

Helping Children Learn[®]

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



October 2012

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board

Make the most of parent-teacher conferences by preparing ahead

Parent-teacher conferences are a great way to establish a relationship with your child's teacher. You are the one who knows your child best, and your insights help make the year a success. Make every effort to attend.

Before the conference:

- **Write down topics** you want to discuss. Note areas where your child may be struggling. Include positive notes to discuss as well.
- **Talk with your child.** What does he like or dislike about school? Ask, "Is there anything you'd like me to discuss with your teacher?"
- **Look over papers** your child has brought home, handouts and textbooks. Do you have questions about your child's progress or how you can help at home?

At the conference:

- **Be positive.** Offer to work with his teacher to make this a great year for your child.
- **Make plans for keeping in touch.** Ask when to call or email the teacher. If necessary, schedule a follow-up meeting.

After the conference:

- **Talk with your child again.** Let him know, in upbeat terms, how the meeting went. Tell him how excited you are to work with his teacher.

Source: "Making Parent-Teacher Conferences Work for Your Child," PTA, www.pta.org/2532.htm.



Pop up some math fun!

October is National Popcorn Poppin' Month. Improve your child's addition and subtraction skills while enjoying popcorn.

Say, "If you have six pieces of popcorn and I give you five, how many will you have?"
"If you have 10 pieces of popcorn and I eat four, how many will you have left?"



Does your child arrive at school ready to learn?

Your child works hard to do well in school, but you can contribute to his success, too. Be sure he has:

- **Enough sleep.** Children between seven and 12 years of age need 10 to 12 hours each night. Proper rest will help your child concentrate in class.
- **A healthy breakfast.** Studies show that kids who eat breakfast do better in school, earn better grades and have fewer behavior problems.
- **High expectations.** When you believe your child can do his best, he'll believe it too. Tell him that you know he'll be working hard in school and you're excited about how much he is learning.



Success takes work and organization

Your child finished her homework, but she couldn't find it when she got to class. You missed the parent-teacher meeting because you never saw the flyer. What's the problem? It could be a bad case of the *messy backpack*! If your child's backpack looks like a tornado hit it:

- **Set up a system.** Designate one folder for homework and take-home papers. Label others with subject names.
- **Clean out the junk.** Before bed, have your child repack her backpack. Include only items she will need for school the next day.
- **Check it every day.** Look through the folders together. What assignments does your child have? What should you read, sign or return?
- **Have a "launch pad."** Once your child's backpack is ready to go, put it by the door where she won't forget it.

Questions help your young author with writer's block

The book report is due tomorrow, but your child stares at any empty sheet of paper. To get her started, ask:

- **Can you describe** the main character? What did she look like? What words describe her? Was she brave, curious or clever?
- **What problem** did the character overcome? How did she do it?
- **What would you say** if you were writing an advertisement for this book?



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How can parents foster responsibility in children?

Q: My son frequently misses the bus. Then I'm late for work because I have to drive him to school. He also forgets things. I end up taking his book report or his math homework to school. How can I get him to be more responsible?

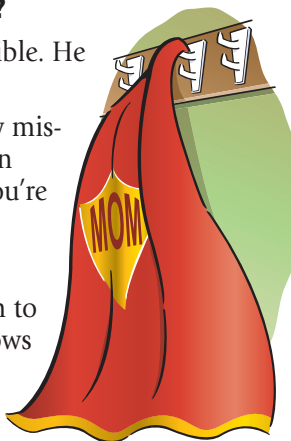
A: Right now, your son doesn't have to be responsible. He knows that Super Mom is ready to help.

It will never be easier for your son to make a few mistakes—and learn from them—than it is right now in elementary school. But first, he has to know that you're about to stop being his own personal rescue squad.

You should also:

- **Talk with his teacher.** Tell her what you plan to do. (She'll probably be glad.) Make sure she knows that if he forgets his things at home, he may not have a book or report in class. Tell her you want him to live with the consequences.
- **Begin bedtime and morning routines.** Set an alarm clock. Make bedtime earlier if he still can't get up in the morning.
- **Have a backpack plan.** Have your son put everything in his backpack before going to bed. Then have him put it by the door.

Once your son learns you won't be responsible for him, he'll start being responsible for himself.



Are you helping your child stay active?

America's kids sit too much and move too little. As a result, childhood obesity is a growing health problem. Parents can encourage children to be more active and have fun at the same time. Are you doing what you can to encourage your child to be active? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

- ___ **1. Do you make** physical activity part of everyday activities?
- ___ **2. Do you make** time for family fitness? Do you block out some time when you can be active as a family?
- ___ **3. Are you a good role model?** Do your kids see you being active and exercising?
- ___ **4. Do you turn off** the TV and the computer at some times of the day?
- ___ **5. Have you planned** activities you can do regardless of the weather?

How did you score? Each yes means you're helping your child be more active—and healthier.

"More than 30 years of research shows that schools, families, and communities can make a difference in a student's learning experience—especially when they work together to raise student achievement."

—Pennsylvania State Parent Advisory Council

Offer helpful advice when homework is 'too hard'

Your child is frustrated again. "This math homework is too hard!" he says. What should you say and do? Try these tips:

- **Remind** him of other "hard" things that are easy for him now, like subtraction.
- **Break** difficult tasks into smaller pieces. Have him do half of the problems. Take a break before completing the rest.
- **Review** examples in his textbook.
- **Talk** about the link between effort and success. Don't give up after his first try.
- **Tell** him you'll get help. If he truly is struggling, contact his teacher. Explain where your child had trouble. Ask what you can do to help at home.

Have some fall craft fun

With your child, gather some colorful leaves on your next walk. Place them between two pieces of wax paper and press them in a book. A week later, place the leaves between two pieces of contact paper to make place mats.



A story a day builds every child's literacy skills

Reading together daily reinforces your child's reading skills. To emphasize its importance:

- **Find stories** at your child's reading level. Don't push her to read stories that are too difficult.
- **Stop occasionally to ask**, "What do you think might come next?"
- **Have your child** retell the story in her own words.
- **Be enthusiastic.** Laugh together. Read aloud using funny voices.

Source: "Supporting Your Beginning Reader," International Reading Association, www.reading.org/Libraries/Parents/pb1071_support.sflb.ashx.

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