

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District  
School Board



September 2012

## Resolve to read with your child every day this school year

It may seem early to be thinking about your child's high school graduation, but steps you take today can ensure that she'll be wearing a cap and gown in the future. One study found that students who were not reading at grade level by the end of third grade were four times less likely to graduate on time.

To promote your child's success in reading:

- **Read with your child every day.** Turn off the TV and eliminate other distractions.
- **Make weekly trips to the library.** Since September is National Library Month, this is a great time to get a library card for your child.
- **Attend back-to-school night,** parent-teacher conferences and other events where you can learn more about ways to help your child with reading.
- **Set a good example.** Let your child see you reading for pleasure.
- **Keep reading materials on hand.** Take along a book if your child will be waiting for an after-school activity to begin. Keep books and magazines around your home.
- **Monitor homework.** Make sure your child completes all assignments on time. Reading skills build day by day in the early grades.
- **Talk with your child's teacher** if you have questions or concerns about your child's progress in reading.



Source: L. Feister, "2010 KIDS COUNT Special Report: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters," Annie E. Casey Foundation, [www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC\\_report\\_color\\_highres.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf).



## Early absences lead to later problems

Research shows that children put their entire school career at risk when they are absent in the early years. The learning they miss is hard to make up. To make sure your child is in school on time every day:

- **Get ready the night before.** Help your child choose what he will wear. Make his lunch together. Put everything he needs to take to school in his backpack.
- **Allow everyone extra time.** Set your alarm clock a few minutes early. Give yourself at least five or 10 minutes to account for lateness.
- **Establish routines.** Create a chart of the things your child needs to do each day. When it's a routine, he won't argue about it.

Source: H.N. Chang with M. Romero, "Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades," National Center for Children in Poverty, [www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_837.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_837.html).

## Make a date when you say 'not now'

Your child wants to go to the park or he wants to play a game. You want homework to come first. Instead of saying "no," say "not now." Then set a specific time for doing something fun with your child.



## Daily exercise helps children's learning

Recent research links exercise to academic success. Kids who are physically active increase the flow of blood to their brains. They feel more positive and are more likely to be alert and ready to learn. Check into activities sponsored by your school or your community. Then block out time in your child's weekly schedule for keeping fit.

Source: A. Singh, Ph.D. and others, "Physical Activity and Performance at School," Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/166/1/49>.

## How can you limit your child's screen time?

Screen time—watching TV, playing video games, surfing the Internet—can affect your child's grades. Kids who have the highest use of media are also the most likely to be the poorest readers. What can you do?

- **Set limits.** Say when your child can watch TV or play video games. Make a weekly schedule.
- **Keep the TV out of the bedroom.** Research found that kids who have a TV set in their bedroom spend nearly three more hours a day watching TV.
- **Turn off the TV if no one is watching.** You'll reduce your child's TV time by an average of an hour a day.



Source: "Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-year-olds," Kaiser Foundation, [www.kff.org/entmedia/mh012010/pkg.cfm](http://www.kff.org/entmedia/mh012010/pkg.cfm).

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## How can parents discourage their child's forgetfulness?

**Q:** My child seems to forget something every day. She leaves a book on her bed or her lunch on the kitchen counter. She leaves things she needs for homework at school. I make several extra trips to the school each week. How can I help her be more responsible?

**A:** The start of a new school year is the perfect time to establish routines that will help your daughter take responsibility for everything she needs for school.

- **Give your child a pocket folder** just for homework-related papers to keep in her book bag.
- **Help your child create and use** a daily homework sheet. On it she should write down assignments and the books she needs to bring home to complete them. Keep this sheet in her homework folder.
- **Identify a homework buddy** your child can call when she forgets or doesn't understand an assignment.
- **Create a backpack drop spot** by your door. Have your child put her book bag there with her completed homework in it.
- **Praise your child** when she completes her homework. But if she forgets it at home, don't rush to school. Let her experience the consequences of being unprepared.



## Are you ready for the school year?

While your child is getting used to a new teacher and getting back in the homework routine, there are also some things you need to do. Have you done these things to make back-to-school time a success? Answer *yes* or *no*.

- \_\_\_ **1. I am re-establishing** routines. This includes setting times for homework and bed.
- \_\_\_ **2. I have reviewed** information the school sent home. I've marked dates like back-to-school night on our calendar.
- \_\_\_ **3. I have looked at** my child's school books with him.
- \_\_\_ **4. I have contacted** my child's teacher. I gave her my contact information and let her know I want to work with the school.
- \_\_\_ **5. We are scheduling** after-school activities carefully so that my child has some "down" time.

**How did you do?** *Each yes means you are helping your child have a successful start to the school year.*

*"Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes, and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted."*

—Garrison Keillor

## Respect at home yields respect at school

Have you ever marveled at how teachers keep classes under control? They deserve a lot of credit, and so do parents! When parents instill respect at home, it shows at school. To help your child work well with teachers and classmates:

- **Teach manners.** Expect your child to take turns, follow instructions, and say *please* and *thank you*.
- **Review school rules.** Go over the student handbook or the teacher's class rules. Show that you support the school's policies.
- **Enforce school rules at home.** These could include keeping hands and feet to self. Compliment your child's good behavior.
- **Be a role model.** Children are most respectful when they're shown respect. Avoid interrupting and speak politely to your child.

## Use pockets of time for quick reviews

Waiting in line at the grocery check out? Ask your child to tell you how much two packs of gum will cost. Have him read a headline from a magazine cover. Ask him about shapes he sees. Find other mini opportunities to review reading and math skills.



## Support your school staff

Your child's teacher, the principal and all the members of the school staff will be working hard to make this an outstanding year for your child. Teach your child to respect those who are so dedicated to her success. Speak positively about educators. Teach her that following school rules is a way to show respect.

### Helping Children Learn®

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