Elementary School
Parents
make the difference!
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Physical activity is linked to better classroom performance

It's no secret that exercise is good for your child. Along with other benefits, it can cut his risk for obesity, diabetes and even some types of cancer. But did you know that physical fitness may also help him in school?

Studies show that, compared with their inactive peers, children who get regular exercise:

- **Have better hand-eye coordination.**
- **Are better listeners.**
- **Are less fidgety during class.**
- **Have better handwriting**.

To give your child lots of opportunities to get his heart pumping:

- **Go on regular walks.** Pick a time, such as before or after dinner, to take a short walk around your neighborhood. Make this a habit.
- **Take the long way.** When you are out running errands, skip the elevators and escalators and take the stairs. Choose parking spots that will allow you to walk a bit farther.
- **Play active games.** From shooting hoops to tag, there's no end to the fun your family can have.
- **Have contests.** When you watch TV together, challenge your child to a competition. During commercial breaks, see who can do the most jumping jacks or pushups.
- **Put him in charge.** Challenge your child to come up with some creative ways to keep your family moving.

Source: "Physically active children have improved learning and well-being, DMU researchers find," De Montfort University.

A study buddy can make learning fun



Sometimes, kids learn better if they work with another student. Having a study buddy can be an effective way for students to master challenging material.

Study buddies can help each other practice math facts. They can help each other prepare for a class presentation. They can test each other to see what they know—and don't know.

Of course, without a bit of planning, a session with a study buddy can turn into nothing more than social time. Here are some tips to make a study session productive:

- **Commit to the purpose.** Both students should agree that they are getting together to study math or social studies—not to play Mario Kart or other games.
- **Choose someone responsible.** Both students should be focused on learning.
- **Set a schedule.** Arrange a time and a quiet place to meet. They could even meet online via FaceTime or Zoom.
- **Set goals.** They should decide exactly what they are going to cover and stick to it!

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Three simple ways to nurture your child's love of science



In one national survey, only about half of moms and dads felt "very confident" in their ability to help their children learn science. But you don't need to be a scientist in order to boost your child's scientific know-how. You only need to be willing!

To promote your child's interest in science and help build his skills:

1. **Investigate together.** There's no shame in admitting that you don't have all of the answers. So, if your child asks a question like, "Why is the sky blue?" or "Where does rain come from?" you can simply say, "I'm not sure. Let's find out together." Help your child go online or visit the library to discover the answer.
2. **View educational programs.** There are lots of kid-friendly science shows on TV. Watch them with your child. If you're not sure where to start, ask his teacher for suggestions. Afterward, talk about the shows. "Wasn't it neat when they explained how fish breathe through their gills?"
3. **Go online.** There are lots of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) websites, games, videos and apps available. Visit *www.commonsensemedia.org* to find one that looks cool and check it out with your child.

Source: M. Silander and others, "What Parents Talk About When They Talk About Learning: A National Survey About Young Children and Science," Education Development Center.

"Science is a way of thinking much more than it is a body of knowledge."

—Carl Sagan

Improve your child's reading skills by showing why you read



A parent's example always teaches a powerful lesson. If you want your child to be a good reader, demonstrate reading habits that give the right impression. You can:

- **Explain how you read** for information. Say, "I'm trying to figure out how to use a new computer program for work. This article explains how it works."
- **Read for a purpose.** Do you take the bus in the morning? Show your child how you read the bus schedule to decide when to leave the house. Are you looking for a new recipe for dinner? Show her how you search online or through cookbooks to find one to try.
- **Read for pleasure.** When your child sees you reading just to relax, she will realize that reading isn't just for school or work.
- **Share something you're reading.** If there's an interesting story in the paper, read some of it aloud. Print or cut out an article you think your child will enjoy and leave it on her bed. Your child will see that reading is something that is fun to share.
- **Take your child with you** when you go to the library. Show her how rewarding it can be to browse titles and discover a great book.
- **Bring something to read** with you everywhere you go. Your child will see that reading is a constructive way to pass the time.

Are you helping your child build community spirit?



The same qualities that help people live together in families can help them live in their communities—and get along with others in school. Are you helping your child be civic minded? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___**1. Do you talk** with your child about school and family rules and why they're important?

___**2. Do you volunteer** your time as a family on a regular basis?

___**3. Do you show** your child that it is important to honor commitments by keeping your promises?

___**4. Do you model** sportsmanship when you are watching sporting events and playing games?

___**5. Do you expect** your child to take responsibility for his actions and do you hold him accountable for his choices?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you're raising your child to be a responsible community member. For *no* answers, try those ideas to help your child cooperate with others.

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Celebrate Geography Awareness Week with learning activities



You probably remember filling in the locations of countries and continents on blank maps when you were in school. But geography is about much more than maps. It's about how places shape people and how people shape places.

Help your child celebrate Geography Awareness Week (November 15-19) with these learning activities:

- **Look it up.** When you and your child hear a news story about an unfamiliar place, locate it on a map. Then, challenge each other to learn a few facts about the location and the people who live there.
- **Go on a virtual trip.** Search online for information about a country you and your child would like to visit. Together, research fun things to do on your "trip."
- **Explore your community.** Help your child discover why your town is located where it is. Who first settled there? How are you and your child connected to the rest of the world (roads, airports, rivers, etc.)?
- **Make a map.** Challenge your child to draw a map of how to get from your home to school, a store or a friend's. Then, follow the map.
- **Share family history.** Tell your child where your ancestors came from. Find these places on a map. If possible, learn about the routes your ancestors traveled when they came to this country. Where do your relatives live now? Again, check the map.

Navigating social challenges leads to increased confidence



When parents are overly involved in their children's social lives, their kids can't develop the confidence and resilience they need to thrive. Swooping in and saving your child from every social challenge won't help him in the long run—it might actually hurt him.

Your child is more likely to establish healthy friendships and feel more sure of himself if he is armed with social and emotional skills. And these skills won't just help him navigate the playground successfully. They'll make him feel more confident in the classroom, too.

To help your child strengthen his social skills:

- **Empower him to take action.** If he comes to you with a problem, listen closely while he tells you about it. Say, "That sounds frustrating. What did you do next?" Then, give him a chance to find his own solution. Sometimes, all kids need is someone to listen to them.
- **Model resilience.** Talk about your own social struggles and how you faced them. When children hear stories about how family members overcame obstacles, they become more resilient in the face of challenges.
- **Teach him to be assertive.** Help your child learn how to speak up for himself. When he wants something, ask him to make a strong case for it. Or, have a family debate night. When you encourage your child to speak up at home, he'll find his voice at school and in the world.

Q: Last year, my daughter put off her science project until the very last minute. She finished it on time, but stressed out our entire family in the process. What can we do to make sure this year is different?

Questions & Answers

A: Long-term projects teach students—and sometimes parents—valuable lessons. Last year, you learned what *not* to do.

Your daughter is obviously a person who can meet a deadline. So this year, help her set *a lot* of deadlines before the project is actually due.

Encourage your child to:

1. **Select her topic early.** The sooner she knows what she is going to do, the more time she will have to do it.
2. **Make a list** of all the things she will need to do to complete the project. She should include the trip to the store for supplies and the time it will take to create a slideshow or display. Have her build in at least two days for the unexpected that often seems to happen.
3. **Set a deadline** for each part of the project. Make sure your child knows the consequence for missing a deadline. (If she hasn't done her work, for example, she certainly doesn't have time to watch TV.)
4. **Post the list of deadlines** in a place where you'll both see it every day. Then, as your child achieves each step, have her cross off that deadline.

If she follows these steps, your daughter will not only learn something about science this year, she'll also learn some valuable time management skills. Good luck!

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It Matters: Discipline

Positive discipline methods yield positive results



The discipline strategies you use at home can increase your child's likelihood of succeeding in school. And experts agree that the best discipline methods are positive, not harsh. Studies have shown that physical punishments may actually increase children's risk for mental health problems.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents:

- **Develop loving,** supportive relationships with their kids. This gives children a strong foundation and motivates them to behave well. When kids feel loved and respected by their parents, they are more likely to cooperate at home and at school.
- **Focus on the positive.** Compliment what your child does right—and be specific. "You started your homework without my reminding you. Great job!"
- **Use time-outs** and other non-physical consequences when needed. A child who speaks disrespectfully may need some time alone in his room. A child who puts off homework may miss other fun activities.
- **Let natural consequences** do the work. If your child forgets to complete his homework *again*, don't make excuses for him. Instead, allow him to get a zero. He will be more likely to remember to do his homework tomorrow!

Source: A. Heilmann and others, "Physical punishment and child outcomes: a narrative review of prospective studies," *The Lancet,* Elsevier.

Predict, prepare and practice to prevent behavior problems

When it comes to discipline, parents often wait until *after* a problem arises to take action. Preventing problems in the first place is much more effective.

Follow these three steps:

1. **Predict.** Think about a behavior you would like to change. Perhaps your child gets up so late in the morning that she often misses the bus.
2. **Prepare.** Since you can predict the behavior, you can also think about ways to prevent it. Instead of waiting until your child straggles down to the breakfast table, think of ways to avoid the late start. Is she tired in the morning because she's been up too late at night? An earlier bedtime could change that. Is she rushing around trying to get organized for school? Spending time the night before could save precious minutes in the morning.
3. **Practice.** Help your child practice the prevention strategies until they become habits.



If you predict, prepare and practice, you can also prevent many behavior problems from recurring.

Model the respectful behavior you'd like to see from your child



Being respectful is critical to success in school and life. By demonstrating what respect looks like, you'll help your child become respectful.

To set a positive example:

- **Be honest.** Tell your child the truth. Admit your mistakes instead of blaming others for them. Apologize when you are wrong.
- **Be dependable.** If you tell your child you'll do something, do it. Earn his respect by proving that you're reliable. And when you can't do something, be honest about it.
- **Be kind.** Don't insult or belittle your child when he makes a mistake.
- **Be fair.** Don't pass judgment on your child or punish him for something before learning all the facts. Show respect by taking the time to get his side of the story.
- **Be polite.** Say *please, thank you* and *excuse me* when talking to your child. Avoid barging into his room. Knock first.