

Elementary School Parents

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Semmes Elementary School

make the difference!



Boost reading comprehension with four proven strategies

Much of your child's school success will depend on reading comprehension. Comprehension is much more than being able to read words. It also means understanding the meaning, context and details of the text.

To boost reading comprehension, encourage your child to:

- **Summarize.** Talk about the material together. Ask your child to recall facts (such as characters, setting and plot), but also ask questions that require deeper thinking: *What problems did the characters face? How does the story progress from beginning to end? Why did things turn out the way they did?*
- **Make connections.** Ask what your child has already learned

or experienced that relates to the story. Is the story like or unlike others your child has read?

- **Solve problems.** Ask how the characters were affected by one another's actions. Suggest your child take a character's place. Would your child make the same decision the character made? How might different choices have changed the story?
- **Apply knowledge.** Ask your child to explain the message or moral of the story. Did the author have a clear opinion? If so, what was it? Does your child agree? How can your child apply information in the reading to everyday life?

Source: "Reading Comprehension and Higher Order Thinking Skills," K12 Reader.

Maximize conferences with questions



Parent-teacher conferences can help you learn more about your child's academic progress,

behavior and overall well-being. They can also give you a better idea about the year ahead.

Here are some questions you can ask your child's teacher:

- **What will you cover** in this grade or subject this year?
- **What are your expectations** for schoolwork?
- **What are my child's strengths** and areas for improvement?
- **How are my child's work habits?** Does my child use class time well?
- **Does my child participate** in class discussions and activities?
- **Does my child get along** well with the other students?
- **Are my child's reading** and math skills at the level you would expect for this grade?
- **Is my child** in different groups for different subjects?
- **Does my child qualify** for any special programs?
- **What goals should we set** for my child this school year?
- **What can I do at home** to support my child's learning?

A five-step process can help your child make better decisions



Children have to make a lot of decisions every day. So it's important that they learn to make responsible ones. Encourage your

child to follow this simple five-step decision-making process:

- 1. Assess the situation.** Your child can't make a wise decision if the issue at hand is confusing. To help clearly define the problem, suggest that your child consider, "What's the main thing I'm concerned about?"
- 2. Explore options.** What are some ways to handle the problem? Have your child make a mental list, then narrow it down to the three most sensible choices. This list-making step is critical because it illustrates that there are usually more than two options for solving a problem.

3. Consider the disadvantages.

Have your child think about the cons of each choice. If a certain option has a particularly negative consequence, this is a good time to rule out that option.

- 4. Consider the advantages.** Have your child think about the pros of each choice. Does one option have major advantages over others?
- 5. Decide on a solution.** After weighing the pros and cons of each possible option, your elementary schooler can make a well-thought-out decision with confidence.

"Life is the sum of all your choices."

—Albert Camus

Families can instill a positive attitude about math and science



Take a look at any list of high-paying jobs and you are likely to see that most have one thing in common: They require

a knowledge of math and science. So why don't more students—especially girls—prepare for careers by studying math and science?

Researchers took a look at how families influence their children's views on math and science. The study found that, in general, families are more likely to encourage boys to take an interest in the subjects. And this tends to start as early as preschool, when students' attitudes toward math and science begin to form. As a result, girls often lose interest in these subjects by high school.

So what can families do to make sure their sons *and* daughters stay interested in math and science? Here are some suggestions:

- **Have some fun with the subjects.** Conduct simple science experiments in the kitchen. See who can add the numbers on a nearby license plate fastest.
- **Look for shows or news stories** featuring diverse people who are doctors, engineers and scientists.
- **Teach your child** that brains, like muscles, get stronger with practice. Remind your child that "smart is something you *get*, not something you *are*."

Source: S. Zielinski, "Adults can sabotage a student's path in science or math," *Science News for Students*, Society for Science and the Public.

Are you teaching your child how to be resilient?



All children face obstacles. Encouraging resilience helps kids overcome them. Resilient students deal with challenges in

positive ways—at home and in school.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are helping your child develop resilience:

- 1. Do you give** your child plenty of opportunities to make decisions? It's a skill that improves with practice.
- 2. Do you listen** when your child is trying to make a decision without taking over and solving the problem?
- 3. Do you talk** to your child about how you find a solution when you are faced with a problem?
- 4. Do you discuss** your elementary schooler's strengths and suggest drawing on those strengths when facing challenges?
- 5. Do you offer reminders** about how your child successfully handled tough situations in the past?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are helping your child become more resilient. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

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Practical Ideas for Parents
to Help Their Children.

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Talk to your child about the importance of academic honesty



Many families think academic cheating doesn't happen in elementary school. However, around third grade, when many students often begin receiving letter grades and taking standardized tests, academic cheating often rears its head.

When you talk with your child about the importance of academic honesty, keep in mind that:

- **Cheating is more tempting** to elementary schoolers than preschoolers, and the pressure only increases in middle school.
- **Young children are confused** about cheating. Although they believe it's wrong, they also think it might be OK on some occasions.

Let your child know that cheating is always wrong.

- **Peer pressure influences** cheating. When a classmate suggests cheating (asking to copy an assignment, for example), it can be difficult for kids to say *no*. Role-play effective responses with your child.
- **Cheating is an ethical issue** that affects more than academics. A child who thinks it's OK to cheat in school, may also think it's OK to lie. Model honorable behavior in your daily life and interactions.
- **Pressure from family** increases the risk of cheating. Let your child know that working hard at learning and being honest is more important than getting a certain grade.

Practice tests reinforce learning and boost your child's recall



How should students study for tests? Studies show that taking practice tests is one effective way. The act of recalling information is a learning activity that helps students retain the information better. Plus, practice tests show students how well they know the content.

Practice testing can occur in several ways. Your child might:

- **Take quizzes in class.** Help your child understand that quizzes are useful opportunities to practice recalling information. Simply taking a quiz can enhance learning and improve future grades.

After getting a graded quiz back, have your child take the time to correct any wrong answers and use the quiz for further studying.

- **Work with others.** Consider allowing your child to invite a classmate over to study and quiz one another. Or, they could meet over Zoom or FaceTime. You can also help your child study by calling out questions.
- **Study independently.** Your child can use flash cards with sample test questions. Discuss how to create questions by looking over notes, assigned readings and handouts. Your child should notice the section headings, vocabulary words and review questions.

Don't let your child stop at one quiz. Research shows that quizzing five to seven times reinforces learning even more!

Source: J. Dunlosky and others, "Improving Students' Learning With Effective Learning Techniques," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, Association for Psychological Science.

Q: My fourth grader spends hours playing online games and rushes through school assignments in order to go back online and play. I'm worried all of this screen time will affect my child's grades. What should I do?

Questions & Answers

A: Used responsibly, online games can be a fun way for kids to relax. Some games promote physical activity, some encourage play with others and some even build important academic skills.

However, studies show that children are spending more and more recreational time in front of screens.

Video game designers know how to create games that keep players hooked. But you must not let online games interfere with your child's responsibilities, schoolwork or the amount of time spent with friends and family.

The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages families to limit recreational screen use—and the new school year is the perfect time to do it. Here's how:

- **Have a discussion** and let your child know that you will be setting limits on time spent gaming.
- **Establish times** when online games are never allowed, such as during schoolwork time, mealtime and family time.
- **Provide screen-free alternatives.** Plan daily family activities, such as reading aloud, taking a walk or playing a board game. All these will replace some of the screen time with better ways to learn and interact.
- **Demonstrate a balanced** approach to screen time yourself. Show your child that you also prioritize offline activities and responsibilities.

It Matters: Building Responsibility

Doing chores develops your child's skills



There are significant benefits for children who do chores—and those benefits carry over into school.

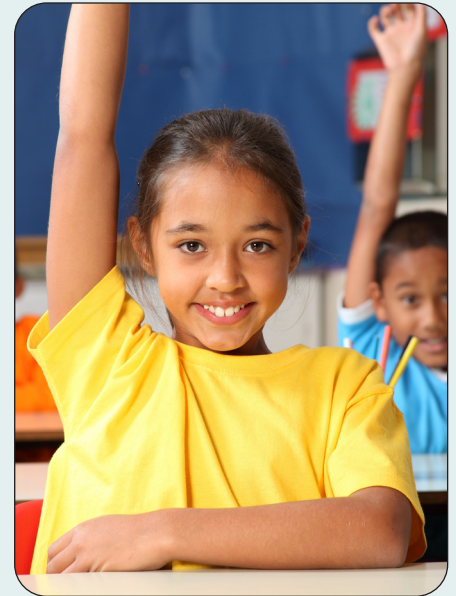
Chores help children:

- **Become “stakeholders.”** When your child does some of the tasks that keep the household running, it’s an investment in your home. A child who swept out the front hall is less likely to walk through it in muddy soccer cleats.
- **Acquire skills.** Each time you show your child how to do a new task, you are also teaching useful skills for the future.
- **Understand** that the world doesn’t revolve around them. We all know people who expect others to clean up the messes they make. Your child won’t grow up to become one of those people.
- **Learn to work well with others.** If you have more than one child, ask them to do a chore together. Or, encourage them to create a weekly chore chart and alternate responsibilities.
- **Develop self-discipline.** There will be lots of tasks throughout life that must be completed, even though your child may not want to do them.
- **Gain a sense of pride.** If your child is responsible for doing laundry, having a stack of clean shirts is an accomplishment.
- **See that they are an important** part of the family. Your child will feel pride while helping to keep home life running smoothly.

Empower your child to take responsibility for learning

While children are in school, learning is their job. To do it well, they need to be active learners. To instill responsibility for learning, encourage your child to:

- **Be prepared.** It’s not enough just to show up to class. It’s also important to get a good night’s sleep, eat a nutritious breakfast and complete assignments.
- **Participate in class discussions.** Your child should ask and answer questions, and exchange ideas with others in the class.
- **Stay organized.** Help your child create a system for organizing handouts and other materials. Suggest collecting phone numbers from a few classmates so your child can find out about missing assignments.
- **Be persistent.** Offer support when your elementary schooler



tackles schoolwork and studies for tests. Show confidence in your child’s ability. Say things like, “This hard work will pay off!”

Respect is the foundation of a positive learning environment



When students have respect for teachers and classmates, they help create the positive academic environment all children need in order to learn successfully.

To promote respectful behavior:

- **Discuss respect.** What is it? Why is it important? How does it feel to be treated with respect or disrespect?
- **Demonstrate** what you want your child to do. If using manners is important in your family, set an

example. If you want your child to knock before entering your bedroom, do the same in return.

- **Criticize constructively.** When you need to correct your elementary schooler, do it privately and respectfully. Say something like, “Next time, please hold the door open for Grandpa. That will make it easier for him to get through it.”
- **Notice times** when your child is respectful. “You listened to the coach even when other players were joking around. I was impressed.”