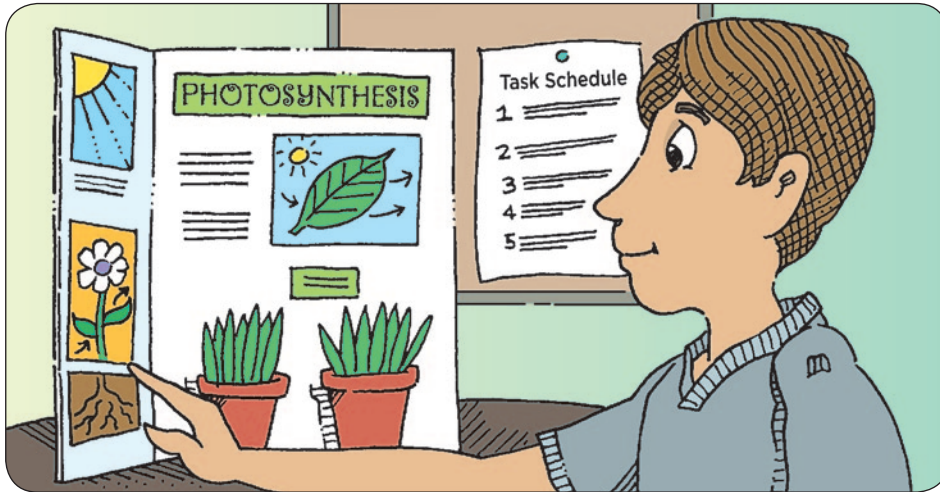


Elementary School Parents[®]

Katy Independent School District

make the difference!

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Don't let end-of-year projects become a family emergency!

As the end of the school year draws near, teachers often assign large projects. Projects can be a way for students to do something creative and have fun while learning.

They can also be a way to drive parents crazy! Kids may try to put off work on that huge project until the very last minute. Then everyone in the house has to go into panic mode, making sure the poster gets made, the costumes are ready and the report is written.

This year, don't let your child's end-of-year project become a family emergency. Here are steps to take:

1. Make a plan. As early as possible, sit down with your child to develop a plan for completing the project. Write the due date on the calendar. Ask questions about what steps he'll need to take to

get ready. "You need to make a poster. Let's check to see if we have the supplies you'll need."

- 2. Make a schedule.** Now help your child figure out *when* he's going to complete each step. Having a number of smaller deadlines is much easier than waiting and trying to meet one big one. Write these dates on the calendar.
- 3. Celebrate successes.** Each time your child reaches a goal, help him figure out a reward. This should be small (a favorite dessert, not a trip to Disney World) and something he can mostly do for himself.
- 4. Check in.** You'll need to see how he is progressing to help him stay on track.

Source: Diane Heacox, *Up from Underachievement*, ISBN: 0-915-79335-0, Free Spirit Publishing.

Try using a chore chart this summer



Summer is a good time to help your child become more responsible. A chore chart can

be a wonderful way to help her learn new skills—and also help keep your home running smoothly. Here's how to get started:

- 1. Select age-appropriate chores.** An eight-year-old can't climb a ladder to clean tall windows, but she could clean the bathroom sink.
- 2. Show your child how to do the chore.** You do it once. Then have her do it.
- 3. Create your chart.** Some chores may need to be done every day. Others may be only once a week. The chart will help you stay consistent and help your child know exactly what you expect.
- 4. Try to make things fun.** Every now and then, add a silly or fun job to the chart. "Go out for ice cream" is a popular summer chore to add.

Source: S. Aguirre, "What Are the Benefits of a Chore Chart?" <http://housekeeping.about.com/od/schedulesandcharts/f/benefitchart.htm>.

Stress these three Cs to build your child's self-esteem



All children, no matter how hard we try to protect them, will face challenges in their lives. A strong sense of who

they are can help them stand up to those challenges. How can you create that sense of self-esteem? Consider these three C's:

- 1. Competence.** Kids who feel that they are able to master one challenging task are more willing to try something else that's difficult. So when your child is struggling to learn something new, don't rush in to do it for her. Instead, let her work things out.
- 2. Confidence.** Even when kids master a new task or skill, they don't always see why they were successful. You can help by

pointing out your child's positive qualities. "You were persistent in math, and it paid off." The next time she faces a challenge, she may say, "I'm persistent. I can do this."

- 3. Control.** There's a lot that kids can't control. But your job as a parent is to help your child see how her actions do give her some control over her life. "You studied every day this week, and your spelling grade showed it."

Source: B. McClain, "Building Resilience in Children," Healthy Children, www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Building-Resilience-in-Children.aspx.

"Genius without education is like silver in the mine."

—Ben Franklin

Teach your child that it is important to play by the rules



Children who are bullied aren't the only ones who are affected. Children who witness repeated incidents of bullying can be affected, too. Standing

by and doing nothing hurts onlookers' self-confidence and self-respect.

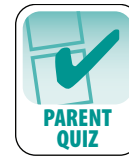
Tell your child that bystanders need to act. Talk with your child about what she can do if she sees someone being bullied.

Tell your child that she should:

- **Speak up for the victim.** Say something like, "Stop yelling at her!" or "That's not cool!"
- **Put her hand on the victim's** shoulder or her arm around the victim. This simple gesture will show the bully that your child is on the victim's side.
- **Walk away.** Most bullies enjoy having an audience, so don't provide one.
- **Refrain from using violence** against the bully. Your child may get hurt or even be blamed for being a bully herself.
- **Refrain from laughing** or giggling—even if she is nervous and doesn't know what else to do.
- **Persuade the victim** to tell an adult. Or offer to tell an adult for the victim. It is wrong to keep quiet about bullying. Your child must tell a teacher or another adult—and know that it's not being a "snitch" or a "tattletale."
- **Seek out the victim later** to offer support and friendship.

Source: *Bullying: Engaging Parents, Students and Staff in Your Anti-Bullying Program*, The Parent Institute.

Do you help your child deal with disappointment?



All kids face disappointments in their lives. Are you helping your child learn to deal with these disappointments?

Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

- 1. Have you helped** your child understand what can and can't be changed? You can't change the fact that it rains on the day of your picnic.
- 2. Do you help your child** make a positive choice when the unexpected happens?
- 3. Do you help your child learn** from mistakes? "Next time, you'll study a little harder and your grade will improve."
- 4. Do you have the rule:** You can feel disappointed, but you can't sulk? Kids can control their actions, even when they feel let down.
- 5. Do you help your child** figure out his own solution instead of trying to fix the problem?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your child deal with disappointments. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Community service strengthens relationships, builds character



Busy family life can disconnect parents and children from each other—and from the community.

Volunteering as a family is a great way to change that. It also teaches your child about responsibility, compassion, generosity and more!

When making summer plans, try to squeeze in at least one volunteer activity. For example, your family might:

- **Clean a favorite spot.** Inspect places your family spends time, such as your street, a park or the beach. You may be surprised by how much trash and debris is there. Supervise as your family fills garbage and recycling bags.
- **Provide shelter.** Many groups provide or improve housing for others. Find one that welcomes kids' help. Your child might sweep, carry items or hand out nails while you hammer. Talk

about how “many hands might light work.”

- **Provide food.** Community food banks are usually in need of groceries and helpers. Homeless shelters and meal-delivery programs may also request supplies, including sandwiches kids can make. You might even help with deliveries.
- **Care for animals.** Call an animal shelter to learn about its needs. If you and your child can't work directly with pets, consider other ideas, such as raising awareness about adoption or collecting necessities.
- **Make visits.** Find a charity that serves elderly or homebound citizens. They may need company, meals or help with errands. A visit from a child may be more uplifting than anything else.

Source: “Community Service: A Family's Guide to Getting Involved,” KidsHealth, <http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/volunteer.html>.

What should you do if your child starts using swear words?



At one time or another, nearly every child will use a swear word. Often, kids just try out a word they've heard to see if

they can get a reaction from their parents. It usually works.

Still, most parents do not want to hear this type of language coming from their child. Here are some things you can do to help your child stop this disrespectful behavior:

- **Stress your family's values.** You might say, “I know other people may use words like that. But in

our family, that kind of talking is not acceptable.” Your child should feel proud to avoid using the inappropriate words she hears around her.

- **Talk about** how those words make others feel. What would her grandmother think if she heard her talking like that? Words can hurt.
- **Remind her** that people judge others by their language. If she uses swear words, she likely will develop a bad reputation.

Source: “My Child Won't Stop Swearing,” Parent News, www.parent.net/article/archive/swearing.shtml.

Q: My fifth-grade son spent most of this year hanging out with a group of kids I don't like. They are students who don't do well in school, and who say school doesn't matter. They aren't involved in sports or other school activities—they mostly just play video games. I suspect that when my son goes to their homes, he plays violent games we don't allow at home. Now that summer is coming, how can I help him find new friends?

Questions & Answers

A: Summer vacation may be a good time to help your son find a new group of friends. But you can't just sit back and wait for it to happen by itself. You'll need to take action. Here are a few ideas:

- **Get him involved** with activities where he will meet other kids. Can you sign him up for a summer sports league? Is there a computer class he could take? These are opportunities to make new friends.
- **Have him spend time away.** Can he go to a camp for a week or two? Or is there an out-of-town relative he could visit for a time? The less available his old friends are, the more likely he is to make some new friends.
- **Limit the time he spends** with his old crowd. You might set up a fun activity for him to do with a friend you approve of. “How about inviting Mike to the ball game with us on Sunday?” Your son will still see these negative friends at school next fall. But hopefully, the friendships he forms this summer will help him want to spend less time with those boys.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Summer Learning

Summer prompts make writing fun for your child



If your child doesn't enjoy writing, summer can be the time to change this! Keep a list of writing prompts handy, so if your child complains, "I'm bored," you can pose irresistible questions.

Here are just a few things your child can write about:

- **How do you sense it's summer?** Have your child describe how summer smells, looks, sounds, feels and tastes. Maybe it smells like chlorine, looks like a sunset, sounds like reggae, feels like a sauna and tastes like ice cream!
- **What's your favorite summer memory?** Your child can write about it in the present tense: "I'm five years old. Dad walks me to the beach. We get our feet wet and jump over waves! I'm happy and scared, so I scream as loud as I can!"
- **Is summer a beauty, a beast or both?** Ask your child to write a poem about what makes summer wonderful—or terrible. Perhaps your child loves fireflies and s'mores, but can't stand mosquitoes and sunscreen.
- **What if summer didn't exist?** If it was spring, then fall, then winter, would your child miss summer? How would this make him feel? Is there another season he'd like to skip? Or would he like to have two of a certain season? Have him write about it.

Source: C. Dunmire, "Summer Writing Prompts," www.creativity-portal.com/howto/writing/summer.writing.prompts.html.

Set firm limits on your child's screen time; monitor carefully

Experts say kids should spend no more than one or two hours a day on screen time. That includes watching TV, using the computer and playing video games. Yet kids spend an average of five hours per day on these activities!

That means within one year, more time is spent watching screens than going to school. Meanwhile, research links excess TV viewing to problems with weight, eating advertised junk food and lower performance in school. Seeing violence in the media is also connected to violent behavior.

To make a difference:

- **Accept the challenge.** Limiting screen time is tough, but possible. Set firm limits and monitor your child's viewing carefully.
- **Limit opportunities.** Keep televisions and computers in central



locations (not in your child's room). And turn off the TV during meals and other activities. When kids visit your home to play, make this time screen-free.

- **Provide alternatives.** Plan creative, active ways to spend time. Read part of a book aloud each day. Go for a walk. Cook and eat meals together. Listen to music. Draw, write or paint. Take "field trips" to new places.

Maintain a consistent schedule over the summer months



Summer is a time to relax—but not a time to relax important routines. Routines help your child cooperate and become self-disciplined. They also make it easier to adjust when school starts again.

Some key routines to maintain include:

- **Sleep.** During the summer, your child's bedtime and rising time may be later than usual. Once you choose a reasonable sleep schedule, however, stick with it.

- **Reading.** Summer offers extra time for reading. Visit the library weekly and encourage reading every day, including in fun spots, such as the pool or beach.
- **Screen time.** Extra free time should not mean more TV and video games. Use the guideline recommended by experts—no more than 10 hours of screen time per week.
- **Meals.** Make it a priority to have at least one family meal a day. This is a chance to catch up and enjoy each other's company.