

Elementary School Parents[®]

September 2015
Vol. 27, No. 1

Portsmouth Public Schools
Simonsdale Elementary

make the difference!



Promote effective study habits for a successful school year

Helping your child strengthen his homework and study skills is one of the most important ways you can help him do better in school. And the start of a new school year is the perfect time to get started.

Here's how:

- **Choose a regular time and place** for homework. It should be a quiet, comfortable location free from distractions. Stock it with necessities such as paper, pencils and a dictionary.
- **Allow for some free time first.** Many kids need to blow off steam after school by exercising or talking about their days. Many also head straight for a snack. Keep healthy options available that will energize your child for work and play.
- **Postpone screen time.** Watching TV and playing video games are privileges that often take time away from priorities, including reading, homework and chores. Save all screen time for *after* homework and studying.
- **Encourage organization.** Productive studying starts with a to-do list. Older elementary school students should make one each day.
- **Pay attention.** Homework time is a chance for you to learn about your child. Does he excel at reading? Have trouble with spelling? Struggle with multiplication?
- **Be supportive.** Don't ever do your child's homework for him. But do stay nearby to supervise. It's okay to answer questions and guide your child through problems. However, if he needs too much help, talk with his teacher.

Build a strong bond with your child's teacher



Your child's teacher will be a significant person in her life this year. So it's a

good idea for the two of you to build a strong bond. That way, you can work together, share information and head off any problems that may come up.

Make sure you:

- **Attend back-to-school night.** While this isn't the time or place for a long one-on-one talk, it will help each of you put a name with a face.
- **Share information.** There may be things you want the teacher to know. Changes at home (even the birth of a baby) can affect children. So write a note, send an email or ask if the teacher can call you to talk. The more she understands about your child, the more she'll be able to help.
- **Let your child know** you respect her teacher. Your attitude will affect your child's behavior in class.

Source: L. Calkins, *Raising Lifelong Learners: A Parent's Guide*, Addison-Wesley, a Pearson Education imprint.

Encourage your child to take action and promote kindness



Children aren't always kind to one another. They pick on other kids. They say mean things behind people's backs.

But your child doesn't have to accept that unkindness as the norm. Instead, you can teach your child a simple rule: Do something about it.

If your child witnesses a classmate being treated unkindly or left out, help her think through actions she could take. She could:

- **Start a conversation** with the classmate about a book she has read or a school assignment.
- **Ask the classmate** to sit with her at lunch.
- **Compliment the classmate** on something. "Your handwriting is neat," or "I like that shirt."
- **Smile at the classmate.** Sometimes all it takes is a simple smile to make someone's day.

Challenge your child to do at least one kind thing for a classmate each week and ask her to report on what she did—and how it made her feel.

As your child takes these actions, she will learn *many* lessons. She will learn how good it feels to do something positive to help another person. Even more importantly, she will learn that when she sees something wrong, she doesn't have to accept it. Instead, she has the power to make a difference. She can do something about it.

Source: L. and R. Eyre, *Teaching Your Children Values*, Fireside Books, Simon & Schuster.

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."

—Aesop

Too much praise has a negative effect on students' motivation



A new study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* shows that children who receive

too much praise from their parents may develop traits such as vanity, selfishness and self-centeredness. Experts note that too much praise also has a negative impact on students' motivation.

While it's still important for parents to encourage their children, it's more important to make sure praise is:

- **Detailed.** Highlight behaviors you want your child to repeat. "You studied every day for your test and earned an A!"

- **Honest.** You want your child to be able to trust what you say. Rather than saying, "You're the best piano player ever!" try, "You kept working until you got that song right!"
- **Focused on effort.** Support your child's efforts to try new things. Put special emphasis on things your child works hard to do, even if they aren't a big deal to others. Perseverance is something to acknowledge and reward!
- **Meaningful.** Save compliments for times when your child really deserves it.

Source: C. Wilson, "Too Much Praise May Make Kids Narcissistic," *New Scientist*, nswc.com/too_much_praise.

Are you helping your child live a healthy lifestyle?



Children need good health and physical well-being to learn.

Are you setting your child up for success by helping him establish healthy habits? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you enforce** a regular bedtime? Being well-rested will help your child focus in school.
- ___ **2. Do you provide** breakfast for your child? Research shows that students who skip breakfast in the morning don't do as well in school as students who do eat breakfast.
- ___ **3. Do you encourage** your child to eat nutritious snacks, including fruits and vegetables?
- ___ **4. Do you remind** your child that smoking and substance abuse will hurt his health and ability to learn?
- ___ **5. Do you encourage** your child to have an outlet for stress, such as exercising or writing in a journal?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your child establish healthy habits. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

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

For subscription information call or write:
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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.

Do you know how to handle your child's school anxiety?



Last year, your child could hardly wait to get to school. But this year, he doesn't want to go.

At one time or another, many students show some anxiety about school.

Here are three reasons why your child may be anxious—and some ways you can help:

- 1. The work is harder** and he is afraid that he won't be able to figure it out. Each year, the work *will* be more challenging. That's why it's important to reassure your child that he *can* do harder work. Researchers say that brains get stronger with use.
- 2. He is worried about friendships.** It's a sad fact that last year's best

friend may suddenly shift loyalties and leave your child out in the cold. You can't change that. But you can remind your child that he's a great kid who will find other friends. Encourage him to spend time doing things he really enjoys. It's the surest way for him to connect with new people.

- 3. He is afraid of getting bad grades.** Sometimes children who have always earned good grades start to worry if grades slip. Help your child put grades into perspective. Is he doing his best work? Is he learning? That's what is most important. And remind him that his teacher is there to help.

Source: D. Bloch, *The Power of Positive Talk: Words to Help Every Child Succeed*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Improve your child's reading skills by reading yourself!



A parent's example always teaches a powerful lesson.

You can't teach a child honesty if you don't tell the truth. You can't teach a child to eat healthy food if you never eat fruits or vegetables.

The same is true with reading. If you want your child to be a good reader, your own reading habits will make a huge impression.

You can:

- **Show your child how you read** for information. Say, "I'm trying to figure out how to use a new computer program for work. This article explains how it works."
- **Read for a purpose.** Do you take the bus in the morning? Show your child how you use the bus schedule to see when to leave the house. Are you looking for a new

recipe for dinner? Show him how you search online or flip through cookbooks to find one to try.

- **Read for leisure.** When your child sees you reading just to relax, he will realize that reading isn't just for school or work.
- **Share something you're reading.** If there's an interesting story in the paper, read some of it aloud. Print or cut out an article you think your child will enjoy and leave it on his bed. Your child will see that reading is something that is fun to share.
- **Take your child with you** when you go to the library. Show him how rewarding it can be to browse titles and find just the right book.
- **Bring something to read** with you everywhere you go. Your child will see that reading is a constructive way to pass the time.

Q: Our family just moved, and my daughter is starting a new school. At her old school, I was a regular volunteer in her classroom, but I am going back to work and can't do that any more. How can I still provide her and her teacher with help and support?

Questions & Answers

A: There is no question that when parents support their children's education, their children are more successful. However, volunteering in a classroom is just one of many ways you can make a difference. Research shows that the things parents do *outside* the classroom can actually have a bigger impact on learning.

First and most importantly, let your daughter know that school is the top priority. You can do that in several ways:

- **Set a schedule** that allows plenty of time for her to get homework finished.
- **Have conversations** with your daughter about what she's learning in school, followed by positive comments. Simply saying, "That sounds really interesting. I hope you'll tell me more" will motivate her.
- **Make time for reading.** Take turns reading parts of a book aloud. And sometimes, try reading the same book and then discussing it.

Although you can't be a regular class volunteer, there may be things you can do at home to support her teacher. Just ask! Perhaps you could type up a roster of class phone numbers, cut out a display for a bulletin board or coordinate supplies for an upcoming class party.

It Matters: Responsibility

Chores can build responsibility and confidence



How do your child's chores compare to ones you had at his age? According to a recent survey, kids aren't

required to do as much today as they were in the past. That means today's kids may lack chances to develop traits that could help them in school and throughout life.

When adding chores to your fall schedule:

- **Choose carefully.** Pick jobs that are challenging yet manageable for your child. Remember that everyday responsibilities, such as putting toys away, aren't "chores."
- **Schedule chore time.** Write chores on your family calendar and post where everyone will see.
- **Limit rewards.** If you give your child an allowance, separate it from chores. Everyone should be expected to pitch in. Make comments like, "It helps so much when you collect the trash! Thank you!"
- **Make work fun.** Chores should not be intolerable or feel like punishments. Turn cleaning into a game by setting a timer to "beat the clock." Or listen to an audio book or music.
- **Consider advantages.** Age-appropriate chores provide many benefits for your child. Among them are confidence, responsibility, pride, exercise, consideration for others, and more time for family fun!

Source: J. Wallace, "Why Children Need Chores," The Wall Street Journal, nswc.com/chores_study.

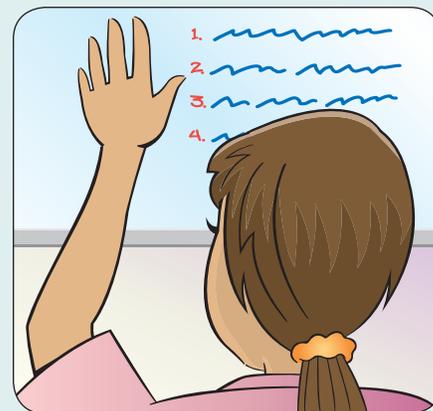
Your child must be in school in order to succeed in school

Your child's most fundamental school-related responsibility is to get to school on time every day.

When kids miss school or arrive late unnecessarily, *everyone* suffers. Teachers spend time collecting makeup work and re-teaching. Meanwhile, other students—who are ready to learn—must wait.

Research shows chronic absence (missing 10% or more of school days) hurts success in school. To prevent it, families can:

- **Stick to a schedule.** Help your child develop habits that prepare her for school each day.
- **Schedule carefully.** Make medical and other appointments during non-school hours when possible. School should be a priority when planning family trips, too. If your child must be absent, work with her teacher to help your child complete makeup work.



- **Seek help when needed.** Many problems contribute to missing school. If your family struggles with health, transportation, work, child care or other issues, talk with school staff. Our shared goal is to help kids get to school and do their best.

Source: H.N. Chang and M. Romero, "Present, Engaged, and Accounted For," National Center for Children in Poverty, nswc.com/attend_research.

Four strategies help students take responsibility for learning



While your child is a student, learning is his job. To do it well, he has to be an active learner—one who takes action instead of just listening. For example, he needs to:

1. **Arrive prepared.** It's not enough just to show up for school. It's also important to get a good night's sleep, eat a nutritious breakfast and bring necessities.
2. **Participate in discussions.** Your child should ask questions, offer

opinions and exchange ideas with others.

3. **Stay organized.** Help your child create a system for organizing assignments and other materials. Have him collect a few classmates' phone numbers. When he's absent, he can call to find out what he's missed.
4. **Be persistent.** Support your child as he tackles assignments and studies for tests. Show confidence that his efforts will pay off!