

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



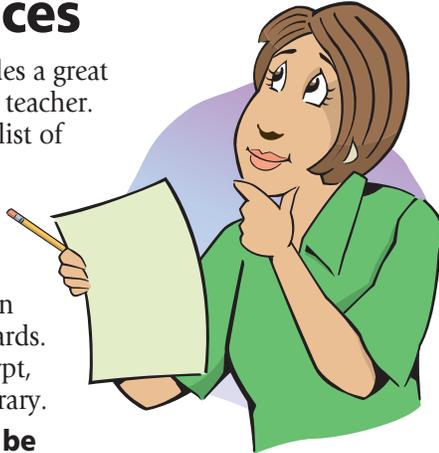
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Educational Service Unit 10

Prepare questions for parent-teacher conferences

Your parent-teacher conference provides a great opportunity to work with your child's teacher. Since the time may be limited, take a list of questions to ask such as:

- **What skills will my child be expected to master this year?** If you know that she's expected to know her multiplication tables, you may want to get flash cards. If she'll do a project on ancient Egypt, you can plan family trips to the library.
- **How will my child's progress be evaluated?** Ask about weekly quizzes, chapter tests and national exams.
- **Will my child have homework?** How much homework should you expect your child to have each night? How long should it take? How much should you help? What should you do if she has problems?
- **What should I do if my child is absent?** Regular attendance is key to a child's success in school, but if your child must miss a day, make sure you and the teacher can work together to keep your child on track.
- **What can I do at home to help?** How can you reinforce skills your child is learning in the classroom?
- **What is the best way for us to communicate?** Exchange email addresses and phone numbers. Find out the best time to contact the teacher.



Help your child make good decisions

It's not too early to allow your child to make decisions on his own. For example, offer:

- **Young children** simple choices: Bologna sandwich or peanut butter and jelly? The red shirt or the one with stripes?
- **Older kids** a wider range of choices: which after-school activity to join, what time to do a chore, how to arrange his room.

Of course, you'll still set the boundaries. He can decide whether to start homework with math or science, but you say he must finish homework before watching TV.

If he makes a poor decision, allow him to experience the consequences. Ask, "What would you do differently next time?" And don't forget to comment positively when he makes a good decision.

Source: Richard L. Curwin, *Making Good Choices: Developing Responsibility, Respect, and Self-Discipline in Grades 4-9*, ISBN 0-76194-634-9, Corwin Press, a Sage Publications Company.

School skills build life skills

Getting along with others helps your child in school and in life. So teach your child to:

- **Use good manners**—to say *please* and *thank you*, hold the door for others, and take turns.
- **Follow the rules**—to listen when others are talking and stay seated during lessons.
- **Respect others**—to be helpful and kind, and avoid gossip.

Source: Hal Urban, *Life's Greatest Lessons: 20 Things That Matter*, ISBN: 0-743-23782-X, Fireside Press.

Questions review writing

Three questions go a long way as you review your child's writing:

1. **Does it make sense?** Read your child's writing to see if you can understand what he's trying to say.
2. **Are paragraphs used correctly?** Each paragraph should focus on one specific idea.
3. **Are sentences correct?** Sentences need a subject and a verb. They should express a complete thought.



Make math time count

Here are some ways you can help your child make the best use of time spent on math homework:

- **Break it up.** Set a timer for 20 or 30 minutes. When the time is up, have your child take a break.
- **Have your child teach you.** Say, "Could you show me how to do long division?" As your child teaches you the process, she'll be reviewing it for herself.





How can parents show that schoolwork is not a race?

Q: My son loves sports and is very competitive. But this love of competition has carried over into his schoolwork. He rushes through every assignment, hoping to be the first one finished—and he doesn't worry about neatness or checking his work. How can I help?

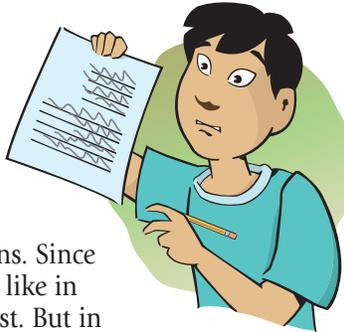
A: Your son has a bad case of "hurry-itis." He turns every task into a competition and wants to be first across the finish line.

First, talk with his teacher. Say you would like to work together on a plan to help your son focus on the quality of his schoolwork.

Then, talk with your son about your concerns. Since he loves sports, use a comparison. Sometimes, like in a race, runners need to get to the finish line first. But in football, when the quarterback is throwing a pass, accuracy is more important than speed.

Explain that doing homework is more like throwing a pass than running a race. Tell him that you're going to help him double check his work each night. If it's not up to standard, you'll ask him to do it over. Eventually you can expect him to double check his work on his own. Your goal is to teach him to be responsible for the quality of his work.

Before long, he'll figure out that when he slows down, he'll get it right the first time—a strategy that is sure to make him an academic winner!



Parent Quiz

Are you teaching perseverance?

Teachers say that today's kids don't always have the skills to cope with life's minor hassles. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child learn to deal with frustration:

1. Do you understand that it isn't your job to protect your child from all of life's ups and downs?
2. Do you encourage your child to stick with tasks?
3. Do you help your child link effort to success by saying things like "It isn't supposed to be easy. But you'll get it if you stick with it"?
4. Do you help your child name her feelings? "You're frustrated that learning to ride a bike is taking longer than you hoped."

5. Do you point out real-life stories of people who have overcome challenges?

How did you do? Each yes answer means your child is learning that she can work through frustration. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."
—Albert Einstein

Enjoy at-home learning

When parents get involved, children are more likely to succeed in school. Reinforcing learning at home doesn't have to be a chore. Make it fun and interesting! With your child:

- **Read aloud.** Find exciting new books at the library. Take turns reading. Be dramatic. Use funny voices.
- **Play games.** Get out your board games, puzzles or cards. While you're enjoying yourselves, you'll develop your child's powers of concentration.
- **Get creative.** Write stories together and illustrate them. You'll create some family keepsakes!

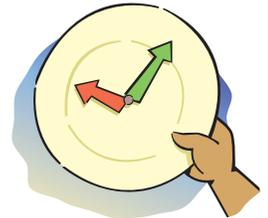
If you suspect bullying ...

Bullying can have serious effects, including problems with emotions and schoolwork. If you suspect your child may be the victim of a bully:

- **Respond with care and love.** Stay calm.
- **Note details about the bullying.** When and where does it occur? Who has seen it? Who is involved?
- **Share your concerns** with the principal or your child's teacher or counselor. They will work with you to help your child.

Take time to tell time

Most schools have clocks with hands and faces—*analog clocks*. Show your child the hour hand and the minute hand. Help your child make an analog clock with a paper plate face and construction paper hands. Then practice telling time every day.



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