

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit 10

## Pack books into your family's plans for the summer

Summer reading doesn't just meet a school requirement. Reading a variety of books over the summer will also help your child keep her reading skills current. And the ability to choose her own books may increase her interest in reading. To help your child view summer reading as more of a joy than a chore:



- **Have books on hand at all times** on topics your child enjoys. She is reading for pleasure, not work. As always, the library is your best friend here. Take your child and let her check out a variety of reading materials.
- **Take books along.** Few families spend their summers at home all day. Wherever you are going, bring books with you. Check out audio books that the whole family can listen to together in the car, too.
- **Find out what the other kids are reading.** Authors such as John Green of *The Fault in Our Stars* and Rick Riordan of the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series have done more than create success for themselves. They've made reading cool again among tweens and teens. Learn about new popular books, and encourage your child to read the ones you agree are appropriate for her.
- **Don't worry about your child** reading books you think are "too easy." Reading that's enjoyable encourages even more reading. When your child reads often, you may find that she moves up to harder material on her own—because she feels confident and capable.

Source: J. Robinson, "Tips for Encouraging Summer Reading," PBS Parents, [niscw.com/packbooks](http://niscw.com/packbooks).



## Attendance now affects success later

As the school year comes to a close, students may be tempted to skip class. But showing up every day, through the last day, is one of the best things your child can do to be successful in school. Here are some attendance facts:

- **Nine is the maximum** number of days your child can miss in a year and still have the best chance for school success and on-time graduation. Try to keep the number as close to zero as possible!
- **By sixth grade,** if your child has regularly missed more than nine days a year, he is at higher risk for dropping out of school than peers who haven't.
- **Excellent attendance history** affects the likelihood of a ninth grader's on-time graduation more than eighth-grade test scores.
- **Missing more than 10 percent** of school days lowers your child's chances of academic achievement significantly.

Source: "Pay Attention to Attendance: Keep Your Child on Track in Middle and High School," Attendance Works, [niscw.com/belownine](http://niscw.com/belownine).

## Discipline promotes safety

During the school year you generally know where your child is and what she is doing during the day. That may not be as true in the summer. Here are some tips:

- **Establish rules.** Where can your child go? With whom and when? Exceptions should be approved in advance. Agree on consequences for breaking the rules.
- **Meet your child's friends.** She shouldn't "hang out" with kids you don't know.

## Energize your child right off the couch

A summertime couch potato can quickly become a school-year slacker. This summer, encourage your child to get up and get moving. Whether it's a daily bike ride, a morning walk or a weekly "family kickball night" in the backyard, offer him ways to get regular exercise and fresh air.



## Sometimes learning can be fun and games

It's fun to play board games as a family. It's worthwhile, too. Board games reinforce skills that inspire learning and thinking. Game-playing teaches your child:



- **The importance of rules** and following directions.
- **Lessons in logic, reasoning** and strategy. This kind of decision making is useful in higher math and science classes.
- **Pattern recognition.** Success with this is directly related to success in math.
- **Flexibility.** A sudden turn of fortune is practice for life's twists and turns.

Source: L. Rodgers, "Board Games That Increase Brain Power," Parenting, [niscw.com/playtogether](http://niscw.com/playtogether).



## How do I help my distracted adolescent focus on school?

**Q:** My sixth grader gets moodier and more disorganized by the day, and I'm worried that his transition to seventh grade is going to be awful. What should I do?

**A:** First, relax. It's normal for many adolescents—especially as they move to seventh grade—to become moody and scattered.

This is partly because seventh grade can be a dividing line between childhood and adolescence. From his changing body to his changing emotions, your child is keenly aware that things are different now.

To help your child weather these changes and thrive in seventh grade next fall:

- **Stay calm.** Your son speaks like an adult one minute and fusses like a toddler the next. What's going on? Puberty. The more you can keep steady—and not freak out—in the face of his changing moods, the better.
- **Hold him accountable.** As always, it's vital that your child understand that actions have consequences. So if he blows off studying, let him fail the test. That has its own consequences. For example, he must stay home on the weekend and study instead of going out with friends.
- **Be flexible.** Lots of things will change in seventh grade, including your child's interests. Be reasonable if he wants to ditch old activities for new ones. Just because he used to love soccer or the clarinet doesn't mean he can't step away from it and try something else.



## Does your child use time productively?

As your child balances end-of-year tests, projects and activities, her ability to manage time is more crucial than ever. And it is a skill she can work on over the summer. Are you helping your child use time wisely? Answer *yes* or *no*:

- \_\_\_ **1. Does your child** have a regular study time?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you urge** your child to do the hardest task first?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you advise** your child to do just one thing if she's having trouble starting?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you encourage** your child to build up to longer sessions by doing two things, then three, before a break?
- \_\_\_ **5. Does your child** have a goal of being able to work for 55 minutes with a five-minute break? Doing this twice

should allow her to finish—and even get ahead—each day.

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean your child is on her way to using her time effectively. For each no, try that idea.*

*“Even as kids reach adolescence, they need more than ever for us to watch over them.”*

—Ron Taffel

## Watch responsibility grow

Your middle schooler is becoming more capable every day. But he can still benefit from lessons in responsibility. To motivate your child to act wisely in and out of school:

- **Let him make decisions.** Think of yourself as your child's adviser, rather than his boss. On matters such as what to wear or how long to study for a quiz, hand him the reins.
- **Allow him to manage his money.** Talk about wise spending. If he burns through his funds and can't afford to see the new movie, don't bail him out. He may be more responsible next time.

Source: M. Purcell, "Building Responsible Kids," PsychCentral, niswc.com/choosewisely.

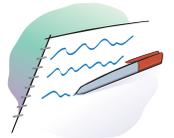
## Expect your child to aim high

Summer may be coming, but your child needs your enthusiasm and high expectations for her schoolwork as much as ever. To keep your child motivated:

- **Show an interest** in what she's learning. Every day, ask what she did in class. And don't take "Nothing" for an answer!
- **Encourage her** to aim high. "You're doing great in science! How about taking honors next year?"

## Writing time gets personal

Journaling offers students writing practice and a chance to consider new thoughts and creative ideas. To get started, encourage your child to:



- **Write about everything** he saw and did on one particular day.
- **Recount something** that made him laugh. Why was it so funny?
- **Describe his ideal day.** How would it differ from his typical day?

Source: J. O'Donnell, "What Your Preteen Can Learn from Journaling," About Parenting, niswc.com/journal.

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