

# Elementary School Parents<sup>®</sup> Katy Independent School District

*make the difference!*



## Experts say three habits can make your child a great reader

**R**eading researchers have studied the best readers. They've found there are some things these people do that make them good readers.

Luckily, these are skills you can teach your child. And you can teach them while reading aloud to your child. Here are three habits you can help your child develop:

- 1. Make predictions.** Expert readers think about what might come next. That helps them pay attention to the details in a story. As you read, stop occasionally and ask your child, "What do you think might come next?" Look for clues in the story that might give something away. Later, you can see if your child's prediction was right. If not, go back and see if there were some clues you missed.
- 2. Look for interesting words.** Children who read a lot have

bigger vocabularies than those who don't. So when you read, point out interesting words. "Oh, look, it says 'his *coursers* they came.' Let's see if this poem tells us what *coursers* are." Your child will pay attention to try to learn this new word. Later, she can make a list of new words she's learned so she can try to use them when she speaks or writes.

- 3. Relate what you have read to your child's life.** If you read a book in which a character learns a lesson, ask your child if she's ever learned a lesson like that. If you read a nonfiction book, you can ask about things she has learned. "What do you know about bees now that you didn't know before?"

**Source:** Cathy Collins Block and Susan E. Israel, "The ABCs of Performing Highly Effective Think-Alouds," *The Reading Teacher*, International Reading Association.

## You can help your child reach for the stars



All parents have dreams for their children. And those dreams can motivate children

to succeed. But sometimes, those dreams can turn into real pressure.

How can you keep a good balance? Try to:

- **Link your dreams to your child's interests and strengths.** If he loves legos and math, he may be an engineer one day. If he loves dancing and singing, maybe acting is for him.
- **Listen to words and actions.** If he starts trying to avoid practice, ask him whether he still likes the game. Sometimes, all it takes is for a parent to step back a little and let the *child* own the dream.
- **Help your child feel successful in your eyes.** He may not get the starring role in the play. But you'll love him even if he's singing in the back row of the chorus.

**Source:** P. Sullivan, "Great Expectations: What's the Best Way for Parents to Help Children Be Their Best," National PTA, [www.pta.org/2530.htm](http://www.pta.org/2530.htm).

## Involve your child in setting consequences for discipline



No matter how carefully you set your rules, some of them will get broken. Your child might play video games *before* he starts his homework. He may forget to do his chores.

And when your child breaks the rules, there need to be consequences. What would happen if your child helped decide what those consequences should be?

First, you might find that you can avoid disciplining in anger—which is never a good idea. Instead of grounding your child for life (and let's face it, both you and your child know that's not going to happen), you might involve him. "James, I've really never seen anyone who broke every flower in the garden while running to catch a fly ball. What do you think I should do?"

James will say, "I don't know." Kids always start with "I don't

know." But gradually he'll figure out that either he names a consequence or you will. So he might offer to clean up the mess and help buy some new flowers by earning extra money.

Another benefit is that James is more likely to follow through. A child who chooses his consequence is less likely to feel it's unfair and more likely to do what he agreed to do.

**Source:** Ray Guarendi, *Discipline That Lasts a Lifetime*, ISBN: 1-569-55368-8, St. Anthony Messenger Press.

**"Above all, an education prepares you to make choices in life—to evaluate and decide based on information, knowledge, experience and wisdom."**

—Arne Duncan,  
Secretary of Education

## Encourage your child to give to others this holiday season



Children need and want to feel like they play an important role in their community. The fact is that even the youngest child can do something for someone else.

This holiday season, why don't you look for a volunteer or community service activity your child can do with you?

Here are some ideas of things you and your child can do:

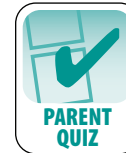
- **Bake something** for a senior citizen or a parent of a new baby together.
- **Help take care of a pet.** If a neighbor is going away for a few days,

you and your child could look after the family pet. Your child could also bring in the neighbor's mail.

- **Take part in a mitten or glove drive.** Many charities collect warm gloves and hats for people who are homeless.
- **Give money she has earned.** It's nice when your child sees you give money to a charity. But she'll remember it longer if she gives away even a small sum of her own to help others.

**Source:** Michael Ungar, *The We Generation: Raising Socially Responsible Kids*, ISBN: 9780-7382-1378-1, Lifelong Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group.

## Are you giving your child gifts that really matter?



Having trouble finding the right gift for your child? Perhaps you can't find it in the store. Perhaps your budget is tight.

Luckily, the gifts children want most are things that don't cost a penny. Are you giving your child these gifts? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below.

Do you give your child:

\_\_\_1. **The gift of time?** Someone once said that children spell love "T-I-M-E."

\_\_\_2. **The gift of reading?** Set aside time each day to read with your child. Talk about what you read.

\_\_\_3. **The gift of responsibility?** Give your child chores to do that help keep your home running smoothly.

\_\_\_4. **The gift of your love?** Each day, be sure you say, "I love you" to your child.

\_\_\_5. **The gift of fun?** Sometimes, do things just because they are silly or fun or make you laugh.

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you are giving your child gifts that are priceless. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

Elementary School  
**Parents**  
make the difference!

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1275

For subscription information call or write:  
The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,  
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.  
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit our website: [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com).

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2010 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Kristen Amundson & Susan O'Brien.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

# Why an extra-long winter break is a bad idea for your child



The winter holidays can be a good time to visit with family. But sometimes, those family visits get extended and children miss several weeks of school.

The problem is that the school your child misses is difficult—maybe impossible—to make up. Missing several weeks of school in the middle of the year will create problems for your child, her teacher and the rest of her class.

Your child will not be there to learn new facts and skills with the rest of the class. Since learning builds on what comes before, by the time she gets back, her class

will have moved on. She may take a long time to catch up with her classmates.

It's a problem for the teacher as well. Should she hold everyone else back while she teaches only your child? Should she let your child struggle because she can't catch up?

The rest of the class will suffer as well. Studies show that every child in the class learns less when teachers have to make time to help a few students catch up the work they missed because they were absent.

**Source:** H. Chang and M. Romero, *Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades*, National Center for Children in Poverty.

# Promote your child's online safety, prevent cyberbullying



Many parents are surprised—and worried—by how much young kids are on the Internet.

Elementary schoolers use it for playing games, doing research and even socializing. So it's no surprise that a Yahoo! survey shows 78% of parents are concerned about kids' online safety, and the majority work to protect their kids online. But parents need to learn more about cyberbullying. Only 37% say they know what to do about it. Yahoo! recommends that families:

- **Limit what they post.** Remember, even if a site seems “private,” the Internet is a public place. So consider all posts “public.” This means private information should not be posted online. This includes where your child goes to school.
- **Show respect for others.** Live by the Golden Rule: Treat others

as you want to be treated. This goes for the real world as well as “cyberspace.” If someone is rude online, Yahoo! suggests using privacy settings to block access to your information and your family.

- **Have self-respect.** Don't respond to inappropriate messages. Instead, tell a trusted adult. Also report the problem to authorities. This might include your Internet service provider, [cybertipline.org](http://cybertipline.org), the school and others.
- **Communicate.** Parents and kids need to talk about online safety often. Make and review clear and helpful rules. Children need to know they can share any concern with their parents—even something embarrassing.

**Source:** “Yahoo! Gives Parents a B+ for Taking Action to Protect Children Online,” MarketWatch and Yahoo!, [www.marketwatch.com/story/yahoo-gives-parents-a-b-for-taking-action-to-protect-children-online-2010-06-10?reflink=MW\\_news\\_stmp](http://www.marketwatch.com/story/yahoo-gives-parents-a-b-for-taking-action-to-protect-children-online-2010-06-10?reflink=MW_news_stmp).

**Q:** My husband is deployed overseas. He won't be here for the holidays. The longer he has been gone, the harder it has been on my third grader. Now my son's grades are starting to suffer. What advice do you have to help me get through a hard holiday season and also get my son back on track?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Being separated from a parent is always hard. Having that parent be away during the holiday season can be even harder. Here are some ways to help:

- **Let your son know** that it is okay to miss his father. Say something like, “We love Daddy very much. Of course we're going to miss him. Whenever you feel sad, you can talk with me.”
- **Talk to his teacher.** Be sure his teacher understands what he's going through and how he's feeling. Sometimes, a child feels he has to be brave at home. His teacher may find he will confide in her. Ask her how you can help support him so he gets his grades back on track.
- **Talk with your child** about some fun holiday traditions you want to continue—baking, decorating or watching a favorite holiday video. Even though the holidays won't be like every other year, they can still be a special time for you and your son.
- **Stay in touch** with your husband. Encourage him to call, send videos and email.
- **Look for ways** you and your son can help others. He'll start to put his own problems in perspective when he sees that there are others who need help.

—Kristen Amundson,  
The Parent Institute

# It Matters: Homework

## Turn science projects into science fun



Science fair projects should be exciting, not daunting. After all, teachers assign them to encourage curiosity and learning. The best project will entertain your child *and his audience*. To make the most of it:

- **Help your child choose** an interesting subject. Look through science books for subjects that make your child say, “Wow!” or “How does that work?” The Internet is a great resource, too.
- **Choose an approach.** He might investigate something, such as, “How does an action-packed video game affect fourth graders’ heart rates?” Or he could demonstrate a concept, such as how black light affects various items.
- **Do research.** Talk with your child about possible sources, such as books, articles and websites. Go to the library together, and if your child goes online, supervise. Help him find reputable, up-to-date sites. When your child takes notes, he should record where he found the information.
- **Encourage independence.** After helping your child choose a topic, sources and supplies, give him freedom. Set reasonable expectations and be supportive, but let him do the work. Help as much as you usually would with an assignment—and no more. This allows your child not only to work, but also to learn and succeed.

**Source:** “The ABCs of Elementary School Science Fair Projects,” Math and Reading Help, [http://math-and-reading-help-for-kids.org/articles/The\\_ABCs\\_of\\_Elementary\\_School\\_Science\\_Fair\\_Projects.html](http://math-and-reading-help-for-kids.org/articles/The_ABCs_of_Elementary_School_Science_Fair_Projects.html).

## Play grammar games with your child to simplify writing

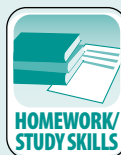
Using proper grammar takes practice. If your child struggles with forming and punctuating sentences, turn it into a game. Here are two to try:

1. **Fill-in-the-blank game.** Write a story with missing words. (“The boy stepped on a *noun*.”) Review parts of speech and take turns filling them in. You can help by saying things like, “A noun? That’s a person, place or thing. I’ll choose *pie*!” Make the words as silly as you’d like. Then read the story aloud.
2. **Punctuation game.** Write a short story without punctuation. Then read it together. It’s tough! This shows the importance of



punctuation. Now edit the story, adding punctuation that makes it easy (or funny) to read. Suggest that your child write a story for you to punctuate. Discuss why you chose—or didn’t choose—certain marks.

## Where and when should your child complete homework?



If you dread homework as much as your child does, you may be arguing about one of two common issues: time or place. Experiment with:

- **Homework times.** Write down your child’s commitments. Notice available, reasonable times for studying. (You don’t have to agree right away. Just list a few options.) Then put them on the calendar and let your child test them for a couple of weeks. Which ones work best? Why? Jot down your thoughts. Set a minimum study time. If she has extra time, she should read or review. Finally, choose the most effective homework schedule.

- **Homework places.** Your child might want to study in her room, while you prefer the kitchen table. Start by focusing on the necessities, including a quiet, well-lit location with nearby supervision and a good work surface. Consider places that meet these requirements. Provide basic supplies, such as pencils, crayons, markers and paper. Once you both pick the best spot, stick with it, since a “same time, same place” routine gives your child the best chance of homework success!

**Source:** R. Hackney, PhD., “Dr. Rene’s Parenting Answers,” <http://drrenesblog.blogspot.com/2009/09/end-homework-battles.html>.