

Elementary School Parents[®] *make the difference!*

December 2015
Vol. 27, No. 4

Essex Regional Educational Services
Commission Title I Program



Ask questions to strengthen your child's comprehension

Much of your child's school success will depend on reading comprehension. Comprehension is much more than having your child recognize the words she is reading. It means that she also understands the *meaning* of what she is reading.

To strengthen your child's reading comprehension, encourage her to:

- **Summarize.** Talk with your child about the material. Ask her to recall facts (such as characters, setting and plot), but also ask questions that require deeper thinking: What problems did the characters face? How does the story progress from beginning to end? Why did things turn out the way they did?
- **Make connections.** Ask your child what she has already learned or experienced that relates to the story. Is the story like or unlike

others she's read? If the story is about a mouse, for example, what does she know about mice that matches or doesn't match the information in the story?

- **Solve problems.** Ask your child how the characters were affected by one another's actions. Can she imagine things from different viewpoints? If your child took a character's place, would she make the same decision the character made? How might this have changed the story?
- **Apply knowledge.** Ask your child to explain the message or moral of the story. Did the author have a clear opinion? If so, what was it? Does your child agree? How can your child apply what she's read to her everyday life?

Source: "Reading Comprehension and Higher Order Thinking Skills," K12 Reader, niswc.com/elem_reader.

Midyear is a time to review attendance



The halfway point of the school year is approaching. It's time for a mid-year checkup on your

child's attendance.

Researchers in Oregon looked at what happens when students miss as few as one day every two weeks. Here's what they found:

- **School absences add up.** Kids who aren't in school can't learn what's being taught.
- **Missing school** becomes a habit. Students who miss a lot of school in kindergarten are still frequently absent in fifth grade.
- **There is a clear relationship** between early attendance and later achievement. Kids who come to school regularly in the early grades are still doing well in secondary school.

How many days of school has your child missed? It's not too late to get back on track so he can have a successful school year—and school career.

Source: M.H. Buehler and others, "Why Being in School Matters: Chronic Absenteeism in Oregon Public Schools," Attendance Works, niswc.com/elem_attendance.

Show your child how to give meaningful gifts that are free



Many people exchange gifts over the holiday season. While kids enjoy receiving gifts, they also enjoy being able to give gifts. Giving gifts can give your child a sense of pride.

Does your child know that the most meaningful gifts don't have to cost money? They take time and come straight from the heart.

Share a few of the many ways your child can give gifts this holiday season. He can:

- Offer to do chores for an elderly neighbor.
- Record himself reading a book for a younger sibling to read along with.
- Make a list, such as "My 10 Best Memories With Grandpa."
- Do a chore for an entire month without whining.

- Play a favorite game with a family member or a neighbor who is home-bound.
- Record an audio or video message for a loved one who is far away.
- Bake cookies and deliver them to someone who may not receive many homemade gifts.
- Create a calendar for 2016 and decorate it with personalized artwork, one drawing for each month.

Source: B. Taylor, *What Kids Really Want that Money Can't Buy: Tips for Parenting in a Commercial World*, Warner Books.

"It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving."

—Mother Teresa

'Goal strips' can keep your elementary schooler motivated



Your child probably has things she wants to accomplish at home and at school. But she may not always know how to accomplish them.

Here's a simple way to help your child clearly define the steps to her goals and remain motivated to achieve them. Have your child:

1. Cut a piece of colored paper into a strip about three inches wide and 12 inches long. Then fold it into three even sections.
2. Write the words *I will* in the first section.
3. Write one thing she would like to accomplish in the center section: read for 20 minutes.

4. Write when she is going to do it in the third section: *every day*. This formula—*will + what + when*—is a key to staying motivated.

Your child can create other strips with other steps towards other goals. "I will make my bed every morning." "I will study my vocabulary words every Thursday night."

Encourage your child to post the goal strips where she can regularly see them. Looking at them will remind her of what she needs to do and what she wants to accomplish. As she achieves each goal, she should replace the goal strip with a new one.

Source: T. Lickona, *Character Matters: How to Help Our Children Develop Good Judgment, Integrity, and Other Essential Virtues*, Touchstone Books.

Are you helping your child learn family history?



Learning about family roots is a great way to ignite a child's curiosity and bring history to life. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are helping your child learn more about your family:

- ___ 1. Do you share old family photos and family stories with your child?
- ___ 2. Do you prepare family recipes together? Preparing and sharing food is a great way to build traditions.
- ___ 3. Do you encourage your child to ask older family members about their memories of childhood?
- ___ 4. Have you looked on a map with your child to see the country or countries that her ancestors came from? Check out books about those countries when you go to the library.
- ___ 5. Are you keeping a scrapbook to preserve your family's history? Keep photos and letters from older generations.

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are giving your child roots in family history. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

Elementary School
Parents
make the difference!

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1275

For subscription information call or write:
The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit our website: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2015 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.
Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Experts recommend children practice writing at home daily



Good writing takes practice and there's never enough time in school for that.

So experts recommend that students spend 15 minutes a day writing at home.

Learning to write well will boost your child's confidence. She'll be able to express her feelings and ideas. Writing is also key to your child's success in school.

To give your child the regular writing practice she needs, ask her to:

- **Help.** When you write a letter, make a grocery list or decide the dinner menu, dictate it to your child. Have her write the words down.
- **Journal.** Get a journal for your child and encourage her to write in it daily. Suggest she write about things that happen to her and how she feels about them.
- **Make lists.** Ask your child to make lists of things she wants to do or things she needs to remember.
- **Copy.** Encourage your child to write down the words to her favorite songs. Your child may also enjoy copying down favorite quotations or poems.
- **Record.** When you take your child out, ask her to bring a notebook. In it, she should describe what she sees and experiences. Views from the car window or sights and sounds while walking in nature are good places to start.

Household chores offer five key benefits for your child



In early American history, children knew they mattered to the family's well-being.

They made real and important contributions.

Today's children don't always have family responsibilities. And that's too bad. There are significant benefits for kids who do chores—that also carry over into school.

Chores help children:

1. **Become "shareholders."** When your child does some of the tasks that keep the household running, he makes a real investment in your home. A child who swept out the front hall is less likely to walk through it in muddy soccer cleats.
2. **Develop skills.** Each time you give your child a new chore, he not only learns how to do the job,

he also learns skills he'll use throughout his life.

3. **Understand** that the world doesn't revolve around them. We all know people who expect others to clean up the messes they make. Your child won't grow up to become one of those people.
4. **Develop a sense of pride.** If your child is responsible for doing his laundry, having a stack of clean shirts is an accomplishment. He can take pride in what he has done.
5. **See that they are an important part of the family.** Your child will know he is helping to keep your home running smoothly.

Source: W. Sears, M.D. and M. Sears, R.N., *The Successful Child: What Parents Can Do to Help Kids Turn Out Well*, Little, Brown & Company.

Q: I wondered why I wasn't hearing about the school events that other parents knew about. Then I opened my son's book bag. I found crumpled papers, a dirty shirt and a smashed up pack of crackers. His chronic disorganization is affecting his schoolwork—he loses things and can't find what he needs. How can I help him get on track?

Questions & Answers

A: There are costs to disorganization, as your son is already discovering. Luckily, a child doesn't need to be born with a special organizing gene. Organization skills can be taught. Talk with your son about *why* you're going to help him get organized. Wouldn't he like to know where his homework is? Wouldn't he like to be able to find his math folder?

Then follow these three steps:

1. **Have your child** give the book bag a thorough cleaning. He can uncrumple wads of paper. Together you can decide what's important and what can be tossed. (And he can also return the forms his teacher is probably waiting for.)
2. **Make sure he has a binder** or a folder for each subject. Color code them so he can remember that green = science and blue = math. Everything for each subject goes in its folder.
3. **Teach him** that the first thing he should do every day after school is empty his backpack. He can put papers and forms for you to review in one pile, and things he needs to do for homework in another. Your child might never be super organized, but now he'll be able to find his math homework!

It Matters: Building Character

Talk to your child about cheating & why it is wrong



Many parents think cheating doesn't happen in elementary school. But cheating often begins during competitive elementary school games. A child may say she wasn't "out," for example, when she really was. Other kids may think, "No fair! Now I have to cheat to win!" Unfortunately, this leads to more cheating.

Keep in mind that parents play an important role in cheating prevention, and that:

- **Cheating is more tempting** to elementary schoolers than preschoolers, and the pressure increases in middle school.
- **Young kids are confused** about cheating. Research shows that although they believe it's wrong, they also think it might be okay on some occasions.
- **Peer pressure influences** cheating. When a classmate suggests cheating (such as by asking to copy homework), it can be tough to say *no*. Role-play possible responses with your child.
- **Cheating is an ethical issue** that affects more than academics. For example, some people cheat in sports or lie to get a job.
- **Too much pressure from parents** increases the risk of cheating. Let your child know that working hard and being honest is more important than getting a certain grade.

Source: S. Shellenbarger, "How Could a Sweet Third-Grader Just Cheat on That School Exam?" *The Wall Street Journal*, nswc.com/elem_cheat.

Persistence can lead your child to success in school and in life

It's wonderful for students to be talented and smart, but research shows it's just as important for them to be persistent.

Pushing forward—even when it's tough—is a key to success. Whether your child is naturally persistent or gives up easily, it helps to:

- **Discuss persistence.** How has persistence already helped your child? Maybe he learned to ride a bike or play an instrument. What new challenge can he tackle now?
- **Break big goals** into small parts. If your child is determined to get an A in math, support him by discussing steps and helping him develop a reasonable plan.
- **Focus on the process.** Sure, it feels great to see an A on a report



card, but it also feels great to study hard and do well on a test. Even better, it feels great to learn! Talk with your child about his accomplishments and what makes them worthwhile.

- **Compliment your child's hard work**—not just the end results. If he falls short of a goal, that's okay, as long as he tried.

Focus on four areas as you help your child develop character



You want your child to develop her best qualities and share them with the world.

You also want her to connect with other students and thrive in the classroom.

Your child can build the strong character she needs for school success if you teach her to:

1. **Take responsibility.** We're all accountable for our actions. Encourage your child to tell herself, "I can't control others. But I can control my choices and actions."
2. **Be flexible.** Model compromise and negotiation by listening to

others' opinions. Encourage your child to do the same. Remind her that having her way is not as important as doing the right thing.

3. **Show empathy.** Teach your child to imagine how others might feel. This will help her make better decisions.
4. **Be respectful.** Talk to your child about what respectful behavior looks like, at home and at school. For example, she can show respect at school by raising her hand before speaking in class. She can show respect at home by helping out with chores.

Source: K. Ruskin, "How to Raise a Child of Character," *Psych Central*, nswc.com/elem_character.