

Helping Children Learn®

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board



April 2012

Showcase the appeal of reading

As their skills improve, students make the transition from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. The better they read, the easier it is to learn—and that learning is a huge asset on standardized tests.

One way to keep your child's nose in a book is to make reading interesting. Here's how:

- **Choose carefully.** What subjects and formats does he love? Perhaps he'd like a how-to book about making paper airplanes or a comic about superheroes. Or consider a subscription to a children's magazine that focuses on a fun subject.
- **Use resources.** It can be a struggle to find interesting books if your child is a reluctant reader. Talk with librarians and bookstore salespeople—and of course, your child's teacher. Read reviews online and in print. Do your best to find appealing materials.
- **Read together.** Find a chapter book—an adventure or a mystery—that captures your interest. Read a chapter a night to build suspense. You'll know you've succeeded when your child begs you not to stop reading.
- **Be creative.** Read aloud to your child—enthusiastically! You might feel silly "getting into character" at first, but it will capture his attention and help him understand the story. When you put the book down for the night, your child may even pick it back up.

Source: E.P. Vuko, *Teacher Says*, The Berkley Publishing Group.



Stick to bedtime routines

As the days get longer, it may be tempting to move your child's bedtime back. But children in elementary school need 10 to 11 hours of sleep.

Kids who lack sleep may:

- **Struggle** to pay attention in class.
- **Fall** asleep during the school day.
- **Have** more discipline problems.
- **Be** more prone to depression.

Source: "Children and Sleep," National Sleep Foundation, www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-topics/children-and-sleep.

Support the dress code

With the arrival of spring, you may be changing your child's wardrobe. Before you select what she'll wear:

- **Review** the school dress code. Are flip flops, halter tops, low-hanging pants and spaghetti straps allowed?
- **Discuss** why there is a dress code. Which clothes or shoes might be distracting? Offensive? Inappropriate? This is a good time to discuss respect for self and others.



Parents' awareness can block bullying

Bullying is a serious problem that deserves your attention—even if your child is not bullied or a bully. To prevent bullying:

- **Recognize bullying.** Bullying comes in many forms. It can be physical, verbal or written, such as in emails or text messages. It can also be silent, when a child is left out on purpose.
- **Supervise your child's activities.** Bullying often occurs when adults aren't around. You may be able to prevent bullying just by being nearby.
- **React to bullying.** If your child knows someone who is being bullied, she should inform you or another responsible adult about the situation. If you suspect that your child is being bullied—or bullying others—seek help quickly before the problem gets worse.

Source: "What Family Members Can Do," StopBullyingNow! www.stopbullying.gov/parents/index.html.

Writing connects families

The written word is a valuable way to communicate with your child. You can:

- **Keep a journal** about special things your child does and says. Reminisce together.
- **Send letters** to your child in the mail.
- **Write captions** in photo albums and scrapbooks for your child to read.
- **Put amusing messages** or jokes in your child's lunch box.



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How can parents decide if a child should repeat a grade?

Q: My child has had a difficult time in school this year. I'm thinking about having her repeat this grade rather than moving on with her classmates. What do you suggest?

A: Make an appointment to talk with your child's teacher about your concerns. He will want to work with you to make the best decision to get your child back on track.

Research says you shouldn't retain your child if you can avoid it. Children who are held back unnecessarily can feel like failures. They often develop social and emotional problems. And their chances for dropping out of school later on are greater.

Students who are held back rarely achieve as well as peers who were performing at the same level, but were not held back. Merely repeating a grade may not solve the problems causing a child's poor performance.

With your child's teacher, look for alternatives to retention. Ask about tutoring or partial retention. That's when a child moves on with the rest of her class, but returns to the lower grade for instruction in a specific skill.

Source: J.L. David, "What Research Says About Grade Retention," *Educational Leadership*.



Are you helping with spelling words?

By this time in the year, both students and parents may be getting bored with the same old spelling list routine. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child stay on track with studying spelling words:

___ **1. Do you and your child** set aside some time each day to review the week's spelling words?

___ **2. Do you look** for interesting ways to study spelling words? Your child might write each word in a different color. Or you could turn out the lights and use a flashlight to "write" the words.

___ **3. Do you encourage** your child to keep a small notebook as his private dictionary? In it, he can write words he finds while reading.

___ **4. Do you and your child** break up the list and learn a few words each day?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you are finding ways to help your child learn spelling words. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"When our spelling is perfect, it's invisible. But when it's flawed, it prompts strong negative associations."
—Marilyn vos Savant

Manners make socializing at school easier for kids

Good manners aren't just nice. They help students feel confident and comfortable around others. In addition to using *please* and *thank you*, children should learn to:

- **Greet** others with a friendly hello.
- **Say**, "Excuse me," if they bump into someone or need to interrupt.
- **Start** requests politely with, "May I?"
- **Share** and take turns.
- **Apologize** for mistakes.
- **Clean** up after themselves.

Phrase compliments wisely

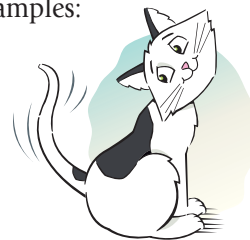
Kids need praise to develop self-esteem. But too much praise can sound meaningless. Make sure your compliments are genuine and specific. Instead of "Good job," you might say, "Your room looks great. I like the way you organized your sports stuff."

Source: A. Davidson and R. Davidson, *How Good Parents Raise Great Kids*, Time Warner Books.

Set up a scavenger hunt

On rainy April days, boost your child's interest in learning with a simple game. Make a list of questions whose answers can be found in your home (in reference books or online). Then assign family members to teams. Which team can find the answers first? Here are some examples:

- **What** breed of cat has no tail?
- **What** colors are in Italy's flag?
- **How** many bones does a person have?
- **What** is Mark Twain's real name?



Source: M. Cheney, *How to Develop Your Child's Gifts and Talents in Reading*, Contemporary Books.

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