

Elementary School Parents

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Amarillo Independent School District

make the difference!



Review the school year with your child and set new goals

We are nearing the end of an unprecedented school year. Your child has navigated learning challenges, read new books and mastered new skills. Now is the perfect time to talk about everything she's learned.

During your talk:

- **Take a look back.** What was your child's favorite school project this year? How did she manage to overcome obstacles? What goals did she accomplish?
Help your child see the ways she has grown. "You worked hard to master division this year. You can do challenging things when you put in the time and effort!"
- **Take a look forward.** What is your child looking forward to this

summer? What is she excited about for next year? Is there a subject or an area she'd like to improve in next year? Are there books she would like to read? Encourage her to make a list of everything she hopes to accomplish in the months to come.

- **Discuss how learning** doesn't stop at the end of the school year. One of the great things about the summer is that it offers the opportunity to learn new things. Help your child think about something she'd like to learn. Would she like to learn a new sport? Would she like to teach herself how to paint? Would she like to learn a new language? Together, make a plan to help her achieve her learning goal.

Turn off the screens and turn on the fun



Many kids spend hours staring at a TV screen, a computer screen, a tablet or a cell phone for entertainment. During the summer, those hours typically increase.

That's why it's critical for families to set limits on screen time. Experts say the easiest way to do that is by replacing screen time with other fun activities.

Here are some ideas:

- **Learn to juggle.** Search online for a tutorial on juggling and see if you and your child can figure out how to do it!
- **Get a hula hoop.** Even indoors, a hula hoop offers an easy way to get exercise. Besides spinning the hoop at his waist, your child can also use it as a jump rope.
- **Explore outdoor parks.** They offer a number of ways for your child to let off steam—and build muscles.
- **Draw a hopscotch game** on a sidewalk or driveway. Take turns playing.
- **Do yoga.** Yoga positions stretch and strengthen every part of the body. They enhance balance and coordination.

Help your child prepare for and finish end-of-year projects



School isn't over yet! Teachers often assign large projects toward the end of the year. To help your child tackle

a big assignment or project:

- 1. Make a plan.** Sit down with your child to help her develop a plan for completing the project. Have her write the due date on the calendar. Ask questions about the steps she'll need to take to get ready. "Will you need to do research? Have you allowed time to write an outline? Do we have the supplies you'll need to make the poster?"
- 2. Make a schedule.** Now help your child figure out *when* she's going to complete each step. Having several smaller deadlines is much easier than trying to meet one big one.

Have her write these dates on the calendar.

- 3. Celebrate successes.** Each time your child completes a step and reaches a goal, help her figure out a reward. This should be small (a favorite snack, not a trip to an amusement park) and something she can mostly do for herself.
- 4. Check in.** You'll need to see how she is progressing to help her stay on track. Schedule regular meetings to touch base and brainstorm solutions to any problems.

"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now."

—Alan Lakein

Five strategies can keep children reading through summer months



Students who don't read over the summer months can lose months of growth in reading skills. Those who keep reading often

experience gains.

The more your child reads, the easier reading will be for him—and the more he'll want to read. See that he reads for at least 30 minutes every day.

Try these activities to make reading enjoyable:

- 1. 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.
- 2. Read aloud together.** You read a line or page of a book. Then your

child does. Or you read the narrative and let your child read what the characters say.

- 3. 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.
- 4. Promote practical reading.** Ask your child to read the recipe while you bake cookies. Involve him in reading instructions to build or repair something.
- 5. Create reading-related jobs.** Ask your child to recopy damaged recipes. He could also organize the family bookshelf or kitchen spices in alphabetical order.

Are you helping your child be a confident reader?



When your child starts reading, he will probably ask you to listen to him.

How you do this can affect his motivation to read—and his progress.

Are you listening in ways that can boost your child's reading confidence? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

- 1. Do you encourage** your child to read books aloud that have pictures, predictable stories and repetitive words and phrases?
- 2. Are you a good listener?** Don't interrupt your child to correct him or insist that he keep trying to sound out a word until he gets it. Just enjoy the story.
- 3. Do you give lots of praise** and encouragement when your child reads?
- 4. Do you avoid criticizing?** If your child gets discouraged, he can lose his confidence and desire to read.
- 5. Do you encourage your child** to retell the story from memory after reading?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are boosting your child's reading confidence. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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The Parent Institute, 1-800-756-5525,
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Brainstorming is the solution for your child's writer's block



Some kids don't like to write because they think it's boring. Others find it too challenging. They get frustrated trying

to think of ideas.

You can't force a child to *love* writing. But you can turn a reluctant writer around with brainstorming.

Brainstorming is fun and boosts creativity. It reduces stress and can help your child break through writer's block.

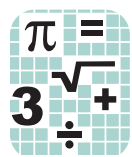
Brainstorming also teaches other skills that help with writing. By creating lists, for example, your child learns to break down complex ideas into smaller components. She can use brainstorming to figure out a topic for a paper or to think of ideas for a short story.

The next time your child can't think of what to write about, have her:

- **Make lists.** Here are a few topics to help her get started: *Things I love. My favorite animals, places, toys or food. Things I know a lot about. Scary characters. Things adults say.*
- **Imagine.** Ask your child some questions that will spark new ways to think about people, events and scenes. "What would it feel like to be a car, a house or a dog? What would life be like if you had four hands?"
- **Use visual images.** Have your child look at a picture and write down what it brings to mind. Or she can take a walk and make notes about what she sees.
- **Think about actions** she could add to her ideas: What will happen next? How quickly?

Source: D.B. Reeves, Ph.D., *Reason to Write: Help Your Child in School and in Life Through Better Reasoning and Clear Communication—Elementary School Edition*, Kaplan Publishing.

Simple everyday activities can bolster your child's math skills



Math is a vital life-long skill, so it's important to involve your child in everyday math activities.

You can have your child

help you:

- **Make a meal.** Put him in charge of weighing and measuring. Discuss sizes, shapes and fractions. Ask him questions such as, "How could we double this recipe?" and "When we add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, what do we get?"
- **Save money.** Ask your child to choose a goal, such as saving for a book. How much does he need to save each week? How long will it take him to reach the total? Help him track his progress on a chart. Then have fun shopping together!
- **Plan a trip.** Before leaving, ask your child to measure the air pressure in your car or bike tires. Calculate how many miles you'll go. If you are driving, how much gas will you use? As you travel, say a number between 1 and 10. Who can find a license plate with numbers that add up to the number you called out?
- **Start a family project.** Planning to paint a bedroom? Involve your child in figuring out how much paint you will need to do the job.
- **Play games.** There are lots of fun math games you can play together. Try dominoes, Uno and Connect 4.

Q: My daughter had a difficult time this year in fourth grade. She will pass—but just barely. I don't have money to hire a tutor. But I know she needs help or next year will be worse. What can I do over the summer to help my child catch up so she can keep up next year?

Questions & Answers

A: It sounds like your child has had a rough year. But there are ways to make sure she doesn't repeat it in fifth grade.

Here are some strategies to help you get your daughter back on track:

- **Meet with your child's teacher** before the end of the year. Together, lay out a summer learning plan. If your child is struggling in math, find out exactly what seems to give her trouble—fractions? Multiplication? Ask the teacher to suggest any resources she thinks could help your child.
- **Take care of the basics.** Have your child's vision and hearing tested. It may be that she can't see to read the board or the screen, or that she can't hear the teacher. It's important to rule out these types of problems early.
- **Set learning goals.** How many books will she read over the summer, for example? Make a list of her goals and post it where your child will see it daily.
- **Set aside time each day** to work on school skills. Use any resources the teacher provided to structure your child's daily learning time.
- **Have fun together.** Learning doesn't have to be drudgery! Go on a virtual tour of a zoo or a museum. Head outside for a nature walk. All these are ways to keep learning alive!

It Matters: Summer Learning

Community service builds character



Social distancing can disconnect parents and children from the community.

Volunteering as a family is a great way to change that. It also teaches children about responsibility, compassion, generosity and more.

When making summer plans, include a few volunteer activities.

Your family might:

- **Clean a favorite spot.** Inspect places your family spends time, such as your street, a park or the beach. You may be surprised by how much trash and debris is there. Supervise as your family fills garbage and recycling bags.
- **Provide shelter.** Many groups build or improve housing for others. Find one that welcomes kids' help. Your child might sweep, carry items or hand out nails while you hammer.
- **Provide food.** Community food banks are always in need of groceries and helpers. Homeless shelters and meal-delivery programs often need supplies. Your child may be able to collect food and supplies or even make sandwiches.
- **Care for animals.** Call an animal shelter to learn about its needs. If you and your child can't work directly with pets, consider other ideas, such as raising awareness about animal adoption.
- **Make cards.** Find a charity that serves elderly or homebound citizens. A letter from a child may be more uplifting than anything else.

Maintain a consistent schedule over the summer months

Summer is a time to relax—but not a time to relax important routines. Routines help your child cooperate, develop responsibility and become self-disciplined. They also make it easier to adjust when school starts again. Maintain routines for:

- **Sleep.** When school is out, your child's bedtime and rising time may be later than usual. Once you choose a reasonable sleep schedule, however, stick with it.
- **Reading.** Schedule time for it. Keep your home stocked with reading material and encourage reading every day, including in fun spots, such as the pool or the park.
- **Meals.** Make it a priority to have at least one meal as a family each day. This is a chance to catch up and enjoy one another's company.



- **Screen time.** Extra free time should not mean more time for screen media. Maintain healthy limits for the amount of time your child spends in front of screens.

Three activities will keep your child learning all summer long



Your child is as ripe for learning during the summer as she is throughout the rest of the year. So don't miss out on chances to boost her smarts during the warmer months. If you make them fun, she'll never suspect she's learning!

Here are three brain-building activities to enjoy this summer:

1. **Plant a garden.** Involve your child in the entire process. She'll have a real-world chance to use her reasoning and math skills. "We have a 10-foot by 4-foot plot in the yard. If tomatoes need to be

planted at least two feet apart, how many should we buy? What else should we plant?"

2. **Host a family game night.** Set aside one evening each week to play board games together. Classics like Scrabble and Boggle are good for keeping language skills sharp. And more complex games like Monopoly and chess require your child to use reasoning and think critically.
3. **Participate in a library program.** Virtual and in person summer reading programs are terrific. Many libraries offer science and math activities, too.