

Elementary School Parents

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Carrie Little, Executive Director

make the difference!



Reflect on the school year and celebrate your child's success

As the school year winds down, it's a great time to help your child look back, look forward, give thanks and celebrate. Here's how:

- **Talk to your child's teacher.** Ask about your child's strengths and weaknesses. How has he improved? Where does he need more work? Ask what you can do to help your child over the summer.
- **Talk to your child** about the school year. Ask what he thinks went well. Talk about what challenged him most. Help him figure out what changes he should make for the upcoming school year.
- **Review your child's successes.** Look over schoolwork you've saved during the year. Point out how much your child has learned—how many new words, for example. Or how he can add and divide. Or how his writing has improved.
- **Help your child set learning goals** for the summer. How much time will he spend reading? What math concepts would he like to master? Guide him, based on the suggestions from his teacher.
- **Encourage your child to thank** people who have made the year work—the teacher, school nurse, librarian, food service worker, etc. This will help him appreciate how many people have helped him.
- **Celebrate** the year's accomplishments with a special activity. It doesn't have to be elaborate or cost anything. Just make plans to enjoy one-on-one time with your child.

Remember the 85-15 rule for discipline



Too often, discipline gets a bad rap. Many parents think it means punishing their children when they misbehave—which isn't enjoyable for kids or parents.

However, the word *discipline* actually comes from the Latin word *disciplina*, which means "teaching." So try thinking about discipline as a way to teach your child skills to be successful in life.

Most of your discipline—roughly 85 percent—should focus on encouraging the behavior you *want* to see from your child. You can do this by being a good role model. If you want your child to be kind, be kind to others. If you want your child to be responsible, fulfill your commitments.

You can also point out other people who display the behaviors you'd like to encourage. And when you see your child doing the right thing, offer praise.

That leaves just 15 percent of the time for correcting negative behavior. Set rules and enforce consequences consistently. Then express your confidence that your child will make better behavior choices next time.

Attendance is *still* important towards the end of the year!



Summer vacation is on the horizon—but it's not here yet. Here are three reasons to make sure your child attends classes on time every day:

- 1. Learning hasn't stopped.** Teachers are still planning lessons and teaching new content. Attending every school day (unless ill or in quarantine) helps ensure that students meet learning goals. Studies show that students who miss just 10% of the school year in the early grades are still behind their peers when they reach high school.
- 2. Teachers often plan group projects for the end of the year.** These projects help students learn collaboration, problem

solving and responsibility. These are skills children will need throughout their school careers and in the workplace.

- 3. Regular attendance** teaches kids to be accountable—an important quality for adulthood.

Source: E. García and E. Weiss, "Student absenteeism: Who misses school and how missing school matters for performance," Economic Policy Institute.

"When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating."

—Attendance Works

Plan a few educational and fun field trips for your family



"I'm bored!" Do you dread hearing this phrase over the summer? Then start planning now! In addition to collecting

supplies, such as books, recipes and games, schedule a few family field trips. Local educational destinations are often free and fun to visit!

Consider going to:

- **Museums.** Call or go online to check upcoming exhibits. Which would your child like to see most? Are there any virtual events you could attend? Add them to your summer calendar.
- **An arboretum.** Kids love walking through gardens, admiring flowers and learning about nature. Bring a camera or sketchbook so your child can record the plants and animals.
- **The zoo.** This trip is almost always a hit with children. Before leaving, you and your child can read about the animals you'll see. Talk about their natural habitats and what they like to eat.
- **A fire station.** Call ahead to see if a summer open house is planned. If not, call and see if you could schedule a visit.
- **An airport.** Simply parking near the airport is interesting. Can your child spot the control tower? What about the planes taking off and landing?
- **Parks.** Find a guide to local parks and keep it handy. Consider visiting hiking trails, historic battlefields and more. Add a nature guide and maybe even some binoculars, and you're ready for an adventure!

Are you teaching your child to use time wisely?



Time management is an important skill for school success—especially as students work to finish end-of-the-year projects

and assignments. Are you helping your child make the most of study time?

Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the questions below:

- 1. Have you reviewed** your child's assignment and study schedule and made adjustments as necessary?
- 2. Do you have your child** record dates for tests, projects and family commitments on the family calendar?
- 3. Do you try** to keep a balance between your child's schoolwork and the rest of your lives? Elementary schoolers need plenty of time for exercise, family time and sleeping.
- 4. Do you help** your child break down big assignments into smaller tasks to complete step-by-step?
- 5. Do you make** sure that your child has some time each day for pleasure reading?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your child learn to use time wisely. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Summer volunteer work can build character and leadership



The world's problems can seem overwhelming. It's vital for kids to learn that every person can make a difference, and

that when people work together, the results are amazing!

Summer volunteering is a great way to teach this lesson to your child—all while building confidence, compassion and leadership skills.

To get started, talk with your child about:

- **Interests.** How do your child's interests relate to community needs? An animal lover could look for ways to help an animal rescue group. A young entrepreneur could help with a fundraiser.
- **Skills.** Your child's abilities and strengths can be gifts to others. Your child might hold a bake sale or read to younger children.

Sometimes it's fun to learn new skills, too, such as how to help with landscaping or home repairs.

- **Needs.** Perhaps your child has noticed a park that needs some sprucing up. Or maybe local families need clothing or food. Go online with your child and search for upcoming in-person and virtual community service events in your area. You could even ask your child's teacher if the school needs help over the summer.
- **Schedules.** Volunteering takes time, and families are busy! Set realistic goals that leave room for other priorities. Depending on your family's commitments, you and your child might volunteer just a few hours here and there—or decide to take on one large, exciting project!

Keep your child safe while navigating the online world



Technology has changed how students learn and how they socialize. Millions of kids in all age groups are online every

day—at home, at school, at friends' homes, at the library—and many are creating online content.

To promote online safety:

- **Discuss rules and expectations.** Use software that helps protect children, but supervise carefully, too. Allow your child to communicate online only with people you both know.
- **Set guidelines.** Establish times when technology is not allowed, and set a time when all devices must be turned off for the evening.

- **Remind your child** not to reveal personal information online, such as phone numbers, school name, passwords or your home's location.
- **Keep internet use** out in the open. Have your child use computers and digital devices in common areas where you can supervise.
- **Learn about the websites** and apps your child wants to visit or download. Make sure you approve of the content.
- **Encourage your child** to tell you about any inappropriate content, messages or experiences online. Report concerns to the authorities. For more safety tips, visit the Family Online Safety Institute at www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting.

Q: My daughter hates to write. When she has a writing assignment, she just stares at the blank piece of paper. Is there anything I can do to help?

Questions & Answers

A: Elementary schoolers are often reluctant writers. Many simply freeze with fear at the thought of writing. They worry that what they write won't be any good, or that they'll be made fun of.

To help your child overcome writer's block:

- **Remind her** that professional writers have difficulty writing sometimes, too.
- **Talk through ideas** with her. Encourage your child to brainstorm and make a list of as many ideas as she can.
- **Suggest she write** down her ideas just as they come. Later she can edit for flow, grammar and spelling.
- **Encourage her** to use a computer to write if possible. This makes it easier to make revisions.
- **Have her try free writing.** She should write anything that comes to mind, no matter how silly. Or, ask your child to write about something she enjoys.
- **Don't over-criticize.** If your child asks you to review her writing, note what you like first. Focus on what your student is trying to say, not just the mechanics of writing.
- **Don't fix her mistakes** for her. This won't boost her self-confidence. Instead, it will send the message that you don't think your child is capable of fixing them herself.
- **Be patient.** Allow your child to express her frustration. It takes time to become a good writer.

It Matters: Summer Learning

Focus on healthy habits over the summer months



Habits can have a lasting impact on your child's health and performance in school. That's why it's important to emphasize

healthy habits all year long—not just during the school year.

As a family, make an effort to:

- **Be active.** Most children should exercise for at least one hour a day. Instead, many watch TV and play digital games for hours on end. Make a list of fun physical activities you can do together, such as taking a walk, gardening, visiting a local park and kicking a ball around. Ask your child, “Which would you like to do?”
- **Eat well.** Involve your child in making healthy meals. You might borrow a cookbook from the library or search for recipes online. Try some new dishes with fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. Avoid potentially harmful or unnecessary ingredients, including excess sugar.
- **Stay hydrated.** This is especially important during activities in hot climates. Remember that drinks don't need to be sweetened or flavored. Water is refreshing—and free! If you serve juice, consider diluting it with water. The earlier you start doing this, the less your child will notice.

It's also important to take your child for regular medical checkups. Talk to the pediatrician about vaccines, summer safety, vision, hearing, allergies and other critical topics. Also, remember to keep your child's medical records up to date.

Engage your child in outdoor science learning this summer

Research shows that girls start to lose interest in science as early as grade school. But a new study shows that learning science outdoors can boost girls' knowledge and their interest in the subject.

In one program, female students explored science in the natural world and recorded their findings in a journal. These students earned higher grades in science and understood more about the science they learned.

To encourage this kind of hands-on science learning whatever your child's gender, head outside and:

- **Have a scavenger hunt** for specific items that can be found nature.
- **Observe** insects and frogs.
- **Look for evidence** of animals, such as tracks.
- **Record how plants change** over the summer.

If you or your child see something puzzling, visit your library or go



online to find the answer. By encouraging your child to ask questions now, you can encourage enthusiasm for science in the future.

Source: K.T. Stevenson and others, “How outdoor science education can help girls stay engaged with science,” *International Journal of Science Education*, Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Which is better: reading online or reading physical books?



Many kids enjoy reading online. However, studies show that there are some reading benefits that can come only from reading a printed book.

Fast-paced, digital media trains the brain to process information more rapidly and less thoroughly. Online readers are more likely to skim than to read for meaning. They will read quickly, but not pay close attention. So when they are finished, they will be able to answer concrete questions but

they stumble on questions that involve deeper thinking.

When students read from paper books, the printed page doesn't change. Readers can take their time and turn back to refer to something they've just read. They are more likely to remember the story in chronological order and can recall more details.

So give your child plenty of opportunities to unplug and read some paper books this summer!

Source: K. Benson. “Reading on Paper Versus Screens: What's the Difference?” BrainFacts.org.