

Helping Children Learn®

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



February 2011

Evarts Elementary School
Edna Burkhart, Principal

Questions fire up thinking skills

Experts have identified six main categories of thinking skills. But you don't have to be an expert to use this information to help improve your child's thinking skills! Just ask questions that engage your child in using:

1. **Knowledge.** Ask your child to recall facts. For example, "What is the capital of Nebraska?"
2. **Understanding.** After reading an assignment, ask questions to check your child's comprehension. "What are the stages in the life cycle of the frog?"
3. **Application.** Ask your child to use what she has learned in everyday situations. For example "If our family drinks a quarter of this container of milk, how many ounces of milk are left?"
4. **Analysis.** Have your child compare and contrast things. "How are mammals different from reptiles?"
5. **Synthesis.** Help your child put information together to make new observations. For instance, after reading a story, ask "What would have changed if the character had made a different decision?"
6. **Evaluation.** Ask for your child's opinion. If there's a controversy or a concern in your community, ask your child, "What do you think would solve this problem?"



Kids respond to questions about knowledge and understanding every day. That's great. But make an effort to ask questions that require your child to use application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. You'll be helping your child move to higher levels of thinking.

Source: Council for Exceptional Children, "Improving Your Child's Thinking Skills," FamilyEducation.com, <http://school.familyeducation.com/gifted-education/cognitive-psychology/38660.html>.



Teach your child to give 110%

Finishing an assignment or getting a job done is fine. But ask your child, "Are you just doing the bare minimum or are you going the extra mile?" Kids who understand that there's more to schoolwork than just getting by will shine in class.

Encourage your child to give his all to every task. Have him:

- **Be his own critic.** Did he double check his spelling? Does his work deserve a top grade?

- **Add the bells and whistles.** Some kids leave projects until the last minute. Their work looks sloppy and rushed. Expect your child to go beyond what is expected. Encourage him to insert a colorful chart, include a detailed map or add a great cover.

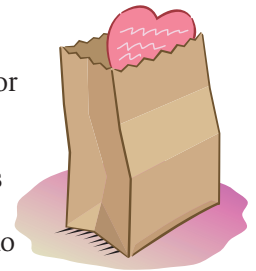
Source: Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, *Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes In You and Your Kids!* ISBN: 0-87788-354-8, WaterBrook Press.

Get results with 'if-then'

"Take out the trash." "Do your homework." Sometimes nagging doesn't work. Instead, use "if-then" statements. If your child does one thing, then something else will follow. "If you do your homework now, then you can watch TV after dinner."

Say 'I love you' every day

Kids love to receive special messages on Valentine's Day. But don't limit expressions of love to a holiday. Buy a package of valentines on sale—or make your own. Then, during the days ahead, tuck one in your child's lunch, hide one under his pillow or tape one to the bathroom mirror.



Kids who feel loved feel more confident. And confident kids are more likely to do well in school.

Learn, spend time together

"Children spell love T-I-M-E." You plan appointments with your doctor. Why not schedule some appointments with your child? And while you're spending special one-on-one time together, add on a learning opportunity. Here's how:

- **Read** together. Establish a daily read-together time. Turn off the TV, grab a good book and take turns reading aloud.
- **Visit** the library. Make this a weekly outing. Consider stopping for ice cream and a chat on the way home.
- **Check** out a museum. Before you go, plan which exhibits you'd most like to see. Help your child look for museums online.





How should parents handle bullying situations?

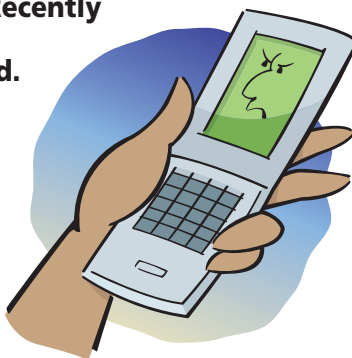
Q: Although my son has a learning disability, he works hard to keep up with the other kids. Recently a child in his class has started teasing him whenever the teacher isn't around. The child calls my son "Dummy" or worse. The teasing seems to focus on my son's disability. Should I call the child's mother?

A: Having a learning disability can be a challenge—and it can be even worse when teasing is involved.

Rather than talking to the other child's mother, make an appointment with your son's teacher. Tell her you want to share information she needs to know. Be as specific as possible. Instead of saying, "A classmate is mean," tell her exactly what the child said. If your son has received any notes or text messages, show those to the teacher as well.

Don't get angry or make threats. Ask how the school usually deals with situations like this. Ask if there is a policy on bullying. Ask the teacher to keep you informed about how this problem is being resolved.

While the school is taking action, give your son extra support. Do things he enjoys. And hang in there. He'll get through this, and so will you.



Are you fighting off winter illness?

The winter months are often times when kids get sick. Each year, millions of school days are lost because kids have colds or the flu. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you know the ways parents can keep their child (and the other kids in the class) from getting sick:

- ___ **1. Have you taught** your child to cover a cough by coughing into her bent elbow?
- ___ **2. Do you encourage** regular hand washing and send hand sanitizer or wipes to school?
- ___ **3. Do you make sure** your child gets plenty of sleep?
- ___ **4. Have you taught** your child to avoid touching her eyes, nose and mouth, since that's usually how germs are spread?
- ___ **5. Will you keep** your child home if she gets the flu so it doesn't spread to other students?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're helping your child fight winter illness. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Education only helps those in attendance."
—Arthur Tugman

Share rules for researching

By third grade, your child may have to do projects that require plenty of research—and she'll probably need help from you. You can't do it for her, of course, but you can make her research more productive. To start:

- **Look at the research together.** Visit the library and find books about your child's topic. Practice using the table of contents, section headings and index.
- **Supervise online research** and review how to use sources. For instance, it's not okay to "cut and paste" words into a project. Your child must put things in her own words. She also has to list her sources.

Get ready for chapter tests

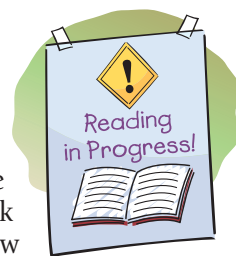
To help your child prepare for his next test:

- **Go** through the chapter with your child. Ask him to show you what he thinks might be on the test.
- **Review** the questions at the end of the chapter together.
- **Quiz** him on key vocabulary words.

Create a 'reading retreat'

Make your child's bedroom a special reading spot. Provide good lighting and say something like, "You're old enough to stay up 15 minutes longer to read. Or we can turn off the light at the same time as always. It's up to you." Your child will probably choose to read.

Decorate with a "reading chain." (Start a paper chain. Every time your child finishes a book or story she can add a new link to the chain with the title.) And allow her to make and post a sign that says, "Keep Out! I'm Reading!!"



Helping Children Learn®

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.

Copyright © 2011, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

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

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