

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



May 2016

Title I Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit 10

## There's a lot more to learn this year! Help your child stay focused

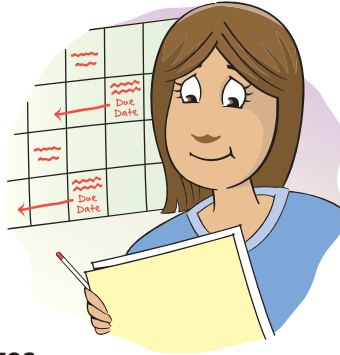
By May, some students are beginning to act as though summer vacation has already started. They "forget" their homework. They stop giving their best effort. They stop trying to improve and start avoiding anything that seems challenging.

But the school year isn't over yet! Students need to concentrate on learning all the way through the last day of school.

To help your child stay on task:

- **Review old homework papers, quizzes** and tests. Use them to talk with your child about how much she has learned this year. Having them close at hand will also be useful as she studies for end-of-year tests!
- **Shape year-end learning around her interests.** If your child has one more book report due, suggest she choose a book on a topic she loves. If she has a social studies project, she should focus on something she is interested in learning about.
- **Show her how to manage end-of-year projects.** Long-term assignments can overwhelm students. So, help your child break a big project down into smaller steps. Teach her this useful rule of thumb: Move the deadline for finishing any big project earlier by two days. If a report is due on Friday, your child should aim to get it finished by Wednesday. That way, she'll have a cushion if something comes up!

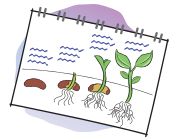
Source: D. Goldberg, *The Organized Student*, Fireside Books.



## Suggest a special journal

Encourage your child to use some free time this summer to start a journal (and build her writing skills!). She could keep:

- **A research log.** Your child can research a subject she likes and write about what she learns.
- **A travel log.** She can record what she sees and thinks when away from home.
- **An observation log.** Your child can describe something over time, such as a growing plant, or describe items in detail.



## Address absence excuses

Attendance is vital to academic achievement. Kids who miss a lot of school are more likely to drop out than those who don't. Here are some common reasons kids miss school—and how to handle them:

- **"My child feels sick."** If he doesn't have a fever and he isn't showing any symptoms, he can probably go to school.
- **"He won't get up."** Set and enforce an earlier bedtime.
- **"He's worried."** Talk with your child. Is it a test that worries him? Help him review. If it's something more serious, talk with the teacher.

## Raise a responsible student

Helping others is a useful way for children to learn responsibility. To nurture your child's sense of service:



- **Model ways to contribute** to the community. Vote. Donate blood.
- **Look for community service** opportunities your child can participate in.
- **Discuss ways she can contribute** to your household. Tailor responsibilities to things she likes to do. Involve her in scheduling. Thank her for her help.



## Add these days to your May calendar

You may have plans to celebrate Memorial Day with your child. Here are some other notable days that offer your family opportunities for learning:

- **May 1—Mother Goose Day.** Take turns reading these classic rhymes with your child.
- **May 4—National Weather Observer's Day.** Go outside and observe the clouds with your child. Or have him cut out weather-related pictures from magazines and make a collage.
- **May 15—International Day of Families.** Show your child that every family member matters by choosing a family goal that everyone can work toward.
- **May 18—International Museum Day.** Talk about the importance of museums to our society. Make plans to visit one with your child, either online or in person.
- **May 21—Armed Forces Day.** Have your child write a letter or draw a picture to thank someone for their military service.



## How can I ease my child's transition to middle school?

**Q:** My son is starting middle school next year. He won't attend the same school as most of his friends, so he's very anxious about this move. What can I do over the summer to help him make the adjustment?

**A:** The move from elementary to middle school is a big transition for any child. Instead of having one teacher, your son will have several. He will have to move from classroom to classroom. Instead of being in the highest grade in the school, he will be in the lowest. It is completely normal for your son to feel anxious. To help him feel a little more confident:



- **Sign up for a tour** of the middle school before it lets out for the summer. Walking around the building and seeing some students will give your child a better idea of what to expect on his first day.
- **Find out if the middle school has lockers.** Have your child practice using a combination lock. Even if he has to learn a new combination when school starts, he'll feel confident that he can manage his locker.
- **Remind your child that he won't be the only new kid** in his school. Everyone in his grade will be starting over.
- **Check out middle school activities.** If he can get started on a team or in the band over the summer, he'll make some new friends and start school already knowing some kids.



## Are you supporting test success?

When it comes to taking tests, how students prepare has a huge effect on their results. Are you helping your child get ready to face important year-end tests? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

\_\_\_ **1. Do you write down** test dates on the calendar and avoid planning big activities on the day before a test?

\_\_\_ **2. Do you encourage** your child to study a little each day instead of cramming the night before a test?

\_\_\_ **3. Do you make sure** your child gets a good night's sleep and eats a nutritious breakfast before a big test?

\_\_\_ **4. Do you have** your child wear comfortable clothing and dress in layers on test days?

\_\_\_ **5. Do you tell** your child that you believe in her and know she will give her best effort?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you're helping your child do her best on tests. For each no, try that idea.*

*"The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own."*  
—Benjamin Disraeli

## Set limits that matter

Parents sometimes have to choose their battles with their kids. But when it comes to improving your child's academic achievement, there are four good reasons for you to set and enforce limits:

- 1. To keep your child safe.** Insist that he stay on the sidewalk when waiting for the bus. Expect him to report bullying.
- 2. To help develop character.** Make it clear that telling the truth is important. Teach your child not to cheat.
- 3. To develop responsibility.** This is a critical trait in school and in adulthood.
- 4. To get along with others.** Students need to cooperate with others and treat them with respect.

Source: B. Maslin, "How to Pick Your Battles," Parenting, niswc.com/battles.

## There's no place like home

To spark your child's interest in learning, become tourists in your own town. Check out the town hall or an exhibit at the local library. Explore a different trail at a park (or hike a familiar one at an unusual time). Whatever you do, help your child see her "same old town" with new eyes.

## Plan summer reading fun

One of the best ways you can boost school success is to keep your child reading over the summer. To make it fun, take a "summer approach" to reading:



- **Match books to summer activities—** sports books for an athlete, camping books for a camper.
- **Change the venue.** Read books at the park or in a tent in the backyard.
- **Watch movies** based on children's books together. Read the books and compare them with what you saw.

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