

# Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Timber Lane Elementary School

October 2008

## BUILDING CHARACTER

### Make manners a high priority

If you've noticed that students' rudeness is a growing problem, you're not alone. Nine out of 10 parents say kids need to practice better manners at school. Sadly, examples of bad manners are all around. Customers yell at store clerks. Drivers make rude gestures. Television shows, videogames and songs often contain offensive material. You can promote respectful behavior. Encourage your child to:

- **Use manners at school.** He says "please" and "thank you" at home, and he should do the same at school.
- **Pay attention.** Help your child listen to instructions and focus on what you say. He has to do this with teachers, too.
- **Follow directions.** Your child may not always like the teacher's ideas. But he needs to know that she is in charge.
- **Put things away.** Expect your child to care for his belongings. At school, he should be responsible for organizing and maintaining his supplies.
- **Be on time.** Promptness is something your child will always need. When you help him get to school on time, it shows respect for everyone and builds an essential habit.



Source: Peggy Post and Cindy Post Senning, *The Gift of Good Manners: A Parent's Guide to Raising Respectful, Kind, Considerate Children*, ISBN: 0-060-18549-X (HarperCollins, 1-800-242-7737, www.harpercollins.com/hc).

## REINFORCING LEARNING

### Simple game reinforces letter sounds

Playing the "Alphabet Words" game is an easy way to practice letters, spelling and word sounds. Here's how to play with your child:

- **Draw a line** down the center of a piece of paper. Write the letters A through M in the first column, and N through Z in the second.
  - **Encourage your child** to think of as many words for each letter as she can (*apple* for A, *brown* for B, etc.).
  - **Give hints when needed.** "I'm thinking of something cold and hard that starts with I."
  - **Say the word** if your child still has trouble. "I was thinking of *ice*."
  - **Have your child** write down the words. Offer help if necessary.
- For an extra challenge, make all the words match a theme. For instance, try to think of 26 animals, foods or places. (It's okay to skip a letter like X if she gets stumped!)

Source: Peggy Kaye, *Games for Reading*, ISBN: 0-394-72149-7 (Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 1-800-733-3000, www.randomhouse.com).

## WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

### Form a parent-teacher team

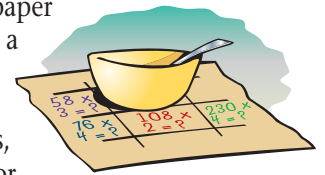
Your child's teacher wants to work with you. To do your part:

- **Use email.** But remember, the teacher may not be able to reply immediately.
- **Read everything** the teacher sends home.
- **Monitor** your child's homework every day.
- **Say thank you.** One of the best ways to build a strong relationship is to thank teachers for everything they do.

## TESTING TIPS

### Make a test-prep place mat

Does your child have a big test coming up? Help her cut a piece of poster board or even a paper bag to the size of a place mat. Have her write key vocabulary words, important dates or math formulas on it. Be sure to have her include some funny drawings. She can review during meals on days before the big test.



## BUILDING MATH SKILLS

### Reinforce math skills by using coupons at the store

Have your child help you cut out some coupons for foods he likes. At the store, ask him to help you find the items. He may want to use a notepad or piece of scrap paper to help him keep track of the items' original prices. After checking out, ask him, "How much did we save?" Then help him compare his answer to your grocery receipt.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### How can parents improve children's reading skills?

**Q: My fifth grader says she hates reading. She reads exactly what the teacher requires, but not another word. She also reads slowly, sounding out each word. What can I do to get her to read more often—and more easily?**

**A:** You have noticed an important connection. Your daughter can improve her fluency—the ability to read smoothly and quickly—by reading more often. Here are some ways to encourage her to spend a little more time reading:

- **Talk with her teacher** or a librarian. Ask about high-interest books for kids her age.
- **Try a book in a series.** Once she's hooked, she may read all of them.
- **Give her a subscription** to a magazine. If she likes sports, get her *Sports Illustrated for Kids*. If she likes the outdoors, *Ranger Rick* might be appealing.
- **Take turns reading a book aloud.** You read a page or two and then have her read.
- **Check out graphic novels** for young readers. They often have captivating story lines.
- **Make weekly trips** to the library.

Finally, don't worry if she doesn't read "good" books. A kid who reads comic books is still reading—and improving her reading skills.



## PARENT QUIZ

### Are you ready for conference time?

In order to make the most of a parent-teacher conference, you have to show up prepared. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you've done your parent-teacher conference homework:

- \_\_\_ **1. Have you scheduled** a conference with your child's teacher?
- \_\_\_ **2. Have you written** down what you want the teacher to know about your child?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you have** a list of some questions you'd like to ask the teacher?
- \_\_\_ **4. Have you asked** your child what he thinks the teacher will say?
- \_\_\_ **5. Are you planning** to ask about ways you can help your child learn at home?

*Each yes answer means you are well-prepared for a productive parent-teacher conference. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.*

*"The one thing children wear out faster than shoes is parents."*  
— John J. Plompp

## DISCIPLINE

### Set and enforce limits

When it comes to setting limits, you may sometimes give in. That's easier than arguing. But setting limits is one of your most important jobs. Here are some tips:

- **Start** with a behavior that matters to you. If seeing clothes on the floor drives you crazy, start there.
- **Talk** with your child about what you expect.
- **Set up** consequences. "If you don't pick up your clothes, then I won't wash them when I do laundry."
- **Stick** to your rules. Enforce consequences every time. Otherwise, your child will learn that you don't mean what you say.

## MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

### Respond to your child's writing assignments

When you read your child's writing, make sure your response motivates him. First, give a specific compliment. Then summarize what you learned from his work. Finally, ask questions that might help him, such as, "Do you have an example of this idea?"

Source: Carol Cujec, "Helping Kids to Write Well," Parenthood.Com, [www.parenthood.com/articles.html?article\\_id=2714](http://www.parenthood.com/articles.html?article_id=2714).

## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Organize with a calendar

Kids today are busy! Help your child take charge of her schedule by helping her write important dates on her own calendar—sports' team practices and games, family events and due dates for important school projects. Give her colored pens and stickers for decorating her calendar.



## Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

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