

# Elementary School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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Portsmouth Public Schools  
Simonsdale Elementary

*make the difference!*



## Review the school year with your child & set new goals

It's nearing the end of a busy school year. Your child has learned a lot. She's read new books and she's mastered new skills. Now is the perfect time to talk about all of the lessons she's learned.

Find a time when you can have a relaxing chat about school. You might even plan something special, such as going out for a treat or making a favorite meal together.

During your talk:

- **Take a look back.** What was your child's favorite project this year? In what subject did she improve the most? Which book that the class read was her favorite? Which of her goals did she accomplish?

As she talks about these positive things, help her see the ways she has grown. "You really worked hard to master division this year.

You can do hard things when you put your mind to it!"

- **Take a look forward.** What is your child looking forward to this summer? What is she excited about for next year? Is there a subject or an area she'd like to improve in next year? Are there books she would like to read?
- **Discuss how learning** doesn't stop at the end of the school year. One of the great things about the summer is the opportunity to learn things that aren't directly related to school. Help your child think about something she'd like to learn this summer. Would she like to learn a new sport? Would she like to teach herself how to paint? Would she like to learn a new language? Together, make a plan to help her achieve her goal.

## Try using a chore chart this summer



Summer is a great time to help children become more responsible.

Completing chores

builds responsibility and helps them learn new skills. And believe it or not, studies show that children actually feel happier when they make a meaningful contribution to their family.

Here's how to get started:

1. **Select** age-appropriate chores. An eight-year-old can't climb a ladder to clean tall windows, but he can clean the bathroom sink.
2. **Show** your child how to do the chore. Then watch him do it. Finally, let him do it alone.
3. **Create** a chart. Some chores may need to be done every day. Others may be only once a week. The chart will help your child know exactly what you expect him to do and when to do it.
4. **Make** things fun. Every now and then, add a silly or fun job to the chart, such as, "Go out for ice cream!"

**Source:** E. Kennedy-Moore, Ph.D., "Chores and Children," Psychology Today, niswc.com/chores.

## Community service strengthens relationships & builds character



Busy family life can disconnect parents and children from each other—and from the community.

Volunteering as a family is a great way to change that. It also teaches children about responsibility, compassion, generosity and more!

When making summer plans, try to squeeze in a few volunteer activities. Your family might:

- **Clean a favorite spot.** Inspect places your family spends time, such as your street, a park or the beach. You may be surprised by how much trash and debris is there. Supervise as your family fills garbage and recycling bags.
- **Provide shelter.** Many groups build or improve housing for others. Find one that welcomes kids' help. Your child might sweep, carry items or hand out nails while you hammer.
- **Provide food.** Community food banks are usually in need of groceries and helpers. Homeless shelters and meal-delivery

programs often need supplies.

Your child may be able to collect food and supplies or even make sandwiches.

- **Care for animals.** Call an animal shelter to learn about its needs. If you and your child can't work directly with pets, consider other ideas, such as raising awareness about animal adoption.
- **Make visits.** Find a charity that serves elderly or homebound citizens. They may need company, meals or help with errands. A visit from a child may be more uplifting than anything else.

**Source:** "Community Service: A Family's Guide to Getting Involved," KidsHealth, [nswc.com/community\\_service\\_family](http://nswc.com/community_service_family).

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."**

—Margaret Mead

## Challenge your child to turn off the television & turn on the fun!



Many kids spend hours staring at a TV screen, a computer screen, a tablet or their cell phones. During the summer, those

hours typically increase.

That's why it's critical for parents to set limits on screen time. Experts say the easiest way to do that is by replacing screen time with other fun activities. Here are some ideas:

- **Get a hula hoop.** Even indoors, a hula hoop offers an easy way to

get exercise. Besides spinning the hoop at his waist, your child can also use it as a jump rope.

- **Explore playgrounds.** They offer a number of ways for your child to let off steam—and build muscles.
- **Draw a hopscotch game** on a sidewalk or driveway. Take turns playing.
- **Learn to juggle.** Check out a book on juggling from the library and see if you and your child can teach each other how to do it!

## Do you help your child deal with disappointment?



All kids face disappointments. Are you helping your child learn to deal with them? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question

below to find out:

\_\_\_1. **Have you helped** your child understand what *can* and *can't* be changed? "You can't change the fact that it is raining, but you can change your plans."

\_\_\_2. **Do you help your child** make a positive choice when the unexpected happens?

\_\_\_3. **Do you help your child learn** from mistakes? "Next time, you'll study a little harder and earn a better grade."

\_\_\_4. **Do you have the rule:** You can feel disappointed, but you can't sulk? Your child can control her actions, even when she feels let down.

\_\_\_5. **Do you help your child** figure out solutions on her own—instead of trying to fix problems for her?

**How well are you doing?**

If you answered mostly *yes*, you're helping your child learn how to cope when things don't go her way. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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# Don't let end-of-year projects become a family emergency!



As the end of the school year draws near, teachers often assign large projects.

These can be a way for students to do something creative and have fun while learning. But projects can sometimes drive parents crazy!

Kids may try to put off work on that huge project until the very last minute. Then everyone in the house goes into panic mode to make sure the poster gets made, the costumes are ready and the report is written.

This year, don't let your child's end-of-year project become a family emergency. Here are steps to take:

1. **Make a plan.** As early as possible, sit down with your child to develop a plan for completing the project. Have him write the due date on the calendar. Ask questions about what steps he'll need to take to

get ready. "You need to make a poster. Let's check to see if we have the supplies you'll need."

2. **Make a schedule.** Now help your child figure out *when* he's going to complete each step. Having several smaller deadlines is much easier than waiting and trying to meet one big one. Have him write these dates on the calendar.
3. **Celebrate successes.** Each time your child reaches a goal, help him figure out a reward. This should be small (a favorite dessert, not a trip to Disney World) and something he can mostly do for himself.
4. **Check in.** You'll need to see how he is progressing to help him stay on track.

**Source:** D. Heacox, Ed.D., *Up from Underachievement: How Teachers, Students, and Parents Can Work Together to Promote Student Success*, Free Spirit Publishing.

# What should you do if your child starts using swear words?



At one time or another, nearly every child will use a swear word. Often, kids just try out a word they've heard to see if

they can get a reaction from their parents. It usually works.

Still, most parents don't want to hear this type of language coming from their children. And teachers certainly don't want to hear it in their classrooms!

To encourage your child to use respectful language:

- **Stress your family's values.** You might say, "I know other people may use words like that. But in our family, that kind of talking is not acceptable." Your child

should feel proud to avoid using the inappropriate words she hears around her.

- **Talk about** how those words make others feel. Words can hurt people's feelings.
- **Remind her** that people judge others by their language. If she uses swear words, she will likely develop a bad reputation.
- **Praise her** when she catches or corrects herself. Positive reinforcement is the most effective way to get more of the behavior you want and less of the behavior you don't.

**Source:** "My Child Won't Stop Swearing," Parent News, [niswc.com/swearing](http://niswc.com/swearing).

**Q:** My son struggled this year in fourth grade. He will pass—but just barely. I don't have money to send him to summer school or an expensive camp. But I know he needs help or next year will be worse. What can I do over the summer to help my child catch up so he can keep up next year?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** It sounds like your child has had a rough year. But there are ways to make sure he doesn't repeat it in fifth grade.

Here are four ideas to help you get your son back on track:

1. **Meet with your child's teacher** before the end of the year. Together, lay out a summer learning plan. If he's struggling in math, find out exactly what seems to give him trouble—fractions? Multiplication and division?
2. **Take care of some basics.** Have your son's vision and hearing tested. It may be that he can't see to read the board, or that he can't hear the teacher. So rule out these problems early.
3. **Set some learning goals.** How many books will he read? (Sign him up for the library reading program.) Let him select the books—don't worry if they aren't "classics."
4. **Set aside time each day** to work on school skills. Perhaps the teacher will give you work sheets or an old math book so he can practice.
5. **Have some fun together.** Learning doesn't have to be drudgery! So visit the zoo or a museum. Look for a free concert. All these are ways to keep learning alive!

# It Matters: Summer Learning

## Seven ways to prevent summer reading loss



Your child has worked on strengthening her reading skills all year long. You don't want her to lose them

over the summer! Yet research shows that summer reading loss is a real problem.

Thankfully, there are countless ways you can encourage your child to maintain—and even improve—her reading skills during vacation. You can:

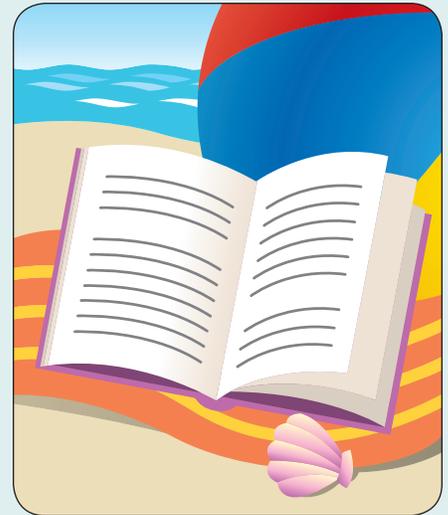
1. **Read together daily.** In addition to reading books, ask for your child's help with following recipes, looking up information online and making lists.
2. **Keep reading materials handy.** Leave comics, magazines, books, newspapers and other materials around the house where your child is likely to pick them up.
3. **Choose irresistible materials.** Look for books and articles about your child's interests, such as sports, art, fashion or even a favorite movie.
4. **Talk with experts.** Ask your child's teacher or a librarian for summer reading suggestions.
5. **Visit the library regularly.** Give your child frequent opportunities to find materials that appeal to her.
6. **Take books with you.** Bring them on trips, into waiting rooms and anywhere else your child might complain, "I'm bored!"
7. **Be creative.** Listen to audio books. Play word games. Visit a museum and read about displays. Start a book club.

## Maintain a consistent schedule over the summer months

Summer is a time to relax—but not a time to relax important routines. Routines help your child cooperate, develop responsibility and become self-disciplined. They also make it easier to adjust when school starts again.

Maintain routines for:

- **Sleep.** During the summer, your child's bedtime and rising time may be later than usual. Once you choose a reasonable sleep schedule, however, stick with it.
- **Reading.** Summer offers extra time for reading. Visit the library weekly and encourage reading every day, including in fun spots, such as the pool or the park.
- **Meals.** Make it a priority to have at least one family meal a day. This is a chance to catch up and enjoy each other's company.
- **Screen time.** Extra free time should not mean more time for TV and video games. Use the guideline recommended by experts—no more than 10 hours of screen time total per week.



## Disguise your child's summer learning with fun activities



Many parents admit that "educational activities" aren't at the top of their summer to-do list—even though they know summer learning (or lack of it) can affect school-year success. One solution is to do things that don't feel like learning. You can:

- **Conduct science experiments.** Find the answers to questions like, "What can we add to water to make an egg float?" "What's the best proportion of lemon juice to water for lemonade?" or "How long does it take for an ice cube to melt on a plate?" Your child can also go online and find more fun experiments to try. A good place to start is [www.sciencekids.co.nz/experiments.html](http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/experiments.html).
- **Combine reading and math.** Many board games use word and number skills. Simple tasks, such as following instructions, reading cards, strategizing and counting points are great practice. Consider taking some games outside. Research suggests outdoor greenery can boost attention, mood and creativity!