

Helping Children Learn®

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board



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Trustworthiness can help your child earn respect at home and at school

Being trustworthy involves respect. When your child acts in a trustworthy manner, it shows that she is respectful toward others. At the same time, when your child is trustworthy, others will respect her, too. This will help your child academically as she interacts with classmates, teachers and other adults at school.

Your young child may not know what “trustworthy” means, but she is old enough to understand the ideas behind it. Here are some things to emphasize:

- **Tell the truth.** Say what really happened. Young children often tell “white lies” because they want to avoid getting into trouble. Make a point of praising, never punishing, your child when she tells the truth.
- **Return what isn't yours.** If your child finds something and she doesn't know who it belongs to, she should give it to a parent or teacher. They may be able to return it to its owner.
- **Keep promises.** Keeping promises can be a difficult lesson for young children. You can help by making promises to your child that you know you can keep. If she sees that you do not go back on your word, she will learn not to go back on hers.



Source: Josephson Institute, “Exercising Character – Trustworthiness, 4- to 6-Year-Olds,” Character Counts, http://charactercounts.org/pdf/Exercising-Character/Exer-Char_04-06-trustworthiness.pdf.



Start developing responsible habits now

In order to be academically successful, your child will need to take responsibility for his schoolwork in the classroom and at home. He can start developing responsible habits with simple chores at home. You can:

1. **Model the task.** If you want your child to be responsible for making his bed, have him watch you for a few days.
2. **Practice together.** You could pull up the sheet, while he pulls up the comforter and puts the pillow on top.
3. **Supervise.** Remember that the idea is not perfection. It is to

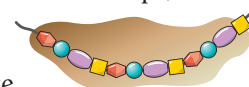
develop your child's desire and belief that he can do it himself.

4. **Establish a routine.** If your child makes his bed at the same time every day, you won't have to remind him. He will have assumed responsibility for the task.

Source: B. Tucker, “Building Responsibility—How do I teach my children to be more responsible? Working with the Young Child: Ages 4-8,” University of Arizona, College of Agriculture, <http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/family/az1037.pdf>.

Have fun with everyday math

Counting with your child is one way to teach about math. But there are many other helpful math activities—and they're fun, too! For example, you can stack cups, sort blocks by shape or string beads according to color, shape and size.



Building a love of reading leads to school success

When you imagine your child as a successful student, imagine her reading—a lot! You can help this dream come true if you:

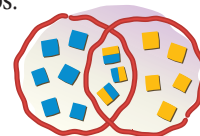
- **Snuggle up and enjoy** books together. Choose books with familiar, clear and colorful pictures.
- **Involve your child.** She can turn pages, name items and answer questions.
- **Use interesting voices.** Your enthusiasm about the story will be contagious.

Source: A.S. Honig, Ph.D., “Building a Reader from Scratch,” Scholastic, www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3754226.

Teach your child to sort and classify with a Venn diagram

A Venn diagram consists of overlapping circles. Each circle represents a set of things: colors, coins, toys, numbers, letters, etc. Where the circles overlap are things they have in common. Follow the steps below and talk about what is common:

1. **Have your child** make overlapping circles out of string or hula hoops.
2. **Cut paper** into squares. Color some squares blue, some yellow, and some blue and yellow. Help your child place the blue squares in one circle, the yellow in the other, and the blue and yellow squares in the overlapping section.



Source: D. Hamner, “Introducing the Venn Diagram in the Kindergarten Classroom, ReadWriteThink, <http://tinyurl.com/2cs5n46>.



How do I describe my child's temperament?

Q: My son will be starting kindergarten in the fall. We received a survey from the school. I am not sure how to answer one of the questions: "Can you describe your child's temperament?" Why is this important?

A: Temperament is a way of referring to your child's personality traits. The school may be interested in your child's temperament because it will help place him in a class that will be a good "fit."

There are several traits that most people consider when talking about temperament. In your answer, you may want to mention your child's:

- **Activity level.** Is he happiest sitting quietly, being on the go—or somewhere in the middle?
- **Actions in the presence** of new people and situations. Is he shy or confident?
- **Reaction to change.** Does he go with the flow or resist change?
- **Distractibility.** Most children are easily distracted if they're doing something boring and something more enjoyable comes along. Others are distracted by just the scraping of a chair.
- **Attention span.** How long can your child normally stick with a task?
- **Sensitivity level.** Some children are highly sensitive to what they see, hear, smell or feel. Others are less so. Where does your child fall?



Are you helping build key math skills?

Preschoolers enjoy learning that math is part of everyday life. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're making math concepts fun.

1. **Do you count** interesting things with your child, such as blocks and how many letters are in his name?
2. **Do you find** numbers on signs, clocks, price tags, license plates, food containers and elsewhere?
3. **Do you look** for basic shapes, including circles, squares, triangles and rectangles?
4. **Do you use** math words in everyday conversations, such as *long, short, big, small, more, less, half* and *whole*?

5. **Do you do** simple math with your child, like adding small numbers of objects?

How well are you doing? *Each yes answer means you're teaching about math in engaging ways. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.*

"I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework."

—Lily Tomlin

Insist on breakfast for school success



Research shows that children who eat a healthy breakfast are more alert, do better on tests, and are better behaved in school than those who don't. If your child is among those who don't eat breakfast, here's how to overcome these "obstacles":

- **No time?** Strive for an earlier bedtime, wake-up time—and breakfast time.
- **Not hungry?** Don't insist on a big breakfast. A banana or yogurt will do.

Source: Penn State Live, "Eating a good breakfast boosts chances for school success," Pennsylvania State University, <http://live.psu.edu/story/47703>.

Build reading readiness by featuring a 'letter of the day'

Recognizing letters is an important step toward reading. Help your child practice this skill by picking a "letter of the day." Point out this letter wherever you go. See if your child can find it on her own. Ask if she remembers yesterday's letter.

Improve conversations in just a few simple steps

Your child's verbal skills are essential to her academic development and achievement. Help her build them by:

- **Starting on her level.** Make eye contact. She may start talking on her own. Focus on enjoying—not directing—the conversation.
- **Making comments.** Instead of asking lots of questions, try statements like, "Cool! You finger painted today."
- **Being a role model.** Use your child's school calendar and projects she brings home to start conversations.

Source: A. Freedman and G. Nicolet, "Give 'Em Something to Talk About," Washington Parent, www.washingtonparent.com/articles/1003/talk.php.

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