

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District  
School Board

March 2006

## DISCIPLINE

### React calmly when your child's school calls home

At some point during your child's school career, you may get a phone call about misbehavior. If that happens, how will you respond?

**Barbara Gaulke**, a National Distinguished Principal from Wisconsin, says parents can make things better ... or worse. She suggests that they:

- **Keep an open mind.** Remember that you probably don't know all the facts.
- **Offer to come to school.** A face-to-face meeting with school staff provides a good opportunity for problem solving. A team approach can make a big difference.
- **Respect the school's rules.** Explain that some things might be okay at home, but not at school.
- **Avoid making excuses.** Children need to see that their actions lead to consequences—consequences that may be uncomfortable. They learn from this experience.
- **Don't overreact.** The trouble may be a one-time event. Take it seriously, but remind your child how much you love him.



## BUILDING MATH SKILLS

### Teach multiplication in several ways

Even in these days of computers and calculators, students still need to know how to multiply seven times eight.

When reviewing multiplication tables, remember to help your child:

- **Practice.** Times tables are something every child needs to know automatically.
- **Start small.** Your child may be overwhelmed by trying to learn everything from  $1 \times 1$  to  $12 \times 12$ .

Start with a few facts and then build from there.

- **Begin with familiar ideas.** Start by reviewing equations your child knows. This will improve her confidence and long-term memory.
- **Play "beat the clock."** Give your child 10 problems to solve. Time her to see how quickly she can get them right. Then see if she can beat her record.

Source: Susan Jones, "Learning the Times Tables: Guidelines and Ideas for Practice," [www.resourceroom.net/math/jones\\_tables2.asp](http://www.resourceroom.net/math/jones_tables2.asp).

## AFTER SCHOOL

### Highlight success with homemade magnets

You love to hang your child's schoolwork on the fridge. Here's a way to remind her:



Ask her to make a refrigerator magnet. Find magnetic tape at a craft store and let her attach a small picture or other creation. Use it to display her papers with pride.

Source: Jean Nayar, "Fridge Fashions," Child.com, [www.child.com/kids/toys\\_projects/fridge.jsp?page=1](http://www.child.com/kids/toys_projects/fridge.jsp?page=1).

## MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

### Low grades don't always equal low motivation

Have your child's grades dropped? Don't assume it's his "fault." There are countless reasons for low grades. Social concerns. Learning difficulties. Not understanding a basic concept. Work with the school and your child to identify and resolve problems.

## REINFORCING LEARNING

### Use a 'bug hunt' to teach your child science skills

Bug hunting builds scientific skills (such as inquiry and observation) and creative skills (such as writing and drawing). You and your child can:

- **Look for bugs.** Check different locations at various times of day.
- **Inspect the bug.** Use a magnifying glass to get an up-close look. What does your child notice?
- **Keep a "Bug Journal."** Write down when and where the bug was found. What was it doing? Make a sketch.
- **Do research.** Answer questions at the library or online.



Source: "Bug Hunting for Kids," [http://allsands.com/Kids/Education/bugshuntingkid\\_adc\\_gn.htm](http://allsands.com/Kids/Education/bugshuntingkid_adc_gn.htm).

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

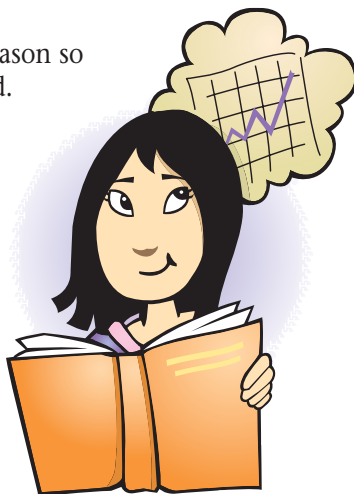
### Does your child study effectively?

**Q: My child studies hard, but she doesn't remember much. How can I help with this?**

**A:** This is a common problem, and it's a reason so many memory "tricks" have been invented.

For example, your child can:

- **Say it out loud.** She should read and recite what she's learning. She can even tell you or a friend about what she studied.
- **Picture it.** Suggest that your child make a picture in her mind or on paper. This may be more memorable than words.
- **Make a mental video.** For example, have her imagine the king and queen of Spain waving goodbye to her as she sails away on the *Nina, Pinta* and *Santa Maria* across her bedroom floor.
- **Associate.** Link information to something she already knows—a word, phrase, rhyme, story, sound, number or experience.
- **Rhyme.** "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." She can even write an entire poem or song.
- **Take self-tests.** Use flash cards and pretend quizzes to check knowledge. Parents and friends can help make up questions.



Source: Sandi Sirovowitz and others, *Study Strategies for Early School Success*, ISBN: 1-886941-55-6 (Specialty Press, Inc., 1-800-233-9273, [www.addwarehouse.com](http://www.addwarehouse.com)).

## PARENT QUIZ

### Are you teaching about good citizenship?

The same qualities that help communities work can help families succeed. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child develop good citizenship.

- \_\_\_ 1. **Do you talk** about rules with your child?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Do you give** your child a say in family decisions?
- \_\_\_ 3. **Do you volunteer** as a family?
- \_\_\_ 4. **Do you hold** your child responsible for his actions?
- \_\_\_ 5. **Do you take** your child with you to vote?

**How did you do?** Each *yes* answer means you're teaching your child about good citizenship. For each *no* answer, try using that idea from the quiz to change your answer to *yes*.

"Ultimately the person, even the child, must choose for himself."  
— Abraham Maslow,  
Toward a Psychology of Being

## MAKING TIME COUNT

### Write special family events on your spring calendar

Family time shows kids they're valued, and this helps them do better in school and in life. To make family events a priority, put them on the calendar in ink. Say, "Our plans are going to be so much fun! Let's write them down."

## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Daily cleanup is not a 'chore'

Some cleaning jobs qualify as chores, such as vacuuming. But cleaning up after yourself is a basic responsibility. When your child makes a mess, he should clean it up before moving on. Make this an expectation at home. Then he's likely to keep it up at school and elsewhere.



## BUILDING CHARACTER

### Help your child learn to deal with disappointment

Everyone is under pressure sometimes—learning how to handle it is part of growing up and part of developing a strong character. Teach your child four steps toward feeling in control:

1. **Stop and focus.** Instead of yelling or crying, tell your child to take a deep breath. This will help her stay calm.
2. **Think.** Tell her to consider how she feels. Parents can help by offering ideas.
3. **Act.** After identifying emotions, choose a response. She should come up with several ideas and pick one.
4. **Review.** Later, talk things over. You might ask her, "When you started playing with Joan, did you feel better?"

Source: Elizabeth Crary, *Dealing with Disappointment: Helping Kids Cope When Things Don't Go Their Way*, ISBN: 1-884-73475-8 (Parenting Press, 1-800-992-6657, [www.parentingpress.com](http://www.parentingpress.com)).

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