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Elementary School Parents[®]

Quashnet School

make the difference!



Summer volunteer work can build character & school skills

The world's problems can feel overwhelming. But kids can learn that every person makes a difference, and when people work together, the results are amazing! Summer volunteering is a great way to achieve this—all while building your child's confidence, compassion and talents. This will make her an even better student next year.

Start by discussing:

- **Interests.** What subjects interest your child most? How do they relate to others' needs? If she loves animals, she might help an animal rescue group. If she's interested in business, she might help organize a charity fundraiser. Enthusiasm is a great motivator.
- **Skills.** Your child's strengths, such as baking or reading, can be gifts to others. She might hold a bake sale or read to younger children. Sometimes it's fun to learn new skills, too, such as how to help with landscaping or home repairs.
- **Needs.** Perhaps you've noticed a park that needs sprucing up. Or maybe a homeless shelter needs food. Your child's school may even need help over the summer. Find out who's organizing volunteers. You are likely to find lots of volunteer opportunities in your community.
- **Schedules.** Volunteering takes time, and busy families only have so much of it. Set realistic goals that leave room for other priorities. Depending on your commitments, you might volunteer just a few hours here and there—or take on one large, exciting project!

Pay attention to how you say *no* to your child



Kids who understand that they can't always get their way have a much easier time

in school. Help your child learn how to deal with disappointment by paying attention to how you say *no*. For example:

- **Pause** before saying anything. Say, "Let me think about this for a minute." This will help your child see that you are listening.
- **Think out loud.** Children need to see how adults make decisions. "If I let you go to Mason's house to play, we won't have time to eat dinner together."
- **Acknowledge** your child's feelings. Sometimes, just saying, "I know you're disappointed" can help.
- **Give a "fantasy" OK.** If your child wants an expensive toy and you can't afford it, say, "I wish I could get that for you. But it is not in our budget." This may lead to a plan to save money for the toy.

Source: "Positive Ways to Talk and Listen," PBS Parents, www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/strategies.html.

Reflect on the school year with your child & celebrate success



The last few weeks of school can make a positive difference in how your child does next year. Now's the time to look back, look forward, give thanks and celebrate. Here's how:

- **Talk to your child's teacher.** Get her thoughts on your child's strengths and weaknesses. How has he improved? Where does he need more work? Ask what you can do to help him this summer.
- **Talk to your child about the school year.** Ask what he thinks went well during the year. Help him figure out what changes he should make next year.
- **Review your child's successes.** Look over schoolwork you've saved during the year. Point out how much he's learned—how many new words, for example.

Or how he can add and divide.

Or how his writing has improved.

- **Help your child list learning goals for the summer.** Guide him, based on what you've learned from his teacher.
- **Encourage your child to thank** those who have made the year a good one—the teacher, bus driver, food service worker, etc. This will help him appreciate how many people have helped him. Help him write thank-you notes to them.
- **Celebrate with a special activity** and enjoy some one-on-one time with your child.

"It is not what is poured into a student that counts but what is planted."

—Linda Conway

Review sheets can help your elementary schooler ace tests



Sometimes kids forget they have a test, they study the wrong material, or they study for the wrong type of test.

To avoid such surprises, help your child come up with a strategy for test review—a routine to follow for every test. Help him create a test review sheet that includes:

- **The date of the test.**
- **The test content.** Will it be a quiz on definitions? Will it cover a specific chapter or class activity?
- **The type of test.** Will it be multiple-choice, true-false or an essay test? Knowing the test type should affect how your child studies for it. He'll need to know more

about a term if he has to use it in an essay, for example, than if he simply has to match a term with a definition.

Tell your child it's important to ask the teacher for this information. He should also follow any review guidelines provided by the teacher.

The review sheet should also include your child's plan for reviewing for the test. Which days will he study? What times? What reference materials will he use?

Also encourage your child to think of study strategies he'll use. Will he review a study guide? Highlight class notes? Make flash cards? Prepare sample test questions? Study with a buddy?

Are you planning a healthy summer for your child?



Kids who stay active during the summer months are more likely to go back to school ready to learn. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are you making plans to keep your child active and healthy over the summer:

___ **1. Have you talked** with your child about the kind of exercise she enjoys? Whether it's biking, walking, shooting hoops or swimming, there's a form of exercise for everyone!

___ **2. Have you mapped out** some routes for family walks?

___ **3. Have you researched** kids' activities that will be offered at community centers, pools or parks?

___ **4. Have you set limits** on TV time? During commercials, challenge everyone to move!

___ **5. Have you helped** your child set personal fitness goals for the summer.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're on track for a healthy summer. And that will mean a better start to the school year in the fall. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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The time you spend with your child leads to academic success



What if someone told you they knew about an investment that was sure to pay off? Well, there is one: Research has shown that the very best investment you can make as a parent is to spend time with your children.

A recent study followed more than 10,000 children. It looked at what factors were most important in helping them achieve—both at school and at home.

Surprisingly, they found that what happened at home was much more important than what happened at school. They noted that families could help children develop positive attitudes and skills that could help them be successful in school.

To build these positive attitudes and help your child achieve:

- **Talk about school** and why it's important. Show your child how what she is learning now will help her later in life.
- **Visit the school.** Continue to attend as many school activities and meetings as you can.
- **Check homework.** Be sure your child does the work and then gets the homework back to school the next morning.

What happens in school is important, too. And when schools and families work together, kids are most successful. The researchers said that both school and family are important. But “the role of family involvement is stronger when it comes to academic success.”

Source: “Parenting More Important than Schools to Academic Achievement, Study Finds,” Science Daily, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/10/121010112540.htm.

Avoid daily homework battles with research-tested strategies



The last school bell has not yet rung. But somehow, your child has already decided to go on summer break and is struggling to stay focused on her homework.

Many parents say that their kids act like summer vacation has already begun—long before the year ends.

Here are some research-tested ways that you can help your child with homework:

- **Stick to a schedule.** Perhaps you've let a regular homework time slide a little. Get back to a regular time every day.
- **Help your child get organized.** Does she have to hunt down a pencil before doing her math?

Has her little sister taken her notebook paper for her art project? Keep supplies in one place.

- **Break it down.** Don't let her get overwhelmed by a long task. Break it down into small chunks.
- **Talk about it before she starts.** Help her think aloud about what she has to do. Then she can make decisions about how to best use her homework time.
- **Recognize effort.** Give her a high five or a hug for sticking with her homework until it's finished.
- **Remind her to put it in her backpack.**

Source: Harvard Family Research Project, “Parental Involvement in Homework: A Review of Current Research and Its Implications for Teachers, After School Program Staff, and Parent Leaders,” <http://tinyurl.com/n3j7z6>.

Q: My sixth grader is usually very well-behaved. But lately, he has been acting out at home and at school. He's heading to middle school next year and I know he's anxious about that. Could this be why he's causing so much trouble? I'm at a loss about what to do.

Questions & Answers

A: When kids are anxious, they tend to act out with the people they feel the closest to—usually parents and teachers. Transitions are hard on all kids, and even harder on some. The move to middle school can be a scary time. Your son has a lot of worries: Will he still see his friends? Will he be able to do the work?

These fears are likely what's causing his misbehavior. Letting him get them out in the open will be a first step in dealing with them.

Here's how to help:

- **Talk with your son.** See if you can get him to start expressing his fears out loud. A low-key approach usually works best, especially with boys. To open up a conversation, you might say, “I bet you're wondering about who will be in your classes next year.”
- **Address his concerns.** Once he begins to talk about his worries, you and his teacher can start to address them. Perhaps the teacher can lead a few class discussions about Life in Middle School. Or, if your son knows someone who is already at the school, he can ask him about what it's really like.
- **Remind your child** that he still needs to follow the rules at home and at school.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Summer Learning

Six educational field trips to take with your child



"I'm bored!" Do you dread hearing this phrase over the summer? Then start planning now! In addition to

stockpiling supplies, such as books, recipes and games, schedule a few field trips. Local educational destinations are often free—and fun—to visit! Consider going to:

1. **Museums.** Call or go online to check upcoming exhibits. Which would your child like to see most? Add them to your summer calendar.
2. **An arboretum.** Kids love walking through gardens, admiring flowers and learning about habitats. Bring a camera or sketchbook to capture the plants and animals.
3. **The zoo.** This trip is almost always a hit with kids. Before leaving, you might read about the animals you'll see. Talk about what they eat and how they spend their time.
4. **A fire station.** Call ahead to see if a summer "open house" is planned. If not, request permission for a special visit.
5. **An airport.** Simply driving by the airport is interesting. Can your child spot the control tower? Planes taking off and landing?
6. **Parks.** Find a guide to local parks and keep it handy. Consider visiting hiking trails, historic battlefields and more. Add a nature guide and maybe even some binoculars, and you're ready for an adventure any time!

Make summer reading sizzle for your elementary schooler

Research shows that when kids don't keep up with reading over summer, they can lose up to three months of learning—and feel the effects for a long time! Fortunately, this doesn't have to happen.

To encourage summer reading:

- **Plan a book swap.** Invite kids to a book-trade event. If a child donates two books he has read, he can exchange them for two books he hasn't read.
- **Research a topic.** Think about your child's hobbies and interests. What would he like to learn? Maybe he wants to identify stars at night, learn to camp or become a firefighter. Find books about subjects he loves.
- **Join a reading program.** Summer learning programs have



been shown to increase kids' self-confidence, motivation and academic success. Ask the local library about a reading program your child can attend.

- **Be creative.** Remember that *all* kinds of reading materials help to maintain and build skills—comic books, craft magazines and even cookbooks.

Fun activities can keep your child learning over the summer



When school ends, it's important for kids to remember—and build on—what they have studied all year. To make this fun, have your child:

- **Keep a journal.** Think about what will appeal to her. An album of photos and captions? A scrapbook of mementos and stories? Reviews of her favorite movies? A collection of drawings and observations?
- **Play board games.** Research shows they're good for kids' thinking skills and development of positive traits, such as

patience, cooperation and focus. Pick games that match your child's age and interests.

- **Plan scavenger hunts.** Give interesting, educational instructions, such as, "Let's find an oak tree leaf." "Pick three daisies." Or "Find three things that are round." Remember, you can have a scavenger hunt anywhere, including in a store or on vacation.
- **Build on books.** After reading a story, consider turning it into a play, puppet show or art project. Reward your child with plenty of applause and praise!