

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



September 2010

Evarts Elementary School

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## Three steps lead to school success

Your child has all his school supplies; he's met his teacher and knows his bus route. He's ready for a great year. What can you do to help? Research has identified three easy—but important—ways to promote your child's success in school:

### 1. Get to know your child's teacher.

Make plans to go to back-to-school night. Once you meet face-to-face, you'll find it easier to ask a question or share a concern about your child.

### 2. Talk about school regularly.

Ask your child what he's learning, who he sat with at lunch, what he created in art class, etc. This shows your child that his education is important to you.

### 3. Stay involved in out-of-school activities.

Even activities that take place outside of the school can impact your child's school success. Set limits on TV, video game and computer time. Encourage your child to get regular exercise. Make sure your child's homework is getting completed.

Parent involvement is more than just volunteering to help in the classroom. It's working on learning activities at home, setting high expectations and communicating the message that learning is a priority in your family.

Source: Michigan Department of Education, "What Research Says About Parent Involvement in Children's Education in Relation to Academic Achievement," [www.michigan.gov/documents/Final\\_Parent\\_Involvement\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_14732\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final_Parent_Involvement_Fact_Sheet_14732_7.pdf).



## Attendance matters!

Research suggests *chronic absence* (missing 10% or more of days in a school year) is linked to low academic performance. Learning builds day by day. So make sure your child is in school on time—every day!

Source: Hedy Chang, "Present and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades," National Center for Children in Poverty, [www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_837.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_837.html).

## Dinner improves grades?

Studies show that kids who regularly eat meals with their family earn better grades. They are also less likely to smoke, drink or use drugs. To make family meals a regular part of your day:

- **Ask** for help. Get your child involved in planning and preparing the meal.
- **Turn off** the TV.
- **Keep** the conversation positive. Talk about everyone's day.



Source: "Family Day," National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, [www.casafamilyday.org/pages/about.html](http://www.casafamilyday.org/pages/about.html).



## Organization starts the year off right

Simple steps can make an enormous difference in your child's school success. To make sure your child starts the year off right:

- **Get organized the night before.** You can review school papers, make and refrigerate lunches, pack backpacks, and agree on outfits.
- **Choose reasonable bedtimes** so everyone is well-rested. Do your best to stick with them.
- **Develop morning habits.** For example, have your child get dressed, comb hair, eat breakfast, brush teeth and put on shoes.
- **Choose a homework time.** Create a quiet study spot (stocked with necessary supplies) where your child can work at the same time each day.
- **Consider individual needs.** What tools would help your child stay organized? She might use calendars, to-do lists or a folder system. Talk with the teacher if organization is a real struggle.

## When schoolwork gets tough, be encouraging

School gets tougher each year, and it's easy for kids to compare themselves to classmates. Here are things you can do to keep your child focused:

- **Remind** him of his strengths.
- **Avoid** comparing him to siblings or friends.
- **Show** interest in his schoolwork.
- **Focus** on areas in which he's improved.





## How can parents prevent clashes over school clothes?

**Q:** Every morning before school, my daughter and I argue about her clothes. What she thinks is cool, I think is inappropriate. How can I end this morning madness?

**A:** You are right to be concerned. Your daughter's focus should be on learning at school, not on making a fashion statement. To avoid daily battles:

- **Review the school dress code.** If you're not sure if your daughter is dressed appropriately for class, talk to her teacher or the parent liaison.
- **Talk with your daughter.** Show her the dress code. Tell her that you support school policies. Share your ideas about what you consider appropriate attire for school.
- **Find common ground.** Look at clothing catalogs and magazines with your daughter. Find outfits that you both think will work for school.
- **Have your daughter select clothes** for school before she goes to bed. It's an easy way to eliminate a morning debate about what she will wear.
- **Emphasize education.** Your daughter doesn't see the big picture right now—that getting a good education is more important than what she wears to school. Find opportunities to get her excited about learning. Take her to the library, visit museums and surround her with books.



## Is your read-aloud time working well?

Time spent reading aloud is critical to helping kids become better readers. It's also fun! Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're making the most of read-aloud time:

1. **Do you set** aside at least 20 minutes each day for read-aloud time?
2. **Do you take** turns picking stories or books that you want to read together as a family?
3. **Do you stop** to talk about what you've just read? Or make predictions about what's about to happen?
4. **Do you let** your child take a turn reading aloud to you?
5. **Do you try** to stop reading at an exciting place in longer books?

**How did you do?** Each *yes* answer means you're making the most of the time you spend reading aloud. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

*"Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book."*  
—Dwight D. Eisenhower

## Promote good citizenship

Your child will learn best in a classroom where students listen to the teacher and respect others. To help your child become a good classroom citizen:

- **Play "I Talk, You Talk."** At home, take turns talking and waiting for the other person to finish.
- **Take turns.** Let your child take turns with things he likes (playing with a favorite toy) and things he doesn't (clearing the table).
- **Make cooperation** a family affair. Set the timer for 15 minutes and have everyone quickly pick up clutter. Then celebrate with family read-aloud time.

## Talk about hard work

Labor Day is celebrated the first Monday in September in the U.S. This holiday recognizes the vital role of workers in promoting the prosperity and well-being of this country. Tell your child that she has an important job, too—being a good student. Discuss how perseverance and hard work will help her have a successful year in school.

## Words enliven writing

Good writers find interesting ways to say what they mean. An "exciting words" chart can give your child more choices when writing. Start by noting a simple phrase at the top. It might be something as simple as, "He [said]." List alternatives under it, such as, *whispered*, *shouted*, *whined* or *pleaded*.

Try another sentence. "Our dinner was [good]." Instead, it might have been *scrumptious*, *tasty*, *spicy* or *button-popping*.



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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Pat Hodgdon. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1013