Elementary School
Parents
make the difference!
Newton County Schools
September 2022
Vol. 34, No. 1



Get the school year off to a great start with productive routines

It's the beginning of a new school year—the perfect time to set the stage for learning success. Try these simple strategies with your child:

- **Get a head start.** Many families find that organizing at night prevents morning "rush hour." You can review school papers, pack and refrigerate lunches, set backpacks by the door and agree on outfits.
- **Establish sleep routines.** Choose a reasonable bedtime so your child is rested when it's time to wake up. Elementary schoolers need between nine and 12 hours of sleep daily. Try to stick to the bedtime on weekends, too.
- **Develop morning habits.** When children do the same things in the same order each morning, it's less likely that they will forget a step.
- **Choose a work time.** Establish a time when your child will have the most energy and motivation to do assignments. Create a quiet study spot, complete with necessary supplies. Your child should work at the same time each day.
- **Use tools for organization.** Teach your child how to use calendars, to-do lists, sticky notes, and a filing system for schoolwork and important papers.
- **Set priorities.** Schedule things like schoolwork, family meals and even free time on a calendar. Treat them like appointments. If there are open blocks of time, your child can add activities.

Help your child build 'intrinsic motivation'



Most parents have used rewards to motivate children at one time or another. And there's no question that reward systems work.

But when the rewards stop, the motivation sometimes stops, too. Researchers have found that students who are motivated *only* by the desire to earn a reward for a good grade rarely do more than the minimum they need to get by.

However, when students are motivated by an inner reward, they are more likely to stick with a task. Students with *intrinsic motivation* learn because they're curious. They retain what they have learned longer, and they earn higher grades.

To foster intrinsic motivation:

- **Have your child think** about an assignment before starting it. "What do I want to learn from this?"
- **Help your child see progress** when working on a big task.
- **Offer positive feedback.**
- **Encourage your child** to use positive self-talk. "I am capable and I will learn this!"

Source: K. Cherry, "Intrinsic Motivation: Why You Do Things," Verywell Mind.

Copyright © 2022, The Parent Institute®

Copyright © 2022, The Parent Institute®

Manage your child's screen time by creating a family media plan



Digital devices are an important part of our world— and can be very appealing to kids. Technology helps your child discover new ideas, connect with others and access educational information for school.

However, too much recreational screen time can negatively affect schoolwork, health, activity levels and face-to-face communication skills.

To help your child strike a healthy balance, experts recommend creating a personalized family media plan that answers the following questions:

- **What devices** do I want my child to have access to?
- **Where will devices** be allowed and where will they be off-limits?
- **How much time** will my child be allowed to use them?
- **Will the same rules** apply during weekends and school breaks?
- **What content** is appropriate for my child to access?
- **How will I maintain** consistency?
- **What consequences** will there be for misusing devices?
- **What example** am I setting through my own use of technology?

Source: *Ways Parents Can Manage Kids' Technology Use,* QuickTip Brochure, The Parent Institute.

"Sometimes you have to disconnect to stay connected. We've become so focused on that tiny screen that we forget the big picture, the people right in front of us."

—Regina Brett

Parent-teacher communication is key for student achievement



Studies consistently show that family engagement in education is linked to students' academic success. When teachers, parents and students work together, anything is possible!

The family-school relationship is just like all relationships—it requires trust, effective communication and respect. To get off to a great start:

- **Set the tone.** Show your interest by participating in back-to-school events. Introduce yourself to the teacher and exchange contact information. Ask how you can support learning at home. Fill out and return school forms promptly. And let your child know that you and the teacher are on the same team.
- **Share information** throughout the school year. Tell the teacher if there are any changes at home, such as a new sibling or a divorce, that may affect your child in the classroom.
- **Communicate respectfully.** Polite requests get better results than demands. A helpful tip is to use the word we instead of you. "How can *we* stay in touch to help Alex?" The teacher is your partner, not your opponent.
- **Remain positive.** When you talk with the teacher later in the year, you will likely learn about your child's strengths. Be prepared to hear about weaknesses, too. React calmly and remember: You and the teacher both want your child to be successful.

Do you encourage your child to work independently?



"Mom, I can't do it. I need help!" Every child makes that plea once in a while. But if you hear it every day, you may need to help your child become more independent.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are fostering self-reliance:

___**1. Do you tell your child**, "I believe in you and know you can do it."

___**2. Do you help** your child break big projects down into smaller pieces that are easier to finish?

___**3. Do you remind** your child of the importance of persistence? "You couldn't ride a bike the first time you tried. But you kept at it. Is there another strategy you could try?"

___**4. Do you ask questions** when your child gets stuck? "What did you learn when you read the chapter?"

___**5. Do you offer praise** when your child finishes work without assistance?

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you are helping your child learn how to work independently. 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: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May.
Copyright © 2022, The Parent Institute, a division of PaperClip Media, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer.
Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

 Copyright © 2022, The Parent Institute®

Begin the school year with a commitment to attendance



Your child's teachers will do their best to help your child learn and succeed in school. But there's one thing that *only you* can do—get your child to school every day.

Children who don't attend school regularly fall behind and score lower on tests. They can also have a hard time making and keeping friends—especially in elementary school.

How often a child is absent in elementary school sets a pattern for absences in later school years. Lots of absences often lead to students dropping out of school completely.

To reduce school absences:

- **Discuss the value** of education and let your child know that school attendance is not optional.
- **Discuss some of the consequences** of missing school, such as needing to do make-up work, missing friends, not understanding new concepts.
- **Follow school rules** for keeping students home due to illness. Don't allow your child to stay home simply to catch up on homework or sleep.
- **Promote frequent hand-washing** to help keep your child healthy and in school.
- **Schedule medical appointments** during non-school hours when possible.
- **Plan vacations** for when school is not in session.
- **Track your child's absences.** Look for any patterns that need to be addressed.
- **Talk to the teacher** or the school counselor if your child regularly doesn't want to go to school.

Source: A. Ansari and M.A. Gottfried, "The Grade-Level and Cumulative Outcomes of Absenteeism, *Child Development*, The Society for Research in Child Development.

High expectations can motivate your child to succeed in school



Don't just *hope* for your child's success—*expect* it! When parents express high, yet realistic, expectations, their children are likely to meet them.

To help your elementary schooler succeed in the classroom and beyond:

- **Don't act surprised** by success. Did your child just bring home a B+ on a super-hard science test? Instead of acting shocked, act like you never had any doubt. "That's awesome! I knew all of your extra studying this week would pay off!"
- **Be supportive.** Never belittle your child for mistakes. Failure happens to everyone sometimes. Besides, plenty of other people in the world will be there to criticize your child. That's why your constant love and acceptance are so vital. Always be your child's "safe place."
- **Discourage "victim mode."** When unfortunate things happen, don't chalk them up to bad luck or a mean teacher. That will make your child feel like a victim who has no control over situations.

  Instead, empower your child to take action. When something goes wrong, talk about the lessons learned. Help your child think about how to handle similar situations in the future.

Source: Y. and S.D. Holloway, "Parental Expectations and Children's Academic Performance in Sociocultural Context," *Educational Psychology Review*, (Springer).

Q: When my eight-year-old gets angry or frustrated, it often results in a tantrum. This is happening at home and at school—and the teacher is asking for my help. How do I teach my child self-control?

Questions & Answers

A: Elementary-age children have more stress in their lives than most parents realize. When they don't have the skills to cope with stress, they may resort to toddler-style outbursts and crying fits.

However, success in school and in relationships depends on your child's ability to maintain self-control.

To minimize temper tantrums, first try to figure out what triggers them. Keep a record of your child's behavior for one week. What happens just before a tantrum begins? Do you notice patterns? Then, help your child avoid some of the situations that lead to stress.

Next, share tools that can help your child manage behavior. When you sense a meltdown, show your child how to:

- **Take a time out.** Have your child walk away from the situation for a five-minute breather. Tell your child, "You may return once you are able to talk calmly."
- **Use calming techniques,** such as breathing deeply, while slowly counting to 10. Encourage your child to say, "I can work through this."
- **Throw it out.** Have your child write or draw the angry feelings on paper and then wad the paper up and toss it away.
- **Talk it out.** Help your child become more self-aware. When things aren't going well, assist your child in recognizing and naming feelings.

Copyright © 2022, The Parent Institute®

It Matters: Building Responsibility

Simple strategies boost your child's responsibility



Young children are still learning how to be responsible students. So they sometimes forget their books, their schoolwork and even their lunches.

It's tempting to keep track of these things for your child. But this won't help in the long run. Success in school depends on your child's ability to be responsible.

To reinforce responsibility:

- **Write down what you expect** your child to do. Post lists of responsibilities, weekly chores, and items needed for school.
- **Show your child how** to keep track of activities and assignments on a weekly calendar.
- **Ask your child to check off** tasks once they are completed.
- **Help your child figure out** where to store things when they are not in use.
- **Encourage self-sufficiency.** Put your child in charge of making lunch, picking out outfits and organizing school supplies.
- **Let your child experience** the consequences of forgetting or losing an item. For example, don't rush an instrument to school if it is left at home. If a library book is lost, expect your child to do extra chores to earn the money to replace it.
- **Set a good example.** Have a designated spot for your keys and wallet. Check your calendar to prepare for the next day.
- **Offer specific praise** when you see your child demonstrating responsibility.

Help your child set goals and take responsibility for learning

Setting weekly goals helps students take control of their learning and establish a clear pathway to success. To help your child set goals and achieve them:

1. **Ask your child to identify** one goal at the beginning of the week, such as learning the new vocabulary words assigned in science class.
2. **Have your child write** the goal on a piece of paper and post it on the refrigerator or bulletin board.
3. **Talk about how to accomplish** the goal. Help your child break the goal down into smaller steps. For example, "You could study and learn three vocabulary words each day."
4. **Check your child's progress** in a few days. If problems arise, talk about possible solutions. If your child falls behind, brainstorm together about ways to catch up.



5. **Help your child evaluate** results at the end of the week. Did your student achieve the goal? Why or why not? Regardless of the outcome, praise your child for trying. Then set a new goal for next week.

Encourage your child to do more than the bare minimum



You asked your child to take the recycling to the curb. It's windy, so your child placed a rock on the papers in the bin so they wouldn't blow all over the street. Congratulations! Your child just demonstrated responsibility and maturity by doing more than the bare minimum.

Talk about other areas where your child can go above and beyond. For example, when:

- **Making a snack** after school, your child can leave the kitchen clean.
- **Using the last** of an item, your child can add it to the grocery list.
- **Pouring the rest** of the water out of a pitcher, your child can refill it.

Encourage your child to do more than what's required at school, too. For example:

- **Read a few extra pages** of an assigned reading.
- **Start a project early,** and go beyond what is expected by including a detailed illustration or a colorful cover page.
- **Work a few extra math problems** to master a concept.