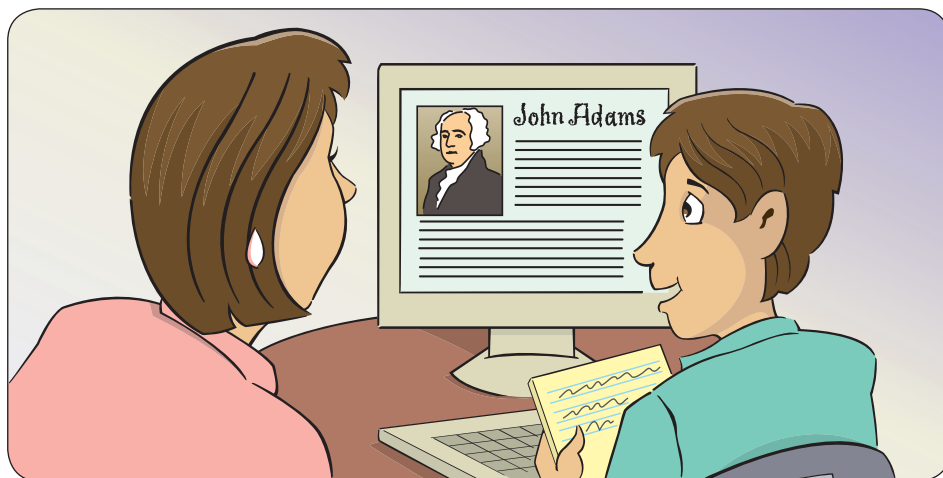


February 2013
Vol. 24, No. 6

Elementary School Parents[®]

Quashnet School

make the difference!



Raise a responsible student who takes school seriously

One of your child's biggest responsibilities is being a good student. Doing well in school is a key to enjoying life! It's hard to imagine paying bills without knowing math, for example, or voting in an election without understanding history.

In order to be effective students, kids must take the job seriously—and that requires parents' support. It's important to:

- **Make learning a priority.** Explore the world with your child. Visit the library, try new foods and take nature walks. Play games (such as Monopoly) to build important skills. Show your child that learning is actually fun.
- **Encourage perseverance.** Kids need parents' encouragement to keep trying when homework and other tasks are tough. When your

child is tempted to give up, provide guidance and a positive outlook.

"Let's review the instructions again. I know you can do this!" Compliment effort and progress.

- **Enforce routines.** Kids need help creating and sticking with routines that lead to success, such as going to bed, waking up, reading and studying at the same times each day.
- **Wonder together.** Instead of providing answers, let your child take charge sometimes. If he asks you, "Who was the second president?" help him find the answer. Use it as an opportunity to learn about other things, too. "I wonder who the second vice president was. Let's find out."

Source: L. Markham, "How Your Child Can Be an A Student," Aha! Parenting, <http://tinyurl.com/c24hbov>.

Planning ahead is a challenge for most kids



Your child can't do her homework if she left the book at school. She can't turn in her homework if it's ... well, who knows exactly where it is?

Parents know that most kids have a very hard time planning ahead. Here are three reasons why—and what you can do about each:

1. **Most kids have very little sense of time.** Often, they really do think that one day is enough time to finish that big project. You can help by breaking big projects down into smaller steps.
2. **Most kids have trouble resisting the temptation to do something fun instead of something hard.** Make a rule: No TV or games until homework is finished.
3. **Most kids lack organization skills.** Create a big calendar for writing everything down. Set aside a "launch pad" where book bags "live" and where homework is returned after it's finished.

Source: M.L. Kutscher, *Organizing the Disorganized Child*, HarperCollins.

Share strategies to help your child experience test success



From the spelling quiz to the unit exam, tests are a fact of life in school. You want your child to be prepared so he can do his

best. But you don't want him to feel so much pressure that he falls apart.

Here are some tips on how you can prepare your child to do his absolute best:

- **Be sure he has set aside time** to study a few days before the test.
- **Suggest that he spend** the last 10 minutes of each evening reviewing concepts he hasn't fully mastered. Research shows that our brains continue to process information while we sleep!
- **Make sure he gets** a good night's sleep the night before the test. He should eat a healthy breakfast the morning of the test, too.

- **Offer tips** on how to stay calm during the test. Be sure he reads directions. If he's stuck, he should take a few deep breaths. If he's *really* stuck, tell him it's okay to move on.

- **Remind him to use extra time** to go back, review his answers and check for careless mistakes.

When your child brings his graded test home, be positive. If he didn't do as well as he'd hoped, look for something he learned for the next time. If he did great, compliment his effort.

Source: E. Hartley-Brewer, *Talking to Tweens: Getting it Right Before it Gets Rocky with Your 8- to 12-year-old*, Da Capo Press.

"Genius without education is like silver in the mine."

—Benjamin Franklin

Improving your child's writing skills can also raise test scores!



These days, students must do more than just fill in the blanks for achievement tests. In addition to multiple-

choice exams, students are often asked to complete a short, timed writing assignment.

Help your child do better on these tests by building her writing skills. Here's how:

- **Try a new approach** to asking, "What did you do in school today?" Once a week, have your child write you a letter describing something that happened in school. Not only will your child get some great writing practice, you may find out that something
- truly amazing happened in school today!
- **Take your child** to interesting places filled with sights, sounds and smells. Children write better when they are describing things they have actually experienced. A trip to the airport, a fire station, a construction site or a local bakery will give your child lots to write about.
- **Give your child** many opportunities to write. When she brings home an A on her science test, ask, "Why don't you write Grandma a letter and tell her about it?"

Source: T. Thomason and C. York, *Write on Target: Preparing Young Writers to Succeed on State Writing Achievement Tests*, Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Are you teaching your child how to be resilient?



Encouraging resilience is one of the best things parents can do for their children. Resilient children deal with challenges

in positive ways—at home and at school. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are helping your child develop resilience:

- ___ **1. Do you give** your child opportunities to make decisions? It's a skill that improves with practice.
- ___ **2. Do you talk** to your child about how you find the right answer when you are faced with a problem?
- ___ **3. Do you talk** to your child about her strengths? Children draw on their strengths when facing challenges.
- ___ **4. Do you remind** your child how she has handled tough situations in the past when she's struggling?
- ___ **5. Do you listen** to your child when she is struggling to make a decision without solving the problem for her?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your child become more resilient. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

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 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 © 2013 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Kristen Amundson & Susan O'Brien.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Strong critical thinking skills will help your child succeed in school



Your child is feeling overwhelmed by a history project. Or he's feeling stuck as he tries to figure out a challenging math word problem.

Helping children understand *how* they think and solve problems is one of the best tools a parent can provide. Strengthening critical thinking skills will help your child in school. But it will also give him the ability to solve problems in the real world.

Help your child:

- **Become aware of *how* he thinks.** Educators call this *metacognition*, or the ability to think about the thinking process. Good thinkers have a plan before they take action. They know if they need more information before they make a decision. And if they get new information, they adapt their plan. Before your child starts a

project, say things like, "Let's think this through." Also help your child see his strengths and weaknesses as a problem solver. "Remember that sometimes you tend to rush in before you make a plan."

- **Draw on past knowledge** to address current problems. He may not have had to do an assignment just like his history project, but he has done other big projects. What did he learn about how he works best?
- **Focus on effort.** "It's not that I'm so smart," Albert Einstein once said, "it's that I stick with a problem longer." So when your child gets discouraged, encourage him. Help him see the progress he has already made, and let him know he can reach his goal.

Source: A. Costa, *Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tackle social problems before they affect school performance



"I thought she was my friend!" Unfortunately, the classmate who seemed so friendly only wanted to copy your child's homework.

Learning how to deal with "friends" who turn out not to be friends is a tough lesson. And it's one that can affect your child's performance in school and distract her from learning.

Talk to your child about the qualities that make a true friend and encourage her to stay away from classmates who seem:

- **Selfish.** Does the friend seem to think and talk mostly about

herself? Does it seem she is using your child for her own benefit?

- **Phony.** Does the friend say one thing ... and then do another?
- **Dishonest.** Someone who is friends with your child only because she wants to cheat on a test is not really a friend at all. Friends are honest and tell the truth.
- **Unreliable.** Did she say she'd walk home with your child after school, but then headed off to someone else's house instead?

Source: R.M. Kidder, *Good Kids, Tough Choices: How Parents Can Help Their Children Do the Right Thing*, Jossey-Bass.

Q: My son spends hours playing video games. From the minute he walks in the door until he falls asleep, he wants to be playing one of his games. He has mostly stopped doing homework and his grades are suffering. How can I get him to start living in the real world again?

Questions & Answers

A: Used responsibly, video games can be a fun way for kids to relax. Some games promote physical activity and some even encourage play with others.

But studies show that today's children are spending more and more time in front of screens. In fact, many are spending nearly eight hours a day in front of screens.

While some children may handle video games well, it is clear they are causing a problem for your son. His grades are suffering. He is spending little or no time with friends and family. It's time for you to take action:

- **Talk with your child** and let him know that you will be setting a limit on his video game time. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children spend no more than one hour a day playing video games.
- **Establish times** when video games are never allowed, such as homework time, meal time and family time.
- **Provide alternatives.** Plan daily family activities, such as reading aloud, taking a walk or playing a board game. All these will replace some of the video game time with more productive activities.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Motivation

Help your child develop 'intrinsic motivation'



Sometimes parents use rewards to motivate kids. But parents really want kids to be motivated by more than

stickers and prizes. Success should feel so good that it's an inspiration—and a reward—all by itself!

This kind of motivation (which comes from the inside) is called *intrinsic motivation*. It's a quality that helps children become excellent students and individuals.

To help your child develop intrinsic motivation:

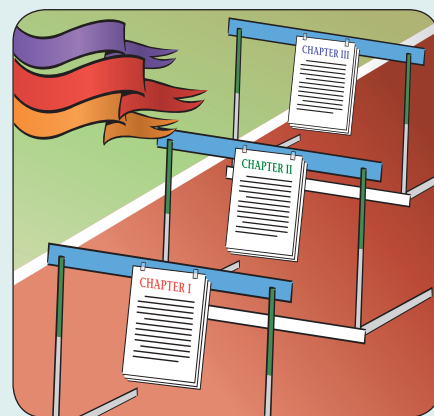
- **Give him opportunities** to make age-appropriate choices. "Should I finish my math homework now or after dinner?" After making smart choices, he'll probably feel pride—and a desire to keep making good decisions.
- **Support curiosity.** Give your child time to play independently and solve problems. For example, if he's building a tower that keeps falling over, let him test different solutions. When one works, success will motivate him to take on new challenges.
- **Encourage reflection.** You might say, "What do you think of that tower you built?" He may respond, "It's really strong because I made a big foundation!" This gives your child a chance to feel good about himself (instead of always relying on others for approval). You should compliment his hard work, too.

Source: "Motivating Learning in Young Children," National Association of School Psychologists, www.nasponline.org/resources/home_school/earlychildmotiv_ho.aspx.

Win the battle of the 'mid-year slump' in just four easy steps

Experts say the "mid-year slump"—a time when some kids lose enthusiasm for learning—is real. So February is a good time to review your child's progress and promote success. To do this:

1. **Look over** your child's last report card. Ask her teacher for suggestions on helping your child do her best. Communicate with the teacher throughout the year.
2. **Be creative.** Read books and do activities that relate to what your child is studying. Visit fun, safe, educational websites that will reinforce learning.
3. **Recommit to organization.** Make sure your child's schoolwork and supplies are in order. Help her clean out her backpack and restock her study space.



4. **Set exciting goals.** Help your child set a specific goal: "I want to finish a chapter book." Plan how she'll do it: "I'm going to read one chapter a day." Then applaud her efforts! Be sure to cheer for all her hard work, not just the end result.

Well-chosen expectations can motivate children to succeed



Parents are often advised to set "high expectations" to help their child succeed.

But how can you tell if your expectations are realistic? After all, you don't want to set your child up for failure.

When setting expectations, ask yourself three questions:

1. **Are they appropriate?** Take your child's development into consideration. In addition to her age, think about her personality and maturity. Goals shouldn't be too easy or too difficult for her to reach.

2. **Are they easy to understand?**

You should state expectations in simple, clear terms. "I expect you to do your homework at 4:00 each day."

3. **Are they important?** Choose expectations that focus on the behaviors you want your child to develop. If you want your child to be respectful and to succeed in school, for example, set expectations that promote those outcomes.

Source: K.V. Thompson, "Setting Realistic Expectations for Children & Adolescents," Texas A&M University, pralab.tamu.edu/documents/SettingRealisticExpectations.pdf.