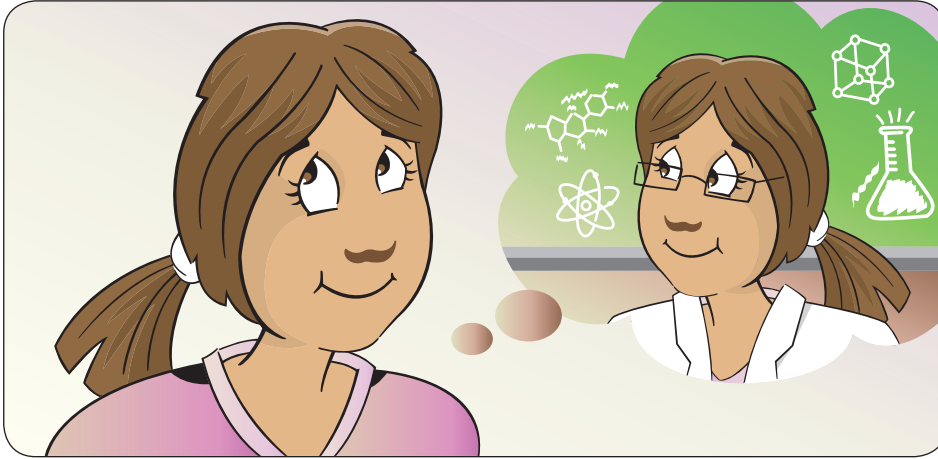


Elementary School Parents[®] *make the difference!*

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Parents can instill a positive attitude about math & science

Take a look at any list of high-paying jobs and you are likely to see they have one thing in common: They require a knowledge of math and science.

So why don't more students—especially girls—prepare for these careers? The answer is found as far back as elementary school. That's when students' attitudes toward math and science seem to be set.

Researchers took a look at how parents influence their children's views on math and science. The study found that, in general, parents are more likely to encourage boys rather than girls to take an interest in math and science. As a result, girls tend to lose interest in these subjects by high school—even though they may continue to get good grades.

So what can parents do to make sure their sons *and* daughters stay

interested in math and science? Here are some suggestions:

- **Play games that encourage math and science.** If you're in the car, see who can add the numbers on the license plate in front of you. If you're at the store, see if your child can calculate the change.
- **Help your child see herself as someone who is good in math and science.** Teach her that brains, like muscles, get stronger with practice. Remind her that "smart is something you *get*, not something you *are*."
- **Find role models.** Look for television shows or news stories featuring a wide diversity of people who are doctors, engineers and scientists.

Source: E. Gunderson and others, "The Role of Parents and Teachers in the Development of Gender-Related Math Attitudes," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, Springer.

Use 'house rules' to make discipline easy



Children who are expected to follow rules at home are much more likely to follow rules at school. And when students follow the rules, there is more time for learning!

Consider creating a set of "house rules." These should be rules and consequences that govern the things that are your biggest concerns. In one family, it might be behavior toward siblings. In another, it might be helping out around the house.

Come up with a catchy phrase that sums up both the rule and the consequence:

- **If you hit, you sit.** Any physical action toward a sibling will result in a time out.
- **If you partake, you take part.** Every family member has responsibility for meal time—from setting the table to clearing the dishes.
- **Pick up or pay up.** If your child doesn't keep track of belongings, put them in a closet. Once a week, he can redeem them for a small "fee."

Source: R. Guarendi, *Discipline That Lasts a Lifetime*, St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Show your child how to deal with failure in positive ways



Sooner or later, your child will experience failure. The way you both deal with that failure can help shape his character.

Here are strategies to help you and your child handle failure:

- **Always let your child know** you love him unconditionally.
- **Think about the positives.**

Mistakes are really opportunities for learning. What can your child learn from these experiences?

- **Praise what you can.** “Your team lost, but you made a great catch in the third inning.”
- **Be realistic.** If he’s doing his best and he still doesn’t bring up a grade, then don’t let him think you are disappointed.
- **Be a role model.** Handle your own mistakes and failures in positive ways.

- **Don’t dwell on the failure** more than your child does.
- **Don’t argue with teachers** or coaches to try to get them to change a decision or a grade. Your child must learn to respect their decisions.
- **Don’t solve every problem** for your child. If he got a bad grade on homework, don’t do the next assignment for him.

Source: D. Walsh, *No: Why Kids—of All Ages—Need to Hear It and Ways Parents Can Say It*, Free Press.

“A failure is not always a mistake, it may simply be the best one can do under the circumstances. The real mistake is to stop trying.”

—B. F. Skinner

Consider a study buddy to teach collaboration & make learning fun



Sometimes, kids can learn better if they work with another student. Having a study buddy can be a great way for students to master challenging material.

Study buddies can help each other practice math facts. They can prepare for a class presentation. They can test each other to see what they know—and don’t know.

Of course, without a bit of planning, a session with a study buddy can turn into nothing more than social time. Here are some tips to make a study session productive:

- **Commit to the purpose.** Both students should agree that they are getting together to study math or social studies—not to play the latest computer game.
- **Choose someone responsible.** Both students should be focused on learning.
- **Set a schedule.** Students might meet at the library. Or they could take turns going to each other’s house.
- **Set goals.** Decide what is going to be covered during a session. Then stick to it!

Source: G. Wood, *How to Study: Use Your Personal Learning Style to Help You Succeed When It Counts*, Learning Express.

Are you teaching your child how to be a good citizen?



The same qualities that help people live together in families can help them live in their communities and get

along with others in school. Are you helping your child develop good citizenship? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___1. **Do you talk** about school and family rules with your child and why they’re important?

___2. **Do you volunteer** as a family on a regular basis?

___3. **Do you show** your child that it is important to honor commitments by keeping your promises?

___4. **Do you model** sportsmanship for your child when you are watching sporting events and playing games?

___5. **Do you expect your child** to be responsible for her own actions and do you hold her accountable for her choices?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you’re doing your best to raise a good citizen. For *no* answers, try those ideas to help your child get along with others.

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Reduce your child's screen time by tracking it & setting limits



Today's kids spend seven and a half hours a day in front of a screen—a TV, a computer, a video game. They spend just 25 minutes a day reading.

That means they may grow up to be great at playing games like *Candy Crush*, but not able to do the reading in their high school history class. All that time spent sitting in front of a screen also means that today's kids aren't getting the exercise they need. (Well, except for their thumbs.)

What can you do? The first step is to help your child become aware of how much time she actually spends

sitting in front of a screen. Have her track the amount of time she spends watching TV, playing video games, texting friends and fiddling with a tablet. She may be surprised how quickly those minutes add up.

If your child is spending less than two hours a day in front of a screen, she is on the right track. If she is spending more, it's time to set limits.

Studies show that when parents set *any* media rules, kids' screen time drops by an average of more than three hours a day!

Source: "Reduce Screen Time," We Can! National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute, niswc.com/limit_screen.

Prewriting can make the writing process easier for your child



Ask any writer about the hardest part of writing and you're likely to hear the same answer: It's getting started that's the biggest challenge.

What's true for the pros is even more true for an elementary school child who's staring at a blank piece of paper. What on earth will he write about? And how can he possibly fill all that white space? It can seem overwhelming.

In the prewriting stage, you can ask your child questions and offer comments to help him shape his thinking and get off to a great start.

If your child is asked to write about a personal experience, for example, follow these three steps:

1. Help your child make a list of his recent experiences: the day he put up the tent in the backyard (and watched it fall down); the

time he sprained his ankle; the day his baby sister arrived.

Ask your child to pick one of his experiences to write about.

- 2. Ask your child to tell you** about the experience. Telling a story is an effective way to remember the key points. Why were he and his dad putting up the tent? Was it easy to find in the garage? Did they read the instructions? Your child can even draw pictures about what came first, second and third.
- 3. Ask him to answer** the basic newspaper reporter questions: *who, what, when, where, why* and *how*. Answering these types of questions will help your child collect all of the important details he needs for his writing.

Source: C. Fuller, *Teaching Your Child to Write—How Parents Can Encourage Writing Skills for Success in School, Work and Life*, Berkley Books.

Q: My two sons could not be more different about homework. The older one spends about two hours a day on his school assignments. He asks for help constantly. He wants me to check over everything. My younger son says he doesn't have homework or he did it at school. When he does homework, he races through it. How can I help them find a happy medium?

Questions & Answers

A: This is a snapshot of the challenges teachers face every day! Your children have the same parents and the same home environment. Yet they are as different as can be.

Surprisingly, however, their two approaches to homework can both be improved with the same three steps:

- 1. Talk with their teachers.** Share what your boys are doing at home. Two hours of homework a day for an elementary school student seems like a lot. Could he have so much because he's not finishing his classwork in school?
- 2. Establish a daily study time** at your house. Your younger son might as well bring work home from school, because otherwise you'll give him things to do. You could, for example, ask him to solve math problems to review.
- 3. Set some ground rules.** At the start of every study session, go over the work they have to do. Help them set priorities and make to-do lists. Stay nearby doing your own work, but let your older child learn to do the work himself. Check at the end to see if they finished everything on their lists.

It Matters: Working Together

Keep the lines of communication open with school



Parent-school communication is critical to students' success. Whether your child is an average

student or has special needs, these tips will ensure effective home-school communication:

- **Meet with school staff** regularly. Attend meetings and follow up to see how things are going. Always contact the teacher if concerns arise.
- **Arrive prepared.** Before meetings, write down notes so you are sure to remember everything you wanted to say and ask.
- **Be optimistic.** Remind yourself that you and your child's school have a mutual goal: your child's success. A positive attitude makes conversations more productive.
- **Listen attentively.** Keep an open mind as you focus on the teacher's view, which may be different from yours. Ask for clarification about anything confusing.
- **Stay calm.** It's natural for parents to feel defensive about their kids. If you accidentally say something you regret, just apologize and refocus on solutions.
- **Offer suggestions.** You know your child best. Explain what you think will help her most—and why you believe it will work.
- **Don't give up.** If an initial meeting doesn't get results, try again. You could also ask for another staff member to join you.

Source: G. Kemp, M.A. and others, "Helping Children with Learning Disabilities: Practical Parenting Tips for Home and School," Helppguide.org, niswc.com/communication.

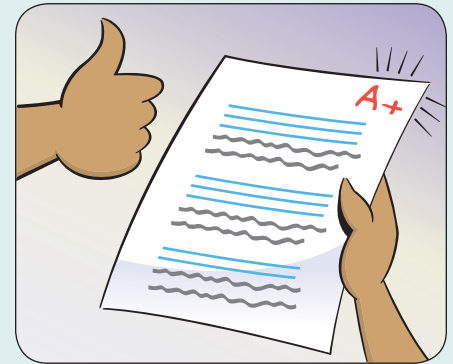
Parent involvement leads to your child's academic success

Getting involved with your child's education doesn't just feel rewarding. It *is* rewarding! Hundreds of studies link parent involvement—at home and at school—to student success.

Parent involvement raises kids' chances of earning higher grades, getting along with others, finishing homework, graduating from high school and more!

To benefit your child the most, be sure to:

- **Start early and stay involved.** When parents get involved early on, kids benefit more. And research shows parent involvement should continue right through middle and high school.
- **Explore your options.** Your involvement can be as simple as



asking, "What did you learn at school today?" or as complex as running a fundraiser. Ask about the school's needs and match them to your time and talents.

- **Be confident.** No matter how you get involved, remember that it makes a difference. All primary caregivers—mothers, fathers, grandparents and others—have valuable contributions to make.

Ten questions to ask at your next parent-teacher conference



Parent-teacher conferences can help you learn more about your child's strengths and weaknesses. They

can also give you a better idea about the year ahead.

Here are 10 questions you might ask your child's teacher:

1. **What will you cover** in this grade or subject this year?
2. **What are your expectations** for homework? Has my child missed any of her assignments so far?
3. **How are my child's work habits?** Does she use time in class well?
4. **Does my child** read at the level you would expect for this grade?
5. **Is my child able** to do the math you expect for a student in this grade?
6. **Is my child** in different groups for different subjects?
7. **Has my child missed** any classes other than the ones I contacted the school about?
8. **Does my child qualify** for any special programs?
9. **Does my child** get along well with the other students?
10. **What can I do at home** to help my child be more successful?