

Elementary School Parents[®]

Hough Street School
Mrs. Lori Wilcox, Principal

make the difference!



Develop strategies to get this school year off to a good start

The start of a new school year is the perfect time to develop strategies to help your child have a successful year. Here are four strategies to try:

1. **Schedule a regular time** and place for doing homework. On days when your child doesn't have homework, she can read a book or prepare for an upcoming test.

2. **Set limits on screen time.** There's a link between how well kids do in school—especially in reading—and how much time they spend in front of a screen. So set limits on the amount of TV your child can watch and the time she can spend playing video games. If there is a TV or a computer in your child's room, move it to where you can have more control over what she watches.

3. **Reestablish your routines** for bedtime and mealtime. Over the summer months, these may have relaxed a bit. Remind your child that she will do better in school if she is not over-tired. Set a bedtime that allows time for reading before it's time for lights-out.

4. **Choose quality, not quantity,** for after-school activities. Too much scheduled time is stressful for kids and families. Help your child choose one or two things she really enjoys. This will leave her time for school work, family activities and unscheduled play—all of which are things children need.

Source: National Association of School Psychologists, "Helping Children Transition to a New School: Tips for Parents in Tough Economic Times," NASP Online, www.nasponline.org/educators/transition_newschool.pdf.

Build a strong bond with your child's teacher



Your child's teacher will be a very important person in his life this year. So it's a good idea for the

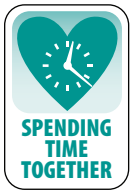
two of you to build a strong bond. That way, you can work together, share information and head off trouble before it ever starts.

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 his 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.

Use the 'quilting bee' model to spend time with your child



There was a time when groups of people got together to make a quilt. They all had a job, they all sat in the same room, and they all worked

toward a common goal.

At the end of the day, they had a quilt to keep someone warm. But what was just as important was that they also talked with each other.

Today, most people don't take part in quilting bees. But the model can give you a good way to spend more time with your child. Working together on a project is a great way for you and your child to find a relaxed time to talk.

The key is to remember that the focus is on communicating with your child. If you get angry because

your child isn't doing it "right," you'll close off communication completely.

Here are some "quilting" activities you could schedule:

- **Prepare food together.**
- **Wash the dishes.**
- **Build something**—from a bookshelf for your child's room to a model airplane.
- **Paint your child's room.**
- **Volunteer together.**
- **Work on a craft project.**

Source: P. McGraw, *Family First*, Free Press.

"Too often we give children answers to remember rather than problems to solve."

—Roger Lewin

Encourage your child to take action and promote kindness



Children aren't always kind to each other. They pick on other kids. They say mean things behind other 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 him think through actions he could take.

Your child might:

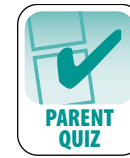
- **Start a conversation** with a classmate about a book he has read or a school assignment.
- **Ask a left-out classmate** to sit with him at lunch.

- **Compliment a classmate** on something. "Your handwriting is neat," or "I like that shirt."
- **Just simply smile at a classmate.** The next day, have your child report on what he did—and how it made him feel.

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

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

Are you helping your child live a healthy lifestyle?



Today, one out of three children in the U.S. is overweight. Those extra pounds put kids at risk of developing health problems, from heart disease to asthma.

Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to see if you are helping your child stay at a healthy weight.

- ___ **1. Do you set a healthy example** by snacking on fruits and vegetables and exercising regularly?
- ___ **2. Do you schedule time** so both you and your child exercise daily?
- ___ **3. Do you make sure** your child has breakfast? Kids who eat this meal are less likely to be overweight than those who skip it.
- ___ **4. Do you encourage your child** to help you prepare meals?
- ___ **5. Do you complete chores** together? It's an easy way to build in some more activity to your child's regular routine.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your child stay at a healthy weight. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

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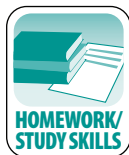
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Promote effective study habits for a successful school year



Homework can be a major source of conflict for parents and kids. But even if study time goes well in your family, it's important to make sure you're covering the basics. Take small, simple steps that promote cooperation and good study habits. Remember to:

- **Choose a regular time and place** for studying. It should be somewhere quiet with no TV or similar distractions. Pick a comfortable spot and stock it with necessities. Kids study better, and with fewer complaints, when they follow a routine.
- **Allow free time first.** Some kids need to blow off steam after school by exercising or chatting. Many also head straight for a snack or drink. Keep healthy options available that will energize your child for work and play.
- **Encourage organization.** Productive studying starts with

a to-do list. Older elementary school students should make one each day.

- **Postpone screen time.** Watching TV and playing video games are privileges that often take away from priorities, including homework, reading and socializing. Save all screen time for *after* homework and studying.
- **Pay attention.** Homework time is a chance for you to learn about your child. Does she excel at reading? Struggle with multiplication? Have trouble with spelling? Work with her teacher to build on her strengths and overcome challenges.
- **Be supportive.** Don't do your child's homework for her. But do stay nearby to supervise. It's okay to answer questions and guide your child through problems. But if you feel she needs too much help in an area, talk with her teacher.

Improve your child's reading skills just 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 find a new design for a scrapbook

page. This magazine article shows how another mom did it."

- **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.
- **Share something you're reading.** If there's an interesting story in the paper, read some of it aloud. Your child will see that reading is something that is fun to share.

Source: M. McTavish, "Constructing the Big Picture: A Working Class Family Supports Their Daughter's Pathways to Literacy," *The Reading Teacher*, February 2007, International Reading Association.

Q: Our family has been through a very hard time. My husband lost his job. We have had to move to a much smaller house in a new school district. These changes have been very hard for my children. How can I help them get a good start in their new school?

Questions & Answers

A: Your family is not alone. Many families are facing difficult economic times. After a big change like the one your family has faced, school can be a place where children feel safe and secure. You are wise to focus on helping your children settle in.

It would be helpful for your children's teachers to know at least some of the story. You'll want the school to be aware that your children may display signs of stress.

"When your children see you connect with their new school, they are more likely to feel a connection as well."

Next, find a way to get involved. Be sure to attend upcoming school events and parent-teacher conferences. Help your children with homework and ask about school every day. If you are able to volunteer, ask your children's teachers if they have any specific needs. When your children see you connect with their new school, they are more likely to feel a connection as well.

Finally, help your children be grateful for what they do have. This positive attitude will carry over into their schoolwork and their lives.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Responsibility

Offer your child opportunities to be responsible



When a new school year begins, responsibilities can feel overwhelming. But your child can probably handle one more task—something fun that reminds her, “I am capable!”

Consider these guidelines:

- **Pick a job your child can handle.** Match the task to her age and abilities. The goal is to give your child an opportunity for her to succeed.
- **Find something meaningful.** What interests her and helps others? It can be as simple as making her own sandwiches or taking out the recycling.
- **Consider relating it to privileges.** If your child has her own room, she should take responsibility for keeping it picked up and clean.
- **Let consequences teach lessons.** Kids learn responsibility from being responsible and failing occasionally. Forgetting to bring her homework to school once or twice may prevent your child from doing it again.
- **Reward responsibility.** It’s natural for good behavior to have positive effects. A child who takes care of her books is likely to get a new one.
- **Take on new challenges.** Once your child has mastered a task, see if there’s another one she’d like to try. You might be surprised by her ideas.

Source: L.A. Brown, “Back to school the perfect time for parents to give kids new responsibilities,” parentcentral.ca, www.parentcentral.ca/parent/education/backtoschool/article/856512--back-to-school-the-perfect-time-for-parents-to-give-kids-new-responsibilities.

Four strategies help your child 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, make comments and exchange ideas with others. It’s especially useful to speak up if something is confusing to him.
3. **Stay organized.** Help your child create a system for organizing papers, assignments and other materials. Also have him collect



a few friends’ phone numbers. If he’s missing an assignment, he can call someone for it.

4. **Be persistent.** School can be tough, and doing well takes work. Support your child as he tackles assignments and reviews for tests. Show confidence that his efforts will pay off!

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



Your child’s most important 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 familiar schedule.** Help your child develop habits that prepare her for school each day.

- **Schedule carefully.** Try to make doctor, dentist and other appointments during non-school hours. School should be a priority when planning family trips, too. If your child must be absent, work with her teacher to complete makeup work.
- **Seek help when needed.** Many problems contribute to missing school. If your family struggles with health, transportation, work, childcare 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, www.nccp.org/publications/pub_837.html.