

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents help children deal with mean classmates?

Q: My fifth-grade daughter is very sensitive. Some girls have been saying mean things to her at school. I'm thinking about calling their parents to tell them what's going on. Is this the best way to help my daughter?

A: Fifth grade can be a hard time—and it's especially hard for sensitive kids like your daughter. It's important for your daughter to know that you are her biggest supporter and that she can tell you when she is upset. Here are some things you can do:

- **Encourage your daughter** to ignore the mean girls. Once they know she won't react, they may leave her alone.
- **Give your daughter** plenty of opportunities to talk with you. Listen carefully. If you suspect that she is being bullied, make an appointment to discuss the situation with her teacher.
- **Work with her teacher**, the school counselor and the principal to find a solution. They are trained to handle situations like this. Most schools have rules about bullying. Don't try going directly to the parents of the other girls.
- **Speak with a librarian.** Ask if she can recommend some books that may help your daughter.



BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Avoid overindulging your child

You can overindulge your child if you give him too many things. But sometimes too little can also be a form of overindulging—too little structure or too few rules.

To avoid overindulging:

- **Give your child** only age-appropriate things that are within your family budget.
- **Establish rules** and stick to them. Don't argue about them with your child.
- **Resist doing things** for your child he can do for himself. He can fix his school lunch and keep his room clean. He can do his own homework.
- **Let your child** deal with the results of bad decisions. If he frequently forgets to take his homework to school, don't take it to him. Let him learn about responsibility by receiving a lower grade.

Source: Jean Illsley Clarke, *How Much Is Enough*, ISBN: 1-56924-437-5 (Marlowe & Company, Publishers West, 1-800-788-3123, www.marlowepub.com).

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Expect your child to be in school all day, every day

"It's just one day, Mom," your child says. "Missing one day won't hurt, will it?"

The answer is *yes*—missing school will hurt! Each day's learning builds on what was done the day before, so a child who misses a day has missed an important building block.

Source: Mohonasen School District, "School Attendance: It Matters More Than You May Think," www.mohonasen.org/03parents/MSParent/Attendance.htm.

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

Stick with new resolutions

It's a new year! Has your child made some resolutions? To help him turn them into reality, encourage him to:

- **Be specific.** What grades would he like to see on his report card? What student council office would he like?
- **Write them down.** Have him write his goals on a poster board. Place the poster where he can see it daily.
- **Identify and eliminate obstacles.** If his desk is messy, he won't be able to study well. Help him get organized.



WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Keep cool if teachers call

Your child's teacher wants to talk about your child's behavior. You may be anxious and concerned. But if you stay positive, this can be a great chance to help your child.

Listen carefully to the teacher. What has she seen? Together develop a plan of action—and have set a time for a follow-up talk.



Source: "Making the Most of Mid-Year Conferences," Families Online Magazine, www.familiesonline.com/teachernotemarch2004.html.

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Positive discipline helps promote school success

Research says that parents who are authoritative but moderate get the best results. You are the parent and you're in charge—but be reasonable, positive and flexible.

Positive discipline will build your child's self-esteem. She'll be more curious about learning and willing to cooperate. These qualities will help her succeed in school.

Source: Robin F. Goodman and Anita Gurian, "About Discipline—Helping Children Develop Self-Control," NYU Child Study Center, www.aboutourkids.org/articles/about_discipline_helping_children_develop_selfcontrol.

ENCOURAGING READING

Series stimulate reading

Introduce your child to "series" books—the *Magic Treehouse* books, the *Animal Ark* series, etc. Tell her about a series you enjoyed such as the *Nancy Drew* books. Ask your librarian for suggestions. Get started by reading the first book in the series aloud together.

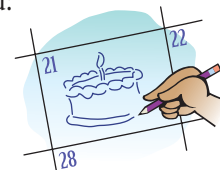
Source: Catherine Sheldrick Ross and others, *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals About Reading, Libraries and Community*, ISBN: 59158-066-8 (Libraries Unlimited, Greenwood Publishing, 1-800-225-5800, www.lu.com).

GETTING ORGANIZED

Use an oversized calendar

January is a great month for giving your child a new calendar. This year buy a BIG one. Then have your child:

- **Draw a little picture** in the box for each day. For example, have him draw a book if he went to the library.



- **Keep a color-coded schedule.** Highlight soccer practice in yellow and music lessons in blue.

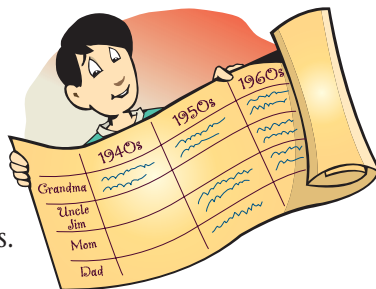
Source: Drew & Cynthia Johnson, *Homework Heroes*, ISBN: 0-743-22258-X (Kaplan, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).

REINFORCING LEARNING

Personalize history with time lines

Does history seem boring and irrelevant to your child? A family timeline can help. Creating one makes history feel personal. Have your child:

- **Collect a roll of paper**, pencils, crayons, glue and a ruler.
- **Make one column on the left** for family members' names. List people he can talk with—people with various experiences.
- **Write ages or eras** across the tops of the pages. For example, "Birth to age five" or "1950s."
- **Turn the time periods into columns** wide enough for descriptions and drawings. He might even include copies of family photos.
- **Discuss what happened to people** throughout their lives. Interview each person separately, if possible. Your child should take notes as he listens.
- **Ask plenty of questions.** "What invention have you liked the most?" "Did you ever attend a political convention?" "Which experiences meant the most to you?"
- **Summarize each person's responses** on the time line. Review it together. Take what your child learns a step further. What parts of history fascinate him? Go to the library together and research them.



Source: Dorothy Rich, *MegaSkills*, ISBN: 0-395-87757-1 (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1-800-225-3362, www.hmco.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Are you helping your child remember?

Teaching children the skills they need to remember things helps them become more responsible. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your child is learning to remember:

1. **Do you ask** your child to repeat important things back to you?
2. **Do you use** checklists to help your child remember?
3. **Do you encourage** your child to keep items in the same place (such as always keeping her backpack by the door)?
4. **Do you give** your child sticky notes to use as memory aids?
5. **Do you make** a game of remembering things (by making up rhymes or sayings)?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you're teaching important remembering skills to your child. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

"What you teach your own children is what you really believe in."
—Cathy Warner Weatherford

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