

Elementary School Parents[®]

Educational Service Unit #8
Linda Miller, Service Representative

make the difference!



Spend time with your child when there's no time to spare!

There's no question that time with children is vitally important. It's been said that children spell love T-I-M-E.

Still, the truth is that many parents would agree that on some days, they hardly have time to brush their teeth. So where can a harried parent find the time to spend with a child?

Here are some ideas:

- **Plan some one-on-one time.** Your child should know that there will be some time during the week when she gets your undivided attention. Seeing "Mom and Sydney" on the calendar for Saturday will help your child make it through a particularly tough week at school.
- **Do things together.** Invite your child to help you while you are cooking dinner. You'll get time

together—and helping in the kitchen could become your child's favorite chore.

- **Make the most of short fun breaks.** Time together doesn't always have to be planned, and it can come in small chunks. You're working on a report for work. Your child is doing math homework. Say, "Let's work until 7:00 and then take a 10-minute break together."
- **Let your child know she's on your mind.** If you can't be there, send your child an "I love you" email. Or write a note and tuck it in her lunch.

Source: R. Silverman, "No Time? 5 Tips to Spend Time with Children When You Have No Time to Spare," www.drrobysilverman.com/parenting-tips/no-time-5-tips-to-spend-time-with-children-when-you-have-no-time-to-spare/.

Researchers say *grit* is key to school success



What do spelling champions and West Point cadets have in common? It's a quality

known as *grit*—the ability to stick with something even when it's hard.

These days, researchers say *grit* is important. People who persist when a task gets challenging are most likely to be successful. To build *grit*:

- **Teach your child to focus** on how good it will feel to finish a tough task. "You did your homework. Now you can relax and enjoy yourself."
- **Emphasize starting.** People with *grit* don't put off unpleasant tasks. So help your child develop the habit of getting started. "You work on homework and I'll clean these drawers. Let's see what we can finish in 15 minutes."
- **Stress effort versus ability.** Tell your child that success requires dedication and effort as much or more than intelligence.

Source: A. Duckworth and others, "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 92, No. 6, American Psychological Association.

Reading for information is an important school skill



There are plenty of fiction books for children to enjoy. But you should also encourage your child to read for information.

Think about what you usually read during a day. You get your news from a newspaper or a website. You read a report at work. You read a recipe or a magazine article. That's the kind of reading children need to learn to do.

Reading for information is also important in school. As your child moves through the grades, he will have to read more challenging material. The more practice he gets, the more comfortable he will be.

Look for interesting stories you think your child will enjoy. Cut out the newspaper article about his

favorite athlete. Check online for an article on a subject he's studying in school.

Look for nonfiction books when you're in the library. Include them in your read-aloud time. You and your child will learn new things and build a bigger vocabulary.

Source: C. Blachowicz and D. Ogle, *Reading Comprehension: Strategies for Independent Learners*, Guilford Press.

“Reading takes us away from home, but more important, it finds homes for us everywhere.”

—Hazel Rochman

Help your elementary schooler succeed on standardized tests



The results of standardized tests have big implications, such as determining school funding. The results show how

schools and students are doing.

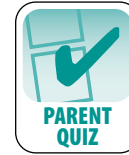
Remember, though, that one test doesn't represent a child's total abilities. A student may get high grades, for example, but be too anxious on test day to think clearly.

To prevent problems and help your child succeed:

- **Make school a priority.** Children who do well on tests tend to be the ones who study and finish homework on time. They also miss less school than other kids. These are habits you can encourage.
- **Develop healthy routines.** Your child needs plenty of sleep and a nutritious breakfast every day before school.
- **Communicate with teachers.** In addition to knowing how your child is doing throughout the year, pay attention to test details. “Which skills do the tests measure?” “How should my child prepare?”
- **Promote reading.** Many tests require reading, so make sure your child reads often. Then ask questions that stimulate thinking. “Why do you think the main character did that?”
- **Reduce anxiety.** Some kids like to take timed practice tests at home. But as test day approaches, focus on relaxation. Stay positive and calm. If your child is worried, she can take deep breaths and think confident thoughts, knowing she has your support no matter what.

Source: “Standardized Tests,” Scholastic.com, www.scholastic.com/resources/article/standardized-tests.

Are you putting a stop to arguments in your home?



Arguing drives parents out of their minds. Which, of course, is why children argue. Are you doing what you can to reduce the arguments in your home? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you disengage** when your child starts to argue? Say, “This is not something we are going to argue about.”
- ___ **2. Do you give your child choices** when possible? “You may take out the trash or empty the dishwasher.”
- ___ **3. Do you state what you expect** your child to do instead of asking, “Will you ... ?”
- ___ **4. Do you use body language** and facial expressions instead of always using words? Sometimes a look can communicate a lot!
- ___ **5. Do you enforce consequences** for arguing?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are taking effective steps to reduce the number of arguments in your house. 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.

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2012 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Kristen Amundson & Susan O'Brien.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Predict, prepare and practice for the most effective discipline



No parent would wait until a child burned down the house to talk about the danger of playing with matches.

Yet when it comes to discipline, parents often wait until after the problem arises. Instead, think about ways to prevent a problem in the first place.

Think about a behavior that you would like to change. Perhaps your child gets up so late in the morning that he often misses the bus. This is predictable—it happens at least twice a week.

Since you can predict the behavior, you can also think about ways to prevent it. Instead of waiting

until your child straggles down to breakfast, think of ways to avoid the late start. Is he tired in the morning because he's been up too late at night? An earlier bedtime could change that.

Is he rushing around trying to get organized for school? Spending time the night before could save precious minutes in the morning.

Then practice. Get out a stopwatch and see how quickly he can get dressed. If you predict, prepare, and practice, you can prevent many behavior problems.

Source: L.R. Griffin, *Negotiation Generation: Take Back Your Parental Authority Without Punishment*, Berkeley Publishing Group.

Q: It's science fair time again. My child actually enjoys working on a project every year. I try to be helpful, but I always remember that it's her project, not mine. The problem is that at our school, most of the projects that win the awards were clearly done by parents. (I just don't know any third graders who can construct a model of a nuclear reactor.)

So what do I do—give in and help her produce a “winning” project? Or let her do the work and be disappointed when she doesn't get a ribbon?

Questions & Answers

A: It's not going to make your daughter feel better, but she's actually the one who is the big “winner” if she does the work herself. She has learned how to be responsible for carrying out a project from start to finish. And she's learned something about science in the process.

But tell that to a third grader who just wants a ribbon. And when parents are competing with third graders, the chances are that the parents will come out on top.

You have a couple of choices. Perhaps this year you could get involved with planning the fair. You might even volunteer to coordinate the judging. That way, judges could focus more on projects children did themselves.

You also need to help your daughter set her expectations. Talk about how she really is a winner because of what she's learned. And let her know that you are really proud of her, whether she gets a ribbon or not.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

Build key critical thinking skills with planning and reflecting



As an adult, you make plans all the time. You plan the meals you're going to prepare before you head to the market. You plan how you're

going to fit everything into your busy day. Then after you've carried out your plan, you look back to see what you might have done better.

Those skills of planning and reflecting turn out to be critical thinking skills for children. It turns out that children who learn the essential skill of planning, which is thinking ahead, end up with stronger reading skills. Then as they further refine their plans (and later reflect on what they did), they develop a richer vocabulary. That, too, is helpful as they learn to read.

Sometimes, parents think that planning and making choices are

the same. While a plan does require choice, it is more than just selecting from some options. Planning involves making choices based on a desired outcome. Choice A is more likely to work than Choice B. Planning also involves thinking about possible problems and ways to avoid or overcome them.

So let your child make plans. “How could we walk to Madison's house?” Ask questions that may help your child consider potential trouble spots. “Where's the safest place for us to cross Main Street?” Then carry out the plan soon after. Later, reflect on how well the plan worked. You'll be helping your child develop skills that will help her think through any problem.

Source: A.S. Epstein, “How Planning and Reflection Develop Young Children's Thinking Skills,” *Young Children*, <http://journal.naeyc.org/btj/200309/Planning&Reflection.pdf>.

It Matters: Reading

Studies suggest there are benefits to active reading



Reading is a calm, cozy activity. But research suggests kids learn a lot from active reading, too. Actually crawling, for example, might help a child understand the word *crawl* better.

To try active reading:

- **Play dress up.** After reading a story, dress up as favorite characters. Use props from around the house and reenact exciting scenes. Make a point to use words from the book. "I'm climbing to the *peak* of the mountain! The very top!"
- **Put on a play.** Find a theater version of a book your child likes. Or help your child write a short skit. Gather friends and family to participate or sit in the audience.
- **Do a dramatic reading.** While reading a story, act it out. Take turns with your child or let her perform the whole thing. Use enthusiastic actions and tones that bring the story to life.
- **Plan a puppet show.** It's okay if you don't have actual puppets. You can use dolls, toys or even socks decorated with markers and yarn.
- **Make a movie.** Plan which scenes from a book you'll act out. Gather the cast, write a short script or outline, grab a video camera, and call, "Action!" Enjoy watching the film together.

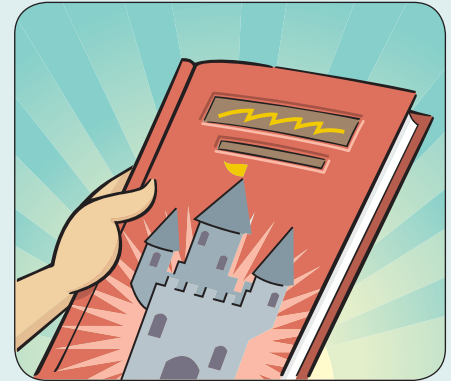
Source: S. Sparks, "Studies Find Students Learn More by 'Acting Out' Text," Education Week, www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/07/13/36read.h30.html.

Teachers share the strategies that motivate children to read

What if your child wants to read at school, but not at home?

Here are some strategies teachers use to motivate kids to read:

- **Find irresistible books.** Start with classics, such as Dr. Seuss. If you're not sure which books are most popular, ask the teacher or a librarian.
- **Address problems immediately.** If you notice your child is struggling with reading, talk with his teacher.
- **Celebrate reading!** Treat reading accomplishments as big successes, the same way you might cheer for a soccer goal or clap for a piano piece.
- **Read together.** These days, many computer games and toys teach about reading. But nothing



replaces a nurturing, enthusiastic parent.

- **Read every day.** Listen to audio books with your child, giggle at newspaper comics, read aloud, and attend library events.

Source: B. Inglesby, "Creating a Lifelong Reader," Mom's Homeroom, <http://momshomeroom.msn.com/articles/6/28839153>.

Help your elementary schooler develop good reading habits



What do good readers have in common? There are certain things they do before, during and after reading assignments. You can help your child develop these habits!

Encourage your child to:

- **Think about the text** before reading. What clues does she notice? What do the titles, pictures or headlines tell her? What does she already know about this subject? What does she think she'll learn?
- **Check comprehension** while reading. Your child should ask, "Does this make sense?" "What

information am I missing?" If she's confused by a word or idea, she should read it twice. Still confused? Keep reading, and then go back. Its meaning may become clear.

- **Make connections** after reading. Your child should summarize the story or information using a graphic organizer, such as a story map. Did her predictions come true? Were her questions answered? If not, she should reread or find answers elsewhere.

Source: "Reading Strategies," Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, www.paec.org/david/reading/general.pdf.