

Elementary School Parents[®]

Katy Independent School District

make the difference!



Four ways to help your child make this school year great

It's the start of a new school year and you want to make it a great one. Researchers at Indiana University found that children did better in school when their parents taught them how to:

- 1. Be positive about challenges.**
The children who do the best in school are those who approach a new task with a positive attitude. Look for ways to model that behavior at home: "I don't know how to use this computer program. Shall we figure it out together?"
- 2. Break down big assignments.**
Reading an entire chapter book may seem overwhelming. But reading one chapter is something your child can do. Teach your child to break down tasks into smaller, achievable steps.

- 3. Pay attention to instructions.** A classroom runs more smoothly when students do what the teacher says. Your child's score on a state test could be lowered if he doesn't fill out the answer sheet correctly. So spend time at home learning to follow directions. Cook together and talk about what happens if you don't follow the recipe exactly.
- 4. Solve problems on their own.** If your child can't figure out the answer to a math problem, help him think about a way to find the answer. Ask, "Have you worked other problems like this? Does your math book show how to find the right answer?"

Source: Anne Dopkins Stright and others, "Instruction Begins in the Home: Relations Between Parental Instruction and Children's Self-Regulation in the Classroom," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, American Psychological Association.

Early absences lead to school problems later



You woke up late and you wonder whether to take your child to school. After all, will one absence matter?

The answer is yes. A large-scale review of research shows that children put their entire school career at risk when they are absent in the early years. The learning they miss is hard to make up.

Still, it can be a challenge to get a family out the door on time. Here's how:

- **Get ready the night before.** Lay out what your child will wear. Make sure she has everything that she needs to take to school.
- **Establish routines.** Create a chart of the things your child needs to do each day. When it's a routine, she won't argue about it.
- **Allow extra time.** Set your alarm clock a few minutes early. Allow yourself an extra five or 10 minutes to get to school.

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

Chores can teach important lessons about responsibility



Tom Sawyer figured out a great way to get his chores done. He convinced other people to paint the fence!

But in most families, everyone needs to pitch in and help. While your kids are helping out, they can also learn some important lessons about responsibility.

To make chores effective:

- **Set a time** when everyone can do chores together. Things will get done faster, and you can make it more fun. Some families write chores on slips of paper and then let everyone choose one or two.
- **Be sure your child knows** what a “good job” looks like. Do the chore yourself while he watches. Next time, do it together. Then let him do it. He may not do it perfectly at first, but over time he will improve.
- **Teach your child** to do a job all the way to the end. That means

putting all the dishes away or lining the trash can. This skill will carry over to school—a report isn’t finished until it’s neatly written and includes a cover page.

- **Help your child see** how what he does is important to the whole family. Thank him for taking out the trash so the house smells fresh. Kids love to know they made a difference!

Source: H. Stephen Glenn and Michael L. Brock, *7 Strategies for Developing Capable Students (Responsible, Respectful, and Resourceful)*, ISBN: 0-761-51356-6, Prima Publishing.

“Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes, and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted.”

—Garrison Keillor

Study found simple strategies to reduce your child’s screen time



The time kids spend staring at a screen—watching TV, playing video games, surfing the Internet—affects their

grades. Kids who have the highest use of media are also the most likely to be the poorest readers.

But a new study found that there are simple ways parents can reduce their child’s screen time. Here are three changes you can make that will have a big impact:

1. **Set rules.** Most kids say there are no rules about screen time at their house. Setting limits—when kids

can watch TV, how long they can play video games—is an easy and effective way to make sure there’s also time for reading and play.

2. **Keep the TV out of the bedroom.** Kids with sets in their bedroom spend nearly three more hours a day watching TV.
3. **Turn off the TV** if no one is watching. You’ll reduce your child’s TV time by an average of an hour. And you may save money on your electric bill!

Source: “Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-year-olds,” Kaiser Foundation, www.kff.org/entmedia/mh012010pkp.cfm.

Are you doing your part to get school off to a great start?



While your child is getting back in the school routine, there are some things *you* can do to help her be successful this year.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are doing your part:

- ___ 1. **Are you reestablishing** homework and bedtime routines?
- ___ 2. **Have you reviewed** all information the school has sent home and marked important dates like conferences on your calendar?
- ___ 3. **Have you looked** through your child’s school books together and talked about what she will be learning this year?
- ___ 4. **Have you contacted** your child’s teacher and given your phone number and email address?
- ___ 5. **Are you scheduling** after-school activities carefully so your child has some “down” time?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers means you are helping your child have a successful start to the school year. Mostly *no* answers? Try those ideas in the quiz.

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The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
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Writers: Kristen Amundson & Susan O’Brien.

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Take time to talk to your child about the start of the school year



Perhaps your child had a rotten year last year. Or perhaps he's in a new school and worried about making friends. There

can be many reasons why children start the year feeling anxious.

Talking with a parent helps.

The National Association of School Psychologists says parents can curb their children's anxiety. Here's how:

- **Control your own anxiety.** Children absorb their parents' emotions. So get in a positive mood when you talk with your child.
- **Acknowledge your child's experience.** You can accept his feelings

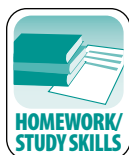
and still help him be positive.

"I know that last year wasn't so great. But this is a new year and you can make changes that will help you have a great year."

- **Teach coping skills.** Help your child figure out one or two things he can do to solve a problem on his own. He'll feel better knowing he can handle things.
- **Stay in touch.** Your child should know that if a problem doesn't go away, he should tell you or his teacher. Remind him that you are on his side and will be there for him.

Source: "Back to School Transitions: Tips for Parents," National Association of School Psychologists, www.nasponline.org/resources/home_school/b2shandout.aspx.

Establish homework routines for long-term school success



Imagine your child is a high schooler with hours of homework every day. How would he handle it? Help him

prepare now by instilling basic study skills. The habits your child develops in elementary school will last a lifetime!

You can instill good study habits if you:

- **Enforce a study time.** Choose one that works best for your child. Some kids need to blow off steam right after school, while others like to finish homework right away. Pick the time that works best for your child—and stick with it!
- **Create a study space.** Make sure your child has a quiet, comfortable place to work. It should be free of distractions, especially noise from the TV. Stay nearby to supervise, and set a good example

by reading or taking care of your responsibilities.

- **Finish early.** Long-term assignments are perfect opportunities to teach the value of planning. If your child has to write a book report, for example, split the project into parts and set a deadline for each one. Ideally, it will be finished with time to spare.
- **Compliment success.** How does it feel to work hard and see results? To do well on tests? To complete projects early? (Great!) Discuss this with your child. "I love what you did! You really took the time to be creative!" "You got an A because you studied every day. You earned it!" "Doesn't it feel great to be done? Now you can relax. Let's do something fun!"

Source: "Helping Your Child With Homework," U.S. Department of Education, www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/homework/index.html.

Q: Last school year, my child was constantly forgetting things. She couldn't remember if she had homework. She would forget to bring home the books or supplies she needed to complete assignments. She would even leave her homework at home. How can I help her take responsibility for her assignments this school year?

Questions & Answers

A: The start of a new school year is the perfect time to establish new routines that will help your daughter have everything she needs to complete her assignments:

- **Create a homework box.** Fill it with supplies needed for routine homework assignments—pencils, erasers, a ruler, scissors, a glue stick, etc. Tell her she's responsible for letting you know when supplies are low.
- **Give your child a pocket folder** just for homework-related papers to keep in her book bag.
- **Help your child create** and use a daily homework sheet. On it she should write down assignments and the books she needs to bring home to complete them. She should keep this sheet in her homework folder.
- **Identify a homework buddy** your child can call when she forgets or doesn't understand an assignment.
- **Create a backpack drop spot** by your exit door. Have your child put her book bag there with her completed homework in it.
- **Praise your child** when she completes her homework. But if she forgets it at home, don't rush it up to the school. Let her experience the consequences of being unprepared.

—Kristin Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: The Home-School Team

Explore new ways to be involved at school this year



Parent involvement significantly raises your child's chances of doing well, and it gives you an insider's view of life at school. Many parents

enjoy volunteering in classrooms. However, that's not the only place schools need parents' help.

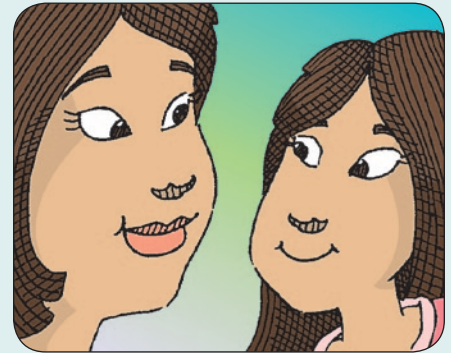
Parents can also support:

- **The library.** You might shelve books, check items in and out, read aloud or help students find materials.
- **The office.** This is one of the busiest places at school so there's usually more than enough work to go around.
- **The music room.** Teachers are usually planning one show or another, so there are plenty of costumes, sets and programs to make.
- **The surroundings.** Parents can spruce up hallways, classrooms, lounges and landscaping.
- **The parent-teacher organization.** Meetings, activities and fundraisers take lots of planning and work.
- **The teacher.** Check the calendar for special events, including field trips, as early as possible so you'll have the best chance of chaperoning or attending.
- **The cafeteria.** Lunch monitors can observe behavior and help students get what they need during lunch.
- **The student.** Simple at-home tasks, such as reading and helping with homework, make a huge difference!

Instill respect at home to ensure your child is respectful at school

Have you ever marveled at how teachers keep classes under control? They deserve a lot of credit, and so do parents! When parents instill respect at home, it shows at school. To help your child work well with teachers:

- **Practice the basics.** Expect your child to take turns, listen when adults talk, follow instructions, and say *please* and *thank you*. Enforce basic class rules at home (such as keeping hands and feet to self), and compliment your child's good behavior, especially in difficult situations.
- **Be a role model.** Children are most respectful when they're shown respect. Picture how



you want your child to behave, and then do the adult equivalent. Share, avoid interrupting, speak politely and apologize for mistakes. Show appreciation for rules. ("What if everyone ran stop signs?") And remember to say positive things about school!

What can you do if the school year doesn't start off well?



Sometimes new classes don't meet students' expectations. Kids might complain, "I don't like my teacher" or "School is too hard."

The best approach is to be calm, caring and cooperative. Think of yourself as:

- **An investigator.** Ask questions and read between the lines. If your child says the teacher is "mean," probe for details. There's a big difference between, "She makes me do all my work" and "She yells at me."
- **A mediator.** If the problem seems significant, take notes and say something like, "I'm sorry

you're going through this. I'll talk with the teacher about it." Stay neutral. Remember there are always two sides to a story.

- **A partner.** Approach the teacher in a positive and non-critical manner. Work together to understand your child's complaints.
- **A parent.** Occasionally, despite multiple tries with a teacher, a problem can't be solved. In that case, the principal can help. Remember, you and the school share the same goal: your child's academic success. By working together, you can make this school year a great one!

Source: "5 Smart Ways to Handle Teacher Troubles," Parenting, www.parenting.com/article/Child/Daycare--Education/5-Smart-Ways-to-Handle-Teacher-Troubles.