you!"

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're working to make home life routine and reliable. For each no answer, consider ways suggested in the quiz to change your response to yes. You'll see a difference at home and at school.

"A child educated only at school is an uneducated child."
— George Santayana

BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Special math flash cards teach families of facts

Sometimes math facts come in families. When children learn that $7 + 5 = 12$, it's helpful to learn that $5 + 7 = 12$, too. Also, $12 - 7 = 5$ and $12 - 5 = 7$. Try making flash cards that show these facts. For example, write 12, 5 and 7 on the front of a card. How many equations can your child make with these numbers? Note the possibilities on the back of the card.

Source: Ellen Klavan, *Taming the Homework Monster*, ISBN: 0-671-74297-3 (Poseidon Press/Simon & Schuster, 1-877-989-0009, www.simonsays.com).

HOMEWORK

Establish daily routines early in the school year

No matter how smart children are, they still need routines to succeed in school. For example, develop regular nighttime habits. You might pack backpacks and choose outfits before bed, and even put school necessities by the front door. The more prepared your child is, the more relaxed he'll be in class.



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