

# Helping Children Learn®

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District  
School Board



April 2013

## Make comprehension a reading goal

Research shows reading comprehension, or understanding what they read, is an essential skill for students—one they will depend on throughout their school years and beyond. To help your child develop this ability:

- **Ask questions about reading materials.** For example, "Why did the character do that?" "What do you think will happen next?" "How would you summarize the story?"
- **Relate his life to his reading.** How does your child relate to a story? What would he do as the main character? Has he experienced anything similar in real life?
- **Match reading to your child's abilities.** If a book is too difficult or frustrating for your child, try something else. Talk with his teacher about the best options.
- **Provide irresistible materials.** If your child has trouble finding appealing books or magazines, talk with his teacher and the librarian. Consider both fiction and nonfiction.
- **Encourage him to write about reading.** Suggest that your child write a book review. Would he recommend the book to others? Why or why not?
- **Suggest connections to other stories.** "This story was about trains. Have you read any other books about trains?"



Source: G. Carrier, "Comprehension," Reading Rockets, [www.readingrockets.org/article/12376](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/12376).



## Review geography with the weather page

There is a wealth of knowledge on the weather page in the newspaper or online. Use the map to help your child review important geography facts. You can:

- **Play "Name That State."** Give your child clues about a state (or city) on the weather map. For example, "I'm thinking of a state that starts with an M. It's near the Atlantic Ocean and has five letters." Keep giving clues, even if you give all letters.
- **Personalize the map.** Help your child find states where her relatives live. Ask your child what clothes Grandma might be wearing based on the weather where she lives today.
- **Mix up places.** Take turns seeing if you can trick each other. Give your child a fact incorrectly, such as, "Phoenix is in Texas." Let your child correct you, then offer you a challenge.
- **Make connections.** Read an article in the paper with your child. Then have her locate the state mentioned using the weather map.

## Continue to support your child by staying involved

When parents are involved, children have higher grades and attendance rates. They're more motivated to learn. Commit to:

- **Being present.** Attend parent events.
- **Offering to help.** Ask the teacher for ways you can support your child's learning and the school.
- **Monitoring schoolwork.** Supporting learning at home is essential, too.

## Learning to analyze builds critical thinking skills

Learning to analyze information is an important critical thinking skill. Look for everyday ways to help your child develop this higher-level skill:

- **Talk about fact and opinion.** Ask your child to tell you whether a statement is fact or opinion, and why.
- **Ask "What do you think?" daily.** Make sure he explains why he thinks as he does.

Source: V. Perrone, *101 Educational Conversations With Your 6th Grader*, Chelsea House.

## Focus on healthy living

A healthy body and brain will help your child be alert in school—which will lead to her academic success. Keep your child's brain and body healthy by:

- **Involving your child** in planning meals. What foods are healthy? Have her read recipes with you.
- **Making use of TV time.** Do exercises during commercial breaks. Keep small weights nearby or compete to see who can do the most situps.
- **Being a good example.** Stay active yourself!



Source: "Let's Move," [www.letsmove.gov/reduce-screen-time-and-get-active](http://www.letsmove.gov/reduce-screen-time-and-get-active).



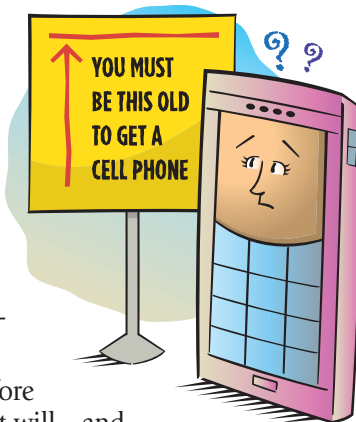
## What is the right age for children to get cell phones?

**Q:** My daughter wants a cell phone. Most of her friends have them. And there are times when I'd really like to be able to reach her. But I'm also afraid that it will affect her schoolwork. How can I know if she is old enough for a phone?

**A:** You are the only one who can decide whether your daughter is old enough to handle a phone. If she is generally responsible—including about completing her schoolwork on time and keeping track of her belongings—she is likely to be able to keep track of a phone. If she usually follows your rules on other issues, she'll probably follow limits you set on her cell phone.

And that's exactly what you need to do. Before you buy the phone, set up a clear code of what will—and will not—be acceptable. The phone cannot detract from her studies. And your child needs to respect the limits you set. Her cell phone must be put away during homework time. She must follow her school's policy regarding cell phones. She needs to understand that you have the right to look at any text messages she sends or receives. And she needs to know that if she uses the phone to bully others, you will take it away.

Remind your child that even though a cell phone can be used in an emergency, it won't replace her good judgment. She needs to keep herself out of dangerous situations rather than relying on the phone to give her a safety net.



## Are you teaching your child how to cope with disappointment?

All kids face disappointments in their lives. Your child may get a bad grade on a project or not make the soccer team, but help her learn to persevere and learn to deal with these disappointments. Answer *yes* or *no* to each question.

\_\_\_ **1. Do you help** your child understand what can—and can't—be changed? Some things we just need to accept.

\_\_\_ **2. Do you help** your child make positive choices when the unexpected happens?

\_\_\_ **3. Do you help** your child learn from her mistakes? Help her brainstorm studying strategies that she can use to get better grades on spelling test.

\_\_\_ **4. Do you have** a rule about behavior? She can feel disappointed, but she can't sulk.

\_\_\_ **5. Do you help** your child figure out her own solution instead of fixing the problem for her? Building a sense of determination will help her succeed in school.

### How well are you doing?

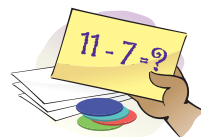
*Each yes means you're teaching your child to deal with disappointments.*

*"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80."*

—Henry Ford

## Practice subtraction with a flash card game

Stack a set of flash cards with subtraction problems on them face down in the middle of the table. Count out 50 tokens. Use pennies or paper circles.



The first player draws a card with a subtraction problem (example: 11-7). If the player knows the correct answer is 4, he puts four tokens in the center of the table. Switch turns.

If a player gives an incorrect answer, he must take the correct number of tokens from the pile. Continue until one player is out of tokens.

Source: "50-Cent Subtraction," Learn With Math Games, [www.learn-with-math-games.com/fun-math-games-for-kids.html](http://www.learn-with-math-games.com/fun-math-games-for-kids.html).

## Reading for fun really works

Studies link reading for pleasure to:

- **Writing and grammar skills.**
- **Vocabulary development.**
- **Confidence about reading.**



To encourage pleasure reading, show your child that you enjoy reading, too. Make reading a regular family routine.

Source: C. Clark and K. Rumbold, "Reading for pleasure: A research overview," National Literacy Trust, [www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0562/Reading\\_pleasure\\_2006.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0562/Reading_pleasure_2006.pdf).

## Support school efforts to promote good discipline

When a child acts out in class, it is distracting for the teacher and other students. Promoting good discipline at home will instill good behavior in your student so he can focus on learning at school. You can:

- **Help your child** set positive learning goals.
- **Involve your child** in solving problems.
- **Show your love.** Firm and kind discipline is an act of love.

### Helping Children Learn®

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