

Helping Children Learn[®]

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board



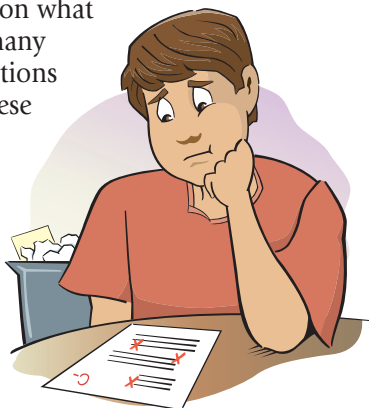
February 2013

Help your child turn those test mistakes into future successes

Your child brings home a disappointing test grade and wants to throw it away. How should you react? He already feels horrible about it, so adding to his negative reaction will not be helpful. Instead, tell him, "Everyone makes mistakes, but not everyone learns from them." Then help him review the test, learn from his mistakes and raise his odds of future success!

As you review the test together, first focus on what your child did well. He probably answered many questions correctly. Next, talk about the questions he answered incorrectly. Look for some of these common mistakes students make:

- **Careless errors.** Sometimes students record wrong answers accidentally. ("Oops! I meant to circle A, not B!") Other times they misread directions, skip a question or simply have poor handwriting.
- **Lack of preparation.** Paying attention in class is essential, but other steps are critical too. Kids need to do homework, read textbooks, learn key facts and ask questions in order to do well on tests.
- **Preoccupation.** Sometimes students don't get enough rest, skip breakfast or are worried about something.



Help your child make a plan to do better next time. Perhaps he could read the test more carefully next time. Maybe he could try studying with flash cards. He should get a good night's sleep and have a healthy breakfast before tests, too.

Source: R. Fry, "Ace" Any Test, Thomson Delmar Learning.



Ask your child to tell you the story

Comprehension—understanding a story—is key to your child's reading abilities. Retelling a story is a great way to build her comprehension skills. Start by reading a story to your child. Then ask her some questions:

- **Who** were the characters? What were their names?
- **Where** did the story take place?
- **What** happened first?
- **Was** there a problem in the story? What was it? How did the characters solve it?
- **How** did the story end?

Tell your child that you are thrilled that she remembers so much of the story. Ask her to use that information to tell you what happened in the story using her own words. You can also ask her to draw a picture about the story and tell you how the picture illustrates what happened.

Source: B.M. Taylor and J.E. Ysseldyke, editors, *Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers, K-6*, Teachers College Press.

Conduct simple science experiments in the kitchen

Sharpen your child's observation and prediction skills as you develop her scientific thinking. See what happens when she:

- **Mixes oil and water** in a jar. Watch as they separate.
- **Experiments to see** what objects float in a sink full of water.



After every experiment, ask your child to predict what might happen next time if she were to change one step.

Games can help your child master math vocabulary

Knowing basic terms will build important math skills. Help your child develop his math vocabulary by playing Math Concentration. Ask his teacher for a list of the terms (and definitions) he should know. Help him write each term and definition on a separate card. Place the pairs of cards face down. Have your child turn over cards and try to match terms with definitions.



Source: J. Willis, *How Your Child Learns Best*, Sourcebooks.

Positivity leads to success

Kids with a positive attitude about school are more likely to succeed. To build your child's enthusiasm about her education:

- **Be a role model.** Say good things about school, attend parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher organization meetings and other school events. Ask your child about school every day.
- **Compliment perseverance.** When your child works hard, speak up! Connect sticking with a task to success.

Source: "Ways to Promote Positive Attitudes Towards School," LIVESTRONG.COM, www.livestrong.com/article/83701-promote-positive-attitudes-towards-school/.



How can I help my child confront bullying?

Q: One of the “Queen Bee” girls in my daughter’s class is picking on another girl. She says mean things and sends her terrible emails. My daughter is afraid to speak up because she could become the next target. What can I do?

A: Bullying is a common problem for students of all ages, so it’s great that your daughter recognized that something wasn’t right. Bullies love an audience, so they often harass victims when other students are watching—but never when adults can observe.

Students like your daughter—bystanders—often don’t know what to do. Your daughter was wise to talk with you. Tell her she did the right thing and that you are always ready to listen. Remember that while schoolwork is her top priority, there are some things you can do:



- **Talk about your family’s values.** Tell your daughter, “I know you’d like to stop this from going on. I’m proud of you for being concerned.”
- **Tell her she needs to talk with an adult** at the school about what is happening. Offer to make an appointment for both of you to talk with her teacher or a school administrator about this if she does not feel comfortable doing it alone.
- **Suggest that she and her friends** reach out to the victim. If the bully is saying mean things, they can invite the victim to walk away and hang out with them.



Is your child learning to prioritize?

With so much going on in children’s lives, it can be hard to keep them focused on the task at hand. Are you helping your child learn to prioritize on his most important job—school? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

1. **Do you help** your child write down new assignments—from tomorrow’s math homework to next month’s science project?
2. **Do you remind** your child that anything due tomorrow is a top priority?
3. **Do you help** your child prioritize when several things are due by asking, “What’s most important?”
4. **Do you encourage** your child to work daily on small

parts of bigger projects that will take time to complete?

5. **Do you have** rules about what has to be completed before he can watch TV?

How did you score? *Each yes means you are helping your child learn to prioritize his work!*

“Substantial research supports the importance of family involvement in the elementary school years.”
—Harvard Family Research Project

With support, your child can accomplish big goals

Staying focused on long-term goals requires persistence. Learning to break up those goals can help your child with lengthy school projects. Your support can help your child develop this trait:

- **Tackle small challenges together.** Work on a jigsaw puzzle to help your child visualize and reach a goal. Have her think of nightly homework assignments as small challenges.
- **Plan rewards for finishing tasks.** When a chore your child must complete is not fun, like cleaning her room, plan a reward for finishing the job. Reward completing long-term assignments, too!
- **Use reminders.** Have your child mark her progress on a chart with stickers.

Source: P. Dawson, Ed.D. and R. Guare, Ph.D., *Smart but Scattered*, Guilford Press.

Share poetry to build your child’s love of words

Reading poetry together is a wonderful way for children to discover the rhythm and beauty of words while developing reading skills. Ask your child’s teacher for recommendations or look for a collection of children’s poetry in your library.

Source: T. Thomason and C. York, *Write on Target: Preparing Young Writers to Succeed on State Writing Achievement Tests*, Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Reward good behavior

Many parents use “time out” when their children misbehave. But what if your child is behaving well? Try using “time in”! The next time you are proud of your child’s behavior, pay special attention to him. Read a special book together (and don’t forget a compliment or hug!).



Helping Children Learn[®]

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Stacey Marin.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Pat Hodgdon. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2013, The Parent Institute[®], a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1013