

Elementary School Parents[®]

March 2011
Vol. 22, No. 7

CESA #9

Yvonne VandenBerg, Director

make the difference!



Five ways chores can help your child become more responsible

One of the best ways to help your child develop responsibility is through chores. Even simple tasks can have a big impact.

Here are five ways that doing chores will help your child:

1. **Chores help your child learn** basic skills he'll need throughout life. Before your child leaves home, he should know how to prepare a few simple meals and how to care for his clothes. The sooner you start teaching these lessons, the more prepared he will be.
2. **Chores help your child feel** a sense of investment. A child who has swept the floor is less likely to track in mud from outdoors.
3. **Chores help your child feel pride** in his work. Be sure you compliment him on a job well done.

This good feeling can carry over to times when he has to face a daunting task, like finishing math problems or writing a book report.

4. **Chores can help your child** do better in school. Learning how to follow directions when baking cookies is no different from following directions when taking a test.
5. **Chores help your child feel** like he is needed. Let's face it—this is something everyone needs. So be sure to recognize your child's contribution. "Wesley made some delicious cookies. We will enjoy them in our lunch tomorrow."

Source: William Sears and Martha Sears, *The Successful Child: What Parents Can Do to Help Kids Turn Out Well*, ISBN: 0-316-77749-8, Hachette Book Group, a division of Little, Brown and Company.

Who is taking responsibility for learning?



Your child brought home a poor report card, so you've set a new homework schedule. Now it's study time. But

your child is still sitting in front of the TV. And you are tearing your hair out.

Too often, kids who underachieve at school are experts at not taking responsibility.

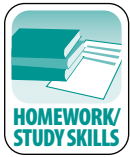
Be clear about who owns the problem. Your child does. You can help, support and reinforce the work she does. But she has to do the work.

So be clear about what you will—and will not—do. You'll remind her that study time is here. You'll help her figure out a schedule of what to do. But you won't hover, you won't do the work and you won't badger her if she doesn't.

Instead, you'll enforce the consequences you both agreed on. And you'll let her experience the consequences at school that come from not turning in homework.

Source: Harvy P. Mandel and Sander I. Marcus, *Could Do Better: Why Children Underachieve and What to Do About It*, ISBN: 0-471-15847-X, John Wiley & Sons.

Put an end to procrastination by doing the crummy job first!



He has math homework, a book report and spelling. He hates spelling. So that's why you're going to tell him to do the spelling first. Here's the thinking:

- **Crummy jobs are a part of life.** We all have to do some things we don't like. You might even talk about some of the jobs you dislike, but have to do anyway.
- **Putting off a difficult task** just makes it—well, more difficult. Until you get that job finished, it's going to hang over your head.
- **All it takes is a little push.** Set a timer for 15 minutes and say, "Work on your spelling for 15 minutes. Then you can stop." Once he gets started, it may not be as painful as he thought.

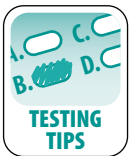
- **Finishing that dreaded task** is going to feel wonderful. Help your child learn to focus on how he'll feel when the job is finished—not how he feels while he's doing it. But let your child know that it's also okay to build in a small reward for finishing an unpleasant task.

Source: Rita Emmett, *The Procrastinating Child: A Handbook for Adults to Help Children Stop Putting Things Off*, ISBN: 0-802-77636-1, Walker & Company.

"Live so that when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you."

—H. Jackson Brown

Share three strategies to help your child do better on any test

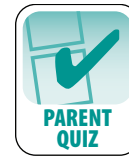


As testing season approaches, share a few strategies with your child to help her do better on any test. When your child gets a test, she should:

1. **Read and code the questions.** Kids sometimes get stuck and spend too much time on one question they don't know. That leaves them with little time to answer the questions they do know. Teach your child to read through the test questions *before* answering any. She should put a plus sign (+) beside the ones she's sure she knows. Put a question mark (?) beside questions she's not sure of. Then she can go back and do all the questions marked with a plus sign first.
2. **Ask the teacher about guessing.** Some tests don't take off points for answering incorrectly. (They just don't add any!) But other tests penalize students for giving a wrong answer (rather than leaving it blank). Your child should know how the test will be graded before she begins.
3. **Match up questions and answers** on the answer sheet. Kids sometimes find themselves at the end of the test before they discover that the answer to Question 100 is on Line 99. Then they frantically go back to see where they went wrong. Instead, teach your child to use a blank piece of paper to line up her place on the answer sheet.

Source: Gary Gruber, *Gruber's Essential Guide to Test Taking, Grades 3-5*, ISBN: 1-402-21185-6, Sourcebooks, Inc.

Are you teaching your child to make good choices?



Parents want children to make wise choices. When the time comes, parents hope they'll say *no* to peer pressure and *yes* to

positive things. Are you doing all you can now to teach your child to make these wise choices? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ 1. **Do you give your child** opportunities to make choices every day? Sometimes they are small, but he gets to live with the choices he makes.
- ___ 2. **Do you talk** about family decisions together? Do you brainstorm about possible solutions and come up with the best one together?
- ___ 3. **Do you sometimes think** out loud, talking about how you are making a choice?
- ___ 4. **Do you encourage your child** to ask questions?
- ___ 5. **Do you teach your child** that every choice has consequences?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your child make better choices today and in the future. For *no* answers, try those ideas in 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 © 2011 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Kristen Amundson & Susan O'Brien.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Ask the right kinds of questions to improve your child's thinking



Experts recommend asking questions to build your child's thinking skills. The trick is to ask the *right* kinds of questions.

A well-known classification system, Bloom's Taxonomy, divides thinking skills into six categories. Ask your child questions that fall under these categories:

1. **Knowledge.** Find out what your child knows about a topic. Talk about facts. Start with the basics, such as who, what, when and where. "When did the war start?" "Who was the President?" The answers should be clearly right or wrong.
2. **Comprehension.** Test how well your child understands the subject. Ask him to describe, explain or predict something. "If we were tadpoles, where would we live?"
3. **Application.** Encourage your child to connect previous learning to new experiences. "Chickens hatch from eggs. What do you think happens with ostriches?"
4. **Analysis.** Discuss how something works or how it's organized. "Name the different kinds of animals you studied."
5. **Synthesis.** This involves thinking about old information in new ways. "What if Christopher Columbus lived today? Where could he explore?"
6. **Evaluation.** Help your child be creative without worrying about *right* or *wrong*. "Imagine you could go back in time. What would you do during the Civil War?" "How might you change history?"

Source: "Improving Your Child's Thinking Skills," FamilyEducation.com, <http://school.familyeducation.com/gifted-education/cognitive-psychology/38660.html>.

Absences in early grades have a big impact on school success



Missing school in the early grades can have an impact throughout your child's school years. New studies show that often, these early absences create a cascading effect from which your child can never recover.

The early grades are where students learn and master the basics. Without that strong foundation, they may face learning problems throughout their schooling. Children who miss just one day of school every two weeks in kindergarten score lower in reading, math and other knowledge at the end of first grade. In other words, they never quite make up the learning they missed.

Early absences also set a pattern. Kids who get in the habit of missing school early continue that pattern. That leads them to miss even more learning. So the cycle continues. And studies consistently show that missing school is one of the strongest predictors of dropping out of high school.

Remember, your child can't learn if he's not in school. So be sure you and your child take school attendance seriously. He should attend school every day, unless there is an emergency or unless he is sick.

Source: Sarah D. Sparks, "Early Grades Become the New Front in Absenteeism Wars," *Education Week*, October 14, 2010, Editorial Projects in Education.

Q: My daughter has just been diagnosed with asthma. She does not want anyone at school to know because she says she still wants to "have fun with her friends" at recess. How should I work with the teacher—without having my daughter singled out?

Questions & Answers

A: Asthma is a serious health problem. It's the biggest reason why children miss school. Asthma causes nearly 14 million absences a year.

So you can't agree to keep her illness from her teacher. You need to work with the teacher to create plans that will protect your child's health and safety. To do so:

- **Check with the school** about rules for medicine at school. See the school nurse or talk to the office to fill out needed forms. You should also be sure that your daughter knows how to take her medication.
- **Talk with the teacher** about times when your daughter may be at risk. Recess is often a time that can trigger an attack. Teach your daughter to self-monitor so she avoids situations that bring on an attack.
- **Take precautions** during times of the year when asthma attacks are more frequent. Pollen, for example, can often act as a trigger. At these times, your daughter will need to pay closer attention to how she feels. Let your daughter know that asthma won't prevent her from having fun at recess or in other physical activity. But she will have to learn to respect her limits so she can stay healthy.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Building Character

Show your child how to deal with bullying issues



Your child sees a classmate being bullied, and it makes him feel awful. What should he do?

Experts say bystanders can make a difference. Review the school's anti-bullying policy with your child and discuss these tips:

- **Know you're not alone.** Most kids dislike bullying and want it to end. But they may not be confident about taking action.
- **Believe you can help.** Research shows that when bullies are discouraged by others, there's a 50/50 chance they'll stop.
- **Take pride** in being knowledgeable. Kids who haven't learned about bullying may do nothing—or even encourage a bully.
- **Make safe decisions.** It may be unsafe to tell the bully to stop. And getting physical is not okay. But do talk with a trusted adult. You can even add, "Please don't say I'm the one who told you."
- **Brainstorm** about other options. Sometimes bullies can be distracted. Or victims can be given an escape. ("Mrs. Jones wants to see you right now.")
- **Befriend targets of bullying.** Even after a bullying incident, peers can show support by spending time with the target and being friendly.
- **Consider your values.** What does your family stand for? Think of ways to be true to your beliefs about right and wrong.

Source: M. Wilde, GreatSchools, "The bully and the bystander," www.greatschools.org/parenting/bullying/the-bully-and-the-bystander.gs?content=593&page=all.

Boost motivation by showing your child how to 'get smart'

Are people *born* smart? Or do they *become* smart? Students who believe they can become smarter through effort are more likely to:

- **Tackle challenges with zeal.**
- **Enjoy learning.**
- **Understand** that everyone makes mistakes.
- **See mistakes as opportunities** to improve.
- **Respond to failure** by trying new approaches.

Meanwhile, kids who believe they can't change their intelligence have a different outlook. They may be overwhelmed by tough situations.

Research shows that parents can influence kids' views about "getting smart." Send the message that hard work and persistence



build intelligence. When your child pushes through challenges, compliment her! Struggling to achieve is a sign of intelligence, not weakness. And remember that effort counts more than the final result.

Source: Deborah Stipek, Ph.D., and Kathy Seal, *Motivated Minds: Raising Children to Love Learning*, ISBN: 0-8050-6395-1, Henry Holt and Company.

Teach your elementary schooler the different aspects of respect



You want your child to be respectful. But have you discussed the meaning of respect?

To be respectful, tell your child to:

- **Practice the Golden Rule.** How does your child want to be treated? That's how he should treat others.
- **Speak politely.** Say kind things and use good manners. Avoid mean comments and inappropriate language.
- **Appreciate diversity.** All people deserve fair treatment, no matter what makes them an individual—age, race, beliefs and more.

- **Resolve conflicts peacefully.** Focus on solutions. Express feelings with "I statements," not blame. "I was angry when you borrowed my toy without asking."
- **Know right from wrong.** Discuss values such as honesty, courage, generosity and learning from mistakes. Talk about how to handle disrespect from others.
- **Respect himself.** Self-respect is the foundation for respecting others. Help your child take pride in his skills, accomplishments and good decisions.

Source: "My Child's Academic Success: What Does 'Strong Character' Mean?" ED.gov, www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/citizen/part5.html.