

# Elementary School Parents<sup>®</sup>

April 2023  
Vol. 34, No. 8

Wilkes-Barre Area School District  
Title I Federal Programs

*make the difference!*



## Spark your child's interest in reading by being a role model

Research shows that reading role models are critical to establishing reading as an essential part of a child's life. In addition, children who see adult family members reading are often more motivated to read themselves.

To demonstrate that reading is informative and fun:

- **Let your child** see you reading something every day. Make it clear to your child that you think reading is worth your time.
- **Tell your child** *why* you are reading. Are you reading for information, to double-check something you think you know, or for enjoyment?
- **Look up a word** in the dictionary when you come across one you are unsure of. Ask if your child knows the meaning of the word.
- **Read aloud** to your child. When you come across something interesting, share a small part of it. Your child may be motivated to finish reading it independently.
- **Use your library card.** When you take your child to the library, find something to check out for yourself.
- **Join your child.** When you see your child reading, pick up something to read yourself.
- **Give books as gifts.** Show your child that books are special by giving them as gifts. Suggest your child give books to friends, too.
- **Ask relatives** to support your child's reading habits. Could they record themselves reading a book aloud?

Source: *Kids and Family Reading Report*, Seventh Edition, Scholastic, Inc.

## When students miss school, they miss a lot



When students miss just one day a week of school, they'll have missed more than two and a half

years of class time before graduation! Even missing one day a month quickly adds up.

Frequent absences result in lost learning time, as well as class discussions and demonstrations in critical subjects like math and reading.

Here are three things you can do to help your child get to school on time:

- **Prep the night before.** Teach your child to pack a lunch, lay out clothing and leave items needed for school by the door in the evenings. Being prepared will help your child be ready to leave on time.
- **Enforce a sensible bedtime.** Your child needs sleep to stay healthy and learn. Occasionally staying up late to finish an assignment isn't a crisis, but it shouldn't become a habit.
- **Stick to a morning routine.** Have your child wake up at the same time each day, so there is enough time to get ready without rushing.

# Give your child opportunities to practice making decisions



The best way to learn how to make good decisions is by making lots of them. So give your child as many opportunities as you can to make choices.

Young children can decide which healthy items to pack for lunch, or which shirt to wear, for example. Older children can make decisions about more significant things. Of course, you must still set boundaries. For example, your child can decide whether to do science or social studies work first, but it's not OK to decide to watch TV before working.

Gradually give your child more freedom to make decisions. Keep in mind that children don't always connect outcomes with the choices

they have made, and help your child think about the potential consequences of decisions.

If your child makes a poor decision, sit down and talk about why it didn't work. Ask, "What would you do differently next time?" Your elementary schooler will be able to draw on this experience when faced with a future decision.

**"Listen to the desires of your children. Encourage them and then give them the autonomy to make their own decision."**

—Denis Waitley

# Responsibility is crucial for your elementary schooler's success



Educators agree that responsible children do better in school. Luckily, families have countless opportunities

to foster responsibility.

Here are just a few to start with:

- **Enforce a few age-appropriate rules and consequences.** State them clearly so your child knows the exact behavior you expect.
- **Trust your child** with meaningful tasks. School-age children are capable of handling responsibilities such as picking up their rooms, setting the table and helping with the laundry.
- **Discuss ways to help others.** Talk about what it means to be a responsible member of a community. Consider different ways your family

can contribute, such as by donating gently-used clothing to a charity or volunteering your time for an important cause.

- **Talk about financial responsibility.** Many children receive an allowance. Even a small one provides a great opportunity to teach about budgeting, spending, saving and giving.
- **Let your child make decisions,** such as how to solve a problem with a friend at school. Making decisions builds confidence.
- **Adjust rules and responsibilities.** As your child matures, abilities will change. Consider assigning more grown-up chores. Or perhaps your child can make new and exciting decisions. Talk about how great it feels to be responsible!

# Are you helping your student read fluently?



Studies consistently show that students who read aloud with *fluency* are most likely to have a strong understanding of what

they've read. Children read fluently if they read aloud smoothly, accurately and with expression.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your child develop this valuable reading skill:

\_\_\_ 1. **Do you set aside time** for your child to read *to you* in addition to the time you spend reading aloud?

\_\_\_ 2. **Do you let your child pick** what to read? Even if you think it's too easy, nothing succeeds like success.

\_\_\_ 3. **Do you try not to interrupt** when your child reads a word incorrectly?

\_\_\_ 4. **Do you offer help** if your child asks how to pronounce a word, and then continue reading?

\_\_\_ 5. **Do you discuss a book** after your child is finished reading?

## How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you're helping your child develop fluency. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Published monthly September through May.  
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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.  
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.  
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

# Everyone wins when families volunteer and get involved!



Have you ever thought about volunteering at your child's school?

It is not too late in the year to give it a try. Here

are six reasons to get involved:

1. **Your child will benefit.** Children whose parents are involved in their schools do better. Even if you're not volunteering in your child's classroom, your child will know you're at school. You will be reinforcing the message that you think learning is important.
2. **You'll get to know teachers and other school staff.** That makes it easier to ask for help when your child needs it.
3. **You'll get to know other parents.** They can be valuable resources and provide advice when needed.
4. **The school will benefit.** Schools that have a strong school volunteer base perform better. Whether you read to a class, help in the cafeteria or tutor students in the library, you'll be freeing school staff to spend more time with students who need it. And that leads to more learning.
5. **Volunteering is easy.** Many schools offer training to volunteers. And there are volunteer jobs that can be completed at home, at night or on weekends. So every parent can get involved.
6. **Volunteering is fun.** You'll meet lots of interesting students and adults. You may learn new skills. And you'll get a good feeling from knowing you've done something worthwhile.

## Celebrate the month of April with fun learning activities



April may bring showers—but it also brings learning opportunities. Here are some enjoyable things you can plan to do with

your child this month:

- **April 2** is International Children's Book Day and Hans Christian Andersen's birthday. This day is designed to inspire a love of reading. Head to the library and check out some books!
- **April 13** is the birthday of Thomas Jefferson. Go online to learn more about this president. Take a virtual tour of his home, Monticello, at [explorer.monticello.org/virtualtour](http://explorer.monticello.org/virtualtour).
- **April 15** is income tax deadline day. Talk about the purpose of taxes. Practice calculating percentages with your child.
- **April 22** is Earth Day. As a family, think of something you can do to protect the earth. Perhaps you could plant a tree, reduce water usage or set up a recycling station at home.
- **April 23** is the day Shakespeare's birthday is celebrated. Ask your child to write a scene for a play and act it out with friends or family.
- **April 26** is the birthday of John James Audubon, who is known for his drawings and paintings of North American birds. Challenge your child to draw pictures of the birds around your home.
- **April 30** is International Jazz Day. Find a radio station that plays jazz and listen to it with your child. Then each of you can describe how the music makes you feel.

**Q:** The principal called to tell me that my fifth grader shoved a child to the ground at school today. As a result, my child is going to be suspended for one day. I know this is the school's policy; however, my child says the other student started the fight by name-calling. Should I go to the school to complain?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** Children don't always make the right choices. What's important is the lesson they learn after they've made a bad choice. Arguing with the school on your child's behalf now can teach the wrong lesson.

Instead:

- **Ask about the incident.** Does your child admit to pushing the other child? It's important for your child to learn to tell the truth. Explain that pushing people is never OK—even if they are saying mean things.
- **Talk about** other ways your child could've reacted in that situation, such as by ignoring the other child, for example.
- **Encourage your child** to tell the teacher if the name-calling continues. If your child had reported the incident, the *other* child might be the one in trouble.
- **Discuss the reasons** schools need rules. They are necessary to protect the physical and emotional safety of all students.
- **Allow your child** to experience the consequences. On the day of the suspension, don't let your child play outside, watch TV or play on digital devices. Instead, expect your child to read, work on school assignments or write about this experience in a journal.

# It Matters: Schoolwork

## Understand the hidden value of assignments



Schoolwork gives students the opportunity to practice the skills they are learning in school. But did you

know that completing assignments also teaches valuable life lessons?

When students complete work independently, they learn skills such as:

- **Organization.** Keeping track of due dates and assignments helps students learn the value of being organized. Show your child how to use organizational tools, such as a daily planner, folders and binders.
- **Responsibility.** Students learn the importance of fulfilling obligations. They also learn that they are accountable for their mistakes and successes.
- **Initiative.** Due dates can help students learn how to be self-motivated. Choosing to start working on the social studies project as soon as it is assigned shows initiative.
- **Perseverance.** Many parents want to protect their children from frustration. However, making your child's life easier now may make it harder in the future. Sticking with a tough assignment and refusing to give up helps your child gain confidence and develop perseverance.
- **Time management.** Breaking down large tasks and prioritizing responsibilities in order to complete assignments on time helps students learn how to manage time effectively.

## Offer your elementary schooler the right kind of support

**H**omework is one communication link between home and school. Teachers assign homework to help students understand and review classwork. When parents are involved in homework, they find out what students are learning.

But being involved does not mean *doing* your child's homework. Instead, you should:

- **Make sure your child understands** the assignments. Look over the instructions together. Then have your child explain the assignment to you. Ask questions to check your child's understanding.
- **Review homework every day.** Even if you're not present when your child completes assignments, always ask to see it. Your interest sends the message that completing work is important.
- **Encourage your child** to take a break when struggling. Then, try



to help with what is frustrating your child.

- **Stay in touch** with the school. Be sure to let the teacher know if your child consistently struggles with homework. Ask what you can do at home to help your child.
- **Remain positive.** Your attitude will affect your child.

## A math strategy wheel can help your child get back on track



When students get stuck on a math problem, they might not remember how to get themselves back on track.

That's where a strategy wheel can help. To make one, ask your child to list all the different things students can do to find the answer to a math problem, such as:

- **Reread the problem.**
- **Draw a diagram.**
- **Restate the problem** in their own words.

- **Guess an answer** and then check it out.
- **Think about how** they solved other problems like this one.

Then, have your child create a pie chart with each of the strategies listed. Post the chart wherever your child works on math assignments.

The next time your child is stuck, all that's needed is to glance at the wheel and then try out one or more of the strategies.

**Source:** D. Ronis, *Brain-Compatible Mathematics*, Skyhorse Publishing.