

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Onalaska Elementary School



November 2019

Create a home environment that supports success at school

Some of the things you can do to help your child do well in school may not seem to be connected to academics. But studies show that kids are more likely to achieve in elementary school and beyond when their parents provide a supportive home environment that fosters positive traits and attitudes.



To support your child:

- **Set the bar high.** Don't demand perfect grades, but do insist that your child work to the best of his ability. Then praise him when he tries hard—even if he falls short.
- **Assign chores.** Kids who have duties around the house learn how to be responsible. They also understand that they can and should contribute to the well-being of the whole family.
- **Nurture your relationship.** You are your child's most important ally! Make time to have fun together. Share a hobby or kick a ball around the park. Never let your child forget you are on the same team.
- **Take care of yourself.** If you are stressed, your child will be, too. Set an example of self-care by eating a healthy diet and making time to exercise and relax with a good book. A calm, peaceful home starts with you.

Source: R. Gillett and R. Premack, "Science says parents of successful kids have these 11 things in common," Business Insider, nswc.com/successools.



Share the pleasures of reading

The ability to read well makes learning every subject easier. Kids who want to read are motivated to improve their reading skills. But what if your child isn't interested? Show her how enjoyable and rewarding reading is!

Here are four simple ways:

1. **Listen to audiobooks.** This is a great way to show a reluctant reader how interesting books can be. Borrow audiobooks from the library, or record yourself reading a book your child might like. Then have her read along.
2. **Follow current events.** Is there a developing news story that interests your child? Read the latest reports in the paper or online together each evening.
3. **Go on a fun outing.** Challenge your child to research attractions near you. Plan a visit to one and ask her to be your tour guide.
4. **Eat your words.** Get a cookbook and let your child pick a recipe to try. Have her read it as you cook the dish together. Then enjoy the tasty rewards of reading.

Put gratitude in writing

Research links a feeling of gratitude with increased happiness and school satisfaction. Help your child explore the feeling with a family writing project. Have everyone:

1. **Write down** something they are thankful for at the top of a sheet of paper.
2. **List** all the reasons they are grateful for it underneath.
3. **Illustrate** their pages.

Post these pages for the whole family to read.



Source: S. Allen, Ph.D., "The Science of Gratitude," Greater Good Science Center, UC Berkeley, nswc.com/thanks.

Avoid a screen time pitfall

When it comes to limiting screen time, a recent study found that one popular practice is likely to backfire.

When parents granted screen time to reward good behavior, or withheld it to punish bad behavior, their kids wound up spending more time with screens.



Instead, set consistent limits and help your child discover lots of ways to have fun without sitting in front of a screen.

Source: University of Guelph, "Controlling children's behavior with screen time leads to more screen time, study reveals," ScienceDaily, nswc.com/screencontrol.

Prevent homework hassles

To keep your child's homework from becoming a source of friction in your home:

- **Give schoolwork top priority.** If your child is too busy to finish his assignments, adjust his schedule so that homework comes first.
- **Expect some frustration.** A little complaining is normal.
- **Have your child call** a classmate if he has a question. This shifts responsibility from you onto him, where it belongs.



Memorizing is difficult for my child. What will help?

Q: My child does her homework and studies before tests. But at test time, she can't seem to recall the facts. How can I help her improve her memory?

A: There are many techniques that may help your child memorize and recall facts. Encourage her to try:

- **Silly sentences.** Help your child use the first letter of terms she needs to learn to make a funny sentence, such as "Special Hamsters Must Eat Oranges" for the Great Lakes (Superior, Huron, Michigan, Erie, Ontario).
- **Grouping.** Have her divide big lists of facts into smaller lists of similar items. Instead of trying to learn every state capital at once, she could divide the country into regions and memorize capitals for each region.
- **Images.** Your child can draw or imagine a picture of what she's studying. Then, during the test, she can think about her picture to recall the facts.
- **Personalization.** Help your child relate the information to her own life. An important date in history might also be a relative's birthday.
- **Singing.** Your child can replace words in a familiar song with facts she needs to remember.



Focus on your child's vision

Kids with vision problems can struggle in school. But children don't always know that they can't see well. It's important to get your child's eyes examined yearly. To protect her eyesight overall:

- **Encourage outdoor play.** Recent research suggests that spending more time outdoors—about 14 hours a week—can help some kids avoid nearsightedness.
- **Provide good light.** A bright reading lamp will help your child avoid eyestrain.
- **Commit to safety.** Does your child play sports? Make sure she wears the proper protective eye wear, such as safety glasses or swim goggles.

Source: K. Zadnick, Ph.D. and D.O. Mutti, Ph.D., "Outdoor Activity Protects Against Childhood Myopia—Let the Sun Shine In," JAMA Pediatrics, niswc.com/sun.

Math facts come in families

Math facts that use the same numbers are called families. If your child is learning that $1+2=3$, it helps for him to know that $2+1=3$, too. And that $3-1=2$, and $3-2=1$. Make flash cards that show fact families. For example, write 3, 2 and 1 on one card.



How many equations can your child make with those numbers? Write the possibilities on the back of the card.

Encourage self respect

When children lack self-respect, it is hard for them to respect other people. This often leads to disruptive behavior in school. To foster self-respect in your child:

1. **Help her feel competent.** Provide chances to learn and practice new skills.
2. **Notice and compliment** her progress.
3. **Let her make** age-appropriate choices.
4. **Show that you accept,** appreciate and love your child for who she is.



Are you taking attendance seriously?

Regular attendance at school is critical for your child's academic success this year—and every year. Are you reinforcing strong attendance habits? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you make** it clear to your child that you expect him to go to school every day?
- ___ **2. Do you overrule** weak excuses? Not wanting to get out of bed isn't a valid reason to stay home.
- ___ **3. Do you try** to schedule appointments and family trips for non-school times?
- ___ **4. Do you set** your child's bedtime and wake-up time earlier if he has trouble getting ready for school on time?
- ___ **5. Do you keep** your child out of school when he is sick? Reducing the spread of illness helps others avoid absences.

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are making attendance a priority. For each no, try that idea.

"Unless such commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes, but no plan."

—Peter F. Drucker

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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

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

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