

Elementary School Parents[®]

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make the difference!



Help your child maintain focus on schoolwork until year's end

Some kids act like summer vacation has already started. They “forget” their homework at school. They avoid anything difficult or challenging—and that includes just about *everything!*

But the school year has not yet ended. Kids need to stay focused on learning until the last day of school. Here's how to help your child:

- **Review old homework papers,** quizzes and tests. Use them to talk with your child about how much he has learned this year. Having these papers close at hand will also be useful as he studies for end-of-year tests!
- **Shape year-end learning** around some of your child's interests. If he has one more book report due,

choose a book on a topic he loves. If he has a social studies project, try to focus on something he is interested in learning.

- **Help your child manage** end-of-the-year projects. Long-range assignments can overwhelm any child. So in addition to helping your child break the big project down into smaller steps, here's a great rule of thumb: Move the deadline for finishing any big project back by two days. If the diorama is due on Friday, aim to get it finished by Wednesday. That way, he'll have a cushion *if* (okay, *when*) something comes up!

Source: Donna Goldberg, *The Organized Student*, ISBN: 978-0-7432-7020-5 (Fireside Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-456-6798, www.simonsays.com).

Look at your child's behavior in a positive way



Sometimes we fail to notice our kids' strengths. That's because strengths are often the “flip

side” of traits we view as negative.

If your child takes 15 minutes to pick out her clothes, you may see her as picky. But look at the positive side of that behavior. She's selective. She sets standards. Suddenly, that negative trait seems like a pretty positive thing.

Take a child who's stubborn. She's also determined. She sticks with it. She is persistent. She doesn't follow the crowd.

As you begin to see your child in this new way, you will also help her think of herself in a new light. Later, you can both move on to seeing other people in the same way.

So when she says, “My teacher is so strict,” you will have a new way to respond. “She has high standards. She expects the best from you.”

Source: Gary McKay and others, *Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World: Teaching Your Children the Power of Mutual Respect and Consideration*, ISBN: 0-761-52811-3 (Prima Publishing, 1-800-733-3000, www.randomhouse.com/index.pperl).

Teach your elementary schooler how to evaluate online sources



"I read it on the Internet." Many kids (and adults) think anything they read online must be true.

A new survey found that parents talk with their kids about online safety. However, they're less likely to help kids judge if a source is biased or not.

As the number of websites increases, it's even more important to give kids the tools to evaluate what they read.

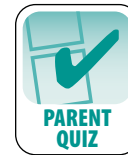
Ask your child to choose a topic you can research together. It should be a topic that interests your child, on which people might hold differing views. Pull up links to several sources.

Together, look at those sites. Then ask some questions:

- **Who wrote the site?** Most websites will identify the author on the front page.
- **Can you tell the author's point of view?** A company that sells toys will have a different viewpoint than a group working for toy safety.
- **Can you verify any of the details?** Do other reliable sites include the same information?
- **Is the information current?** The website should have a date when it was revised.

Source: ESchool News, "Survey: Parents Talk to Their Kids About the Web," October 2007, www.eschoolnews.com/news/showstoryts.cfm?Articleid=7391.

Are you building a love for reading in your child?



"A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't," Mark Twain once said. But far too many kids would

rather spend their time doing *anything* but reading.

Are you doing what you can to help your child love reading? Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the questions below:

- ___ **1. Is reading a regular part of your child's day?** Do you make sure he reads at least 30 minutes a day?
- ___ **2. Does your child see you reading something** (newspaper, magazine, book) **nearly every day?**
- ___ **3. Do you allow your child to try to read a book that may be too hard for him?** If it is, do you decide to use the book for a read-aloud?
- ___ **4. Do you make regular trips to the library and encourage your child to check out all types of age-appropriate reading material?**
- ___ **5. Do you plan on enrolling your child in summer reading activities at your local library?**

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you're doing a good job of raising a child who loves to read. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

Plan fun activities, spend quality time with your child this summer



This summer, plan to spend some quality time with your child and keep her brain at work, too. Sit down with your child and make a list of all the

fun possibilities that are before you this summer. Ask yourself:

- **Are there places** in our town we've never visited but would like to?
- **Are there free concerts** or plays nearby? When are they scheduled?
- **What summer activities** would we like to try? Are there things I could do with my child, such as riding a bike or learning a new sport?
- **What are my child's interests?** What could my child do to explore those interests?
- **Is a class available** that interests my child? Whether she wants to learn how to make a video or learn to knit, there may be a class on that subject.

Once you have your list, narrow it down with your child. Choose three things you both want to do this summer. Then make a plan so you can get them done before school starts next fall.

Source: Ron Fairchild and others, *How Did You Spend Your Summer Vacation? What Public Policies Do (And Don't) To Support Summer Learning Opportunities for All Youth*, Spring 2007 (Robert Bowne Foundation, 212-658-5878, www.summerlearning.org).

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Maintain limits for TV viewing during the summer vacation



At the end of the summer, what will your child remember? Hours spent reading, playing and being outdoors? Or hours spent staring at the TV?

It's all too easy to let TV-viewing hours creep up during the vacation. But the American Academy of Pediatrics wants parents to limit TV time to two hours a day—or fewer.

Here are some ideas about how you can make that work during the summer months:

- **Make a schedule.** Set aside a time each day for TV viewing. To make

your schedule work, you'll also need to schedule time for activities like reading. While you're at it, schedule times for snacks so your child doesn't eat out of boredom.

- **Stock up on other things to do.** Create a costume box for plays. Collect art supplies. Buy a few board games.
- **Take TVs out of bedrooms.**
- **Plan trips.** Go to museums, parks or on neighborhood walks.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Public Education, "Children, Adolescents, and Television," *Pediatrics*, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/107/2/423>).

Encourage responsibility by helping your child enjoy chores



How do you get your child to *want* to do chores? Remember that elementary-age children love to plan and carry out their plans. So first, involve your child in brainstorming what needs to be done and when. Also:

- **Be a good model.** Happily do chores yourself. Acknowledge your satisfaction when you finish a chore.
- **Give your child a choice of chores.** She should be able to take out the trash, vacuum, fold laundry, feed a pet, help with yard work.
- **Rotate chores each week,** so no one feels "stuck" doing a chore she doesn't like. Put chores on slips of paper family members draw from a bowl.
- **Make a game of it.** Race to put things away. Or set a timer and see if your child can "beat the clock."
- **Use a chore chart.** Place a star on it when chores are finished.

- **Schedule a "work time"** when everyone is doing a job.
- **Curb criticism.** Don't immediately say what your child did wrong. Gently ask what she might do to improve her work.
- **Be encouraging.** Say, "Here's the broom so you can help! You can do it. Let's do this together."
- **Follow chores with fun.** Have a basket of index cards listing fun stuff to do after chores.

Source: Lynn Lott and Riki Intner, *Chores Without Wars: Turning Dads and Kids from Reluctant Stick-in-the-Muds to Enthusiastic Team Players*, ISBN: 0-7615-1252-7 (Prima Publishing, 1-800-726-0600, www.primapublishing.com).

"Tell them how they're special to you Nothing solidifies a relationship more than letting someone know why you consider his or her presence in your life a precious gift."

—Susan Stiffelman,
Licensed Marriage, Family Counselor

Q: My child is in fourth grade. I've heard a lot about one of the fifth-grade teachers at our school. Many parents say I should ask the principal not to put my child in her class. Will this work?

Questions & Answers

A: Probably not. In most schools, children are assigned to classes based on criteria other than parent requests.

But there's no question that your child may work better in a certain kind of classroom. If he has attention issues, for example, he might thrive in a class where things are orderly and predictable. If he's very creative, that same classroom might feel stifling.

That's the type of important information principals want to know. As they assign children to classes, they want to place them with teachers who will help them do their best.

So instead of asking the principal for a specific teacher:

- **Try to describe** your child's learning style. What school experiences has he loved? What traits affect his learning?
- **Be candid** about your child's weaknesses. One teacher may be able to address those weaknesses more successfully.
- **Talk about the type of** classroom where you think your child would thrive. Does he need structure or rebel against it? Does he have any special education needs?

Finally, if your child is assigned to this teacher's class, don't panic. Instead, give the teacher a chance. Different children react in different ways—and this teacher may be just right for your child.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Summer Learning

Keep your child reading through summer months



Students who don't read over the summer months lose an average of two to three months in reading skills. Those who keep reading experience gains.

The more your child reads, the easier it'll be for him. And the more he'll *want* to read. So see that your child reads 30 minutes every day.

Try these activities to keep reading fun:

- **Read the newspaper together.** Give your child the comics to read. Ask him which one's the funniest. Discuss sports, the weather, letters to the editor, travel destinations, etc.
- **Read aloud together.** You read a line or page of a book. Then your child does. Or you read the narrative. Let your child read the dialogue—what characters say.
- **Dramatize what you read.** Select a simple scene from one of your child's books. Assign character roles. Discuss what happens first, second, next. Then act it out, adding lots of dialogue.
- **Promote practical reading.** Help your child read a recipe to bake cookies. Involve your child in reading instructions to build or repair something.
- **Create reading-related jobs.** Ask your child to recopy damaged recipes. Your child could also organize the family bookshelf or video collection in alphabetical order.

Source: Kathy Zahler, *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Raise a Child Who Loves to Read*, ISBN: 0-02-861765-7 (Macmillan, 1-888-330-8477, <http://us.macmillan.com>).

Take action to help your child ward off summer 'brain drain'

A new study shows that over the summer students can lose up to 60 percent of what they learned in the school year. This "brain drain" in elementary school hurts performance in later school years.

To help prevent a loss in your child's learning skills this summer:

- **Hone basic math skills.** Let your child measure and weigh as you cook. Help her organize a lemonade stand. Help her figure out the cost of ingredients and calculate change.
- **Explore the natural world of science.** Have a family scavenger hunt for bugs, leaves, rocks and flowers. Study the stars.
- **Keep your child writing.** Ask her to write your grocery list and thank-you notes. Give her questions that she can answer in a journal.



- **Nurture curiosity.** Let her disassemble and reassemble an old appliance (be sure to supervise). Fill glasses with different amounts of water and tap on them to create tunes.

Source: "Prevent Summer Brain Drain: Learn Ways to Retain School Knowledge During Summer Vacation," July 16, 2007, ABC News, <http://abcnews.go.com/print?id=3379558>; "The Learning Season: The Untapped Power of Summer to Advance Student Achievement," Nellie Mae Education Foundation, www.nmefdn.org/uploads/Learning_Season_ES.pdf.

Enhance learning with some physical activity this summer



Brain research shows that exercise can enhance learning. It fuels a child's brain with oxygen and nutrients needed for reasoning and memory.

Try these fun ways to keep your child moving this summer:

- **Tug of War.** Give two kids a rope and have them hold opposite ends. They each stand on a towel four feet apart and see who can pull the other off the towel. Then have them try doing it using just one hand or standing on one leg.

- **Partner Mirrors.** Face your child and move a part of your body. Can your child can mimic you exactly? Now you try to mimic your child's moves.
- **New Moves.** Brainstorm a new aerobic activity you can do together each week—hiking, biking, tennis, skating. Then do it!
- **Do yoga.** Yoga positions stretch and strengthen every part of the body. They enhance balance and coordination.

Source: "Brain Fitness for Learning," *New Teacher Advocate*, www.kdp.org/pdf/NTA%20W%2005shaw.pdf.