

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



December 2014

Grand Erie District School Board
Growing Excellence ... Inspiring Success

Time management gives students the structure to get things done

Many children are bright and capable, but never seem to accomplish anything. They don't finish homework, or they forget to turn it in. They are always late getting out the door in the morning.

Children with these problems aren't lazy. They just don't know how to set priorities and manage their time. Here are some ways you can help if your child has trouble completing tasks on time:



- **Focus on productivity, not grades.** Reward your child for getting all her homework finished and turned in. Praise her for the time she spends reading. Once she develops better work habits, her grades will improve.
- **Enforce a consistent homework time.** Set a schedule that lets your child relax a little after school. But once homework time comes, it's time to get to work.
- **Set priorities.** Talk about assignments that are due tomorrow and later in the week. What's most important? Make sure those things get done first.
- **Help with time management.** At least once a week, look over her schedule. If there's a big project due on Friday, don't let her wait until Thursday to start.
- **Have your child track the time she spends on homework.** How many hours did she study math this week? When her math grade starts to improve, she will see the connection between effort and results.

Source: M. Levine, *The Myth of Laziness*, Simon & Schuster.



Teach your child to give responsibly

At its best, gift giving strengthens bonds between people. When your child gives a gift of time, it also develops his sense of responsibility for others. Here are some ideas your child might try:

- **Run errands** for an elderly neighbor.
- **Make a recording** of a book so a younger sibling can listen and read along.
- **Teach an adult** (perhaps you!) how to download and use an app or computer program.
- **Bake cookies** or other treats for someone who will not receive many homemade gifts.
- **Play a favorite game** with a family member or neighbor who is home-bound.
- **Create a 2015 calendar** for a teacher or coach. Decorate with a different artwork for each month.
- **Make a list.** Write "My 100 Best Memories With Grandpa."

Source: B. Taylor, *What Kids Really Want That Money Can't Buy: Tips for Parenting in a Commercial World*, Warner Books.

Encourage self-control

You want your child to thrive in school, both academically and socially. Help by teaching her that we are all accountable for what we do.

Encourage your child to repeat to herself, "I can't control others. But I can control my choices and my actions."



Do an attendance checkup

Researchers in Oregon studied students who missed as little as one day of school every two weeks. They found that:

- **Absence has an impact on learning.**
- **Missing school becomes a habit.** Children who miss a lot of kindergarten are still frequently absent in fifth grade.
- **Early attendance affects later achievement.**

Has your child missed some days? It's not too late to get him back on track for a successful school year ... and school career.

Source: M. Buehler, J. Tapogna and H.N. Chang, "Why Being in School Matters: Chronic Absenteeism in Oregon Schools," Attendance Works, niswc.com/on-track.

Listen now, correct later

"Ashley came to school today in these weird clothes. I think she called them cougots ..."

"Actually," you chime in, "those pants are called *culottes*."



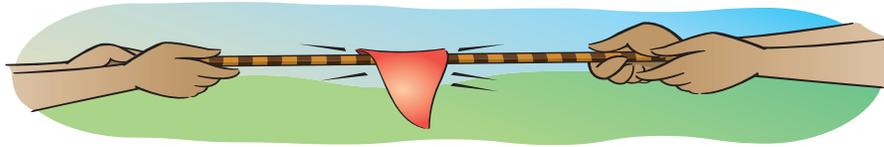
So now your child knows the correct name for the pants. But she's stopped talking and you don't know what she was going to say. To keep the lines of communication open so you can support your child as she goes through school:

- **Listen to her** without interrupting.
- **Save corrections** until she's through talking.

Source: A.E. Wolf, *I'd Listen to My Parents if They'd Just Shut Up*, HarperCollins.



How do I stop having power struggles with my child?



Q: Perhaps my son will grow up to be a lawyer. For now, I'd like to stop feeling like I'm in court every time I want him to do something. He argues with me. I argue back. How do I avoid feeling like every conversation with my son is a negotiation?

A: It's certainly important for your son to learn how to express his ideas. You want to raise a child who knows how to advocate for himself. (That's what will help him say *no* when he's facing peer pressure.)

Still, there are some things that really should not be negotiated. You know when it's time for him to go to bed. And homework is just one of those things that's part of the daily routine.

When your son starts to argue over something that is not open to debate, just smile and stay firm. "Sorry, sweetie, it's bedtime." Then don't say anything else.

Other times, you may be willing to listen. Let your son know what he can negotiate and what he can't. "I'm happy to talk about what you want to do this weekend. Let's see if we can visit Grandma and still have time for you to do what you want."

The key is not to get sucked into an argument. As you've learned, no one really wins in a power struggle!



Do you encourage a sense of family?

It's said that the greatest gifts we give our children are roots and wings. The holiday season is a great time to share the family time, stories and traditions that will feed your child's roots and make her feel she belongs. Are you helping your child learn about family? Answer *yes* or *no*:

___ **1. Do you share** old family photos and stories with your child?

memories, photos and letters from older generations?

___ **2. Do you prepare** family recipes together?

___ **3. Do you encourage** your child to ask older family members about their memories of childhood?

___ **4. Have you looked** at a map with your child for the countries her ancestors came from?

___ **5. Does your family keep** a scrapbook or journal to save

How well are you doing?

Each yes helps root your child in family history. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

"Tell me and I forget,
teach me and I may
remember, involve me
and I learn."

—attributed to Benjamin Franklin

Achieve goals with 3 W's

Children don't always know how to reach their goals. Making goal strips can help them plan. Here's how:

- 1. Cut a paper strip** about 3" wide and 12" long. Fold it into three sections.
- 2. On section one,** your child writes "I will ..."
- 3. On section two,** he writes *what* his goal is. "Read for 20 minutes."
- 4. On section three,** he writes *when* he is going to do it. "Every day."



This 3W formula, *will + what + when*, is a key to staying motivated. Have your child post his strips where he can see them.

Source: T. Lickona, *Character Matters*, Touchstone Books, Simon & Schuster.

Start a 'word bank' account

When writing, students often use the same few words over and over. To help your child enlarge her "word bank," have her make lists of words she knows that have the same meaning as common words. For example, *said* (*shouted, whispered, yelled, cried*).

Keep her lists in a binder she can pull out whenever she has a writing assignment.

Turn reading into thinking

When young readers go beyond sounding out words to understanding and using information, reading becomes learning! To reinforce your child's comprehension skills:

- **Talk about the material.** What problems did the characters face? Why did things turn out the way they did?
- **Make connections.** How is the story like or unlike others he's read?
- **Sum up.** What was the message of the story? Can he apply it to real life?

Source: P. Marshall, "Reading Comprehension and Higher Order Thinking Skills," K12 Reader, niswc.com/comp.

Helping Children Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Phillip Wherry.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2014, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1013