

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

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Dodson Branch School

*make the difference!*



## Review the school year with your child and set new goals

It's almost the end of another school year. Students have navigated learning challenges, read new books and mastered new skills. Now is the perfect time to sit down and talk about everything your child has learned this year.

During your discussion:

- **Take a look back.** What was your child's favorite school project this year? How did your child manage to overcome obstacles? What goals did your child accomplish?  
Help your child recognize personal growth. "You worked very hard to master division this year. You can do challenging things when you have a positive attitude and put in the time and effort!"
- **Take a look forward.** What is your child looking forward to this summer? What seems exciting

about next year? Is there a subject or an area your child would like to improve in? Are there books your child would like to read? Is there an extracurricular activity your child would like to try? Together, make a list of things your elementary schooler hopes to accomplish in the months to come.

- **Set summer learning goals.** Talk about 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. Together, think about something your child would like to learn during the summer. It could be new sport, a new language, or an artistic skill. Then, help your child make a detailed plan to achieve the learning goal.

## Inspire journal writing with creative ideas



This upcoming summer is a great time to begin writing in a journal. All your child needs is an empty notebook and a few fun ideas to get started.

Suggest that your child keep:

- **A research log.** Have your child pick a subject, such as penguins, and then research and write about it. *What do penguins eat? Who are penguins' predators? How do penguins communicate? How do penguins move from one place to another?*
- **A travel log.** Each time you go somewhere special—whether it's far away or close to home—your child can keep a record by taking pictures, drawing or writing notes. *What did your child see? Who did your child meet? What did your child think about the place?*
- **An observation log.** Suggest that your child observe something over a period of time, such as a summer vegetable as it grows. Or, suggest things to describe in great detail, such as bugs or animals.

# 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 elementary

schooler tackle a big assignment or project:

1. **Make a plan.** Together, develop a plan for completing the project. Have your child write the due date on the calendar. Ask questions about the steps needed 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.** Help your child figure out *when* each step is going to be completed. Having several smaller deadlines makes it much easier to meet one big one. Have

your child write these dates on the calendar.

3. **Celebrate successes.** Each time your child completes a step and reaches a goal, figure out a reward. This should be small (a favorite snack, not a trip to an amusement park) and something your child can mostly do independently.
4. **Check in.** You'll need to monitor progress to help your child 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

# Learning about people from different cultures is fun!



Respecting people from diverse backgrounds fosters a positive and productive learning environment. The summer

is a great time to help your elementary schooler learn more about others and appreciate diversity.

Try these activities with your child:

- **Talk to friends, neighbors** and coworkers who are from different backgrounds. Ask them to share some of their experiences and traditions with you and your child.
- **Watch television programs** about people from other cultures.
- **Learn simple words** in different languages. Teach your child to count to 10 in another language. Learn how to say *hello* and *thank you*.
- **Find an international pen pal.** Ask your child's teacher or a librarian to help you get started. You can also check out free pen pal sites, such as [www.studentsoftheworld.info](http://www.studentsoftheworld.info).
- **Learn about holiday customs** of people around the world. Go online and check out books to discover how other people celebrate their special days.
- **Cook authentic recipes.** Pick a culture and search online for a recipe to try. Prepare the dish with your child and enjoy it together.
- **Learn about crafts** from around the world. Search online for examples and make a few with your child. You could make a mask, drums, a hand fan, worry beads, tissue paper flowers and more.

# Are you preparing your child for a safe summer?



Summer is prime time for fun and often brings increased outdoor activities for families and kids.

Are you doing all you can

to make sure your child is healthy and safe during the summer break?

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions

below to find out:

\_\_\_1. **Do you require** your child to wear sunscreen and insect protection when playing outdoors?

\_\_\_2. **Do you insist** that your child wear a helmet when on a bike, scooter or skateboard?

\_\_\_3. **Do you make sure** your child is supervised when near water and uses a flotation device in lakes or pools?

\_\_\_4. **Do you encourage** your child to drink plenty of water when playing or exercising outdoors in the heat?

\_\_\_5. **Do you look** for supervised activities that will keep your child busy and active?

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are preparing for a safe summer for your elementary schooler. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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# 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—and the more likely your child is to want to read. Set a goal for your elementary schooler to read at least 30 minutes every day.

You can make reading fun with activities like these:

- 1. Read the news together.** Give your child the comics to read. Ask which one's the funniest. Discuss sports, the weather, letters to the editor, travel destinations, etc. If you don't get a printed newspaper, share articles of interest you find online.
- 2. Read aloud together.** You read a page of a book, then your child does. Or, you read the narrative and let your child read the dialogue.
- 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 your child in reading instructions to build or repair something.
- 5. Create reading-related jobs.** Ask your child to rewrite damaged recipe cards, organize the family bookshelf or put kitchen spices in alphabetical order.

## Celebrate your child's personal and school achievements



There is no better motivator for children than setting a goal and reaching it. But sometimes, a major accomplishment also calls for a celebration.

Perhaps your child earned a higher grade in a class this grading period. Or, maybe your child finally finished reading that book series. Whenever your elementary schooler sets and reaches a challenging goal, try one of these fun ideas:

- 1. Take a picture** of your child reaching the goal—holding up a report card or a finished book series, for example. You could also ask your child to draw a picture of the accomplishment. Frame the picture and place it by your child's bed. When children regularly see images of themselves being successful, they will start to see themselves as achievers.
- 2. Plan a special surprise.** On one side of a piece of paper, write down a goal your child wants to achieve. On the other side, write down a small reward—such as having a friend over for a sleepover or a one-on-one activity with you. Roll up the paper, put it into a balloon, and then blow up the balloon. After reaching your goal, your child can pop the balloon to find out what the reward is.
- 3. Host a family victory dinner** to celebrate your child's success. Set a "fancy" table and serve some of your child's favorite foods. During dinner, ask your child to say a few words about how great it feels to reach a goal.

**Q:** My fourth grader struggled in school this year and will barely pass. I don't have money to hire a tutor but I know my child needs help or next year will be worse. What can I do over the summer to help my child catch up and be ready to learn next year?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** It sounds like your child has had a rough year. But there are ways to make sure fifth grade will be better. To get your child 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 where the struggle is—fractions? Multiplication? Ask the teacher to suggest any resources that could help your child strengthen those skills.
- **Take care of the basics.** Have your child's vision and hearing tested. Sometimes, students can't see the board or hear the teacher. It's important to rule these types of problems early.
- **Set aside time each day** to work on school skills. Use any resources the teacher provided to structure your child's daily learning time.
- **Boost confidence.** When kids struggle in school, they often feel bad about themselves. Offer reminders of past success and say you believe in your child.
- **Find educational games** and apps that make learning fun, while strengthening academic skills. Ask your child's teacher for recommendations.
- **Have fun together.** Visit a local farm. Take a virtual tour of a museum. Head outside for a nature walk. All these are ways to keep learning alive!



# It Matters: Summer Learning

## Help your child give back during summer break



Volunteering as a family is a great way to show children the importance of community. 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 or collecting pet food, blankets and beds.
- **Make cards.** Find a charity that serves elderly or homebound citizens. A letter from a child may be more uplifting than anything else.

## Three activities will keep your child learning all summer long

Children are as ripe for learning during the summer as they are throughout the rest of the year. So don't miss out on chances to boost your child's smarts during the warmer months.

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

1. **Plant a garden together.** Your child will have a real-world chance to use 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.** Summer library programs often include storytelling sessions, interactive read-alouds, book clubs and arts and crafts.

## Maintain a consistent schedule over the summer months



Summer is a time to relax—but not a time to relax important routines. Routines help children cooperate,

develop responsibility and become self-disciplined. They also make it easier to adjust when school starts again.

Maintain family 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.