

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Brooke Elementary School
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May 2008

BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Encourage your child to be an author

Books don't start out in libraries. They begin in someone's imagination. Slowly, word by word, they flow onto the page. This summer, your child could experience this process. To help him become an author:

- **Be encouraging.** Say, "I bet you could write a book. You'd have the whole summer to do it."
- **Listen to your child's stories.** Offer to be a "scribe" and get his words onto paper.
- **Make writing easy.** Keep pencils and paper handy around the house.
- **Help your child think about the characters** in the story. Have him pretend to be one of them. Ask questions like, "How do you look?" "What clothes are you wearing?" "What do you like to do?" This promotes the use of his imagination.
- **"Publish" the story your child writes.** Type it on a computer. Have your child design a cover. Then take the book to a copy shop for binding or attach the pages yourself.
- **Read together and discuss the material.** Point out details your child might miss. "Why do you think he mentions the color of her hat so often?" A good book provides great inspiration!

Source: Martha Cheney, *How to Develop Your Child's Gifts and Talents in Writing*, ISBN: 1-56565-797-7 (Lowell House, a division of McGraw-Hill Education, 1-800-323-4900, www.mheducation.com).



REINFORCING LEARNING

Apply this year's lessons to next year

As the school year comes to a close, it's a good time to reflect on the past and plan for the future. You might:

- **Ask** the teacher about your child's strengths and weaknesses. How has she improved? Where does she struggle? What activities might help her make progress?
- **Discuss** new goals. What would your child like to accomplish?

What did she learn from this year that can make next year better?

- **Review** your child's successes. Look over schoolwork you saved. Point out how much she's learned.
- **Plan** a celebration. Take your child out for a special meal, to a park or on a picnic. Or celebrate with a new book!

Source: Ellen Breslau, "4 Moves To Make Before School Ends," *Woman's Day* (Hachette Filipacchi Media U.S., 1-800-333-8546, www.womansday.com).

DISCIPLINE

Teach your child not to interrupt at home, school

Teachers don't want students interrupting when others are talking in class. So teach your child not to interrupt at home. Have a signal that indicates, "don't interrupt." For example, if she interrupts a conversation, say, "I'm talking with Grandma. I will help you when I'm finished." Then go back to your conversation. If she interrupts again, hold up your hand. Don't forget to make time to listen to her later.

SUPPORTING YOUR SCHOOL

Be sure to thank your child's teacher this May

May 6 is National Teacher Day and May 4-10 is Teacher Appreciation Week. Think back over all your child's teacher has done to make this a wonderful year of learning. Then write a thank you note. Help your child to write one, too. Your child's teacher will definitely appreciate this gesture.



IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

The final days of school are important for your child

Summer is just around the corner and the weather outside is inviting. It may be tempting to allow your child to skip a day of school. But don't do it. Your child may miss important lessons or tests. Getting him in the habit of good attendance now will benefit him throughout his life. Promote learning up to the very last day!



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents help children learn over the summer?

Q: My second grader really struggled this year. She's moving on to third grade, but I want to help her catch up in problem areas. What can I do over the summer?

A: Your daughter has had a tough year, so she may want to relax all summer. But you're right to stay focused on learning. Otherwise, third grade may be overwhelming. Meanwhile, understand your child's need for a break. To combine learning and fun:



- **Talk with the teacher about which skills your child should build.**

Then find ways to make them part of your day. If she needs to learn measurements, for example, follow recipes together. If she needs help with reading, start a parent-child book club that meets for ice cream.

- **Make a schedule with room for all kinds of activities.** Include academic tasks and your child's hobbies. Spend time reading every day. Plan small adventures to the park or local museums. Have time devoted to chores. Play games that teach important lessons. Routines, such as reading each night before bed, may help.

- **Celebrate accomplishments that boost your child's confidence.** Some may be related to school, but include other things too, such as swimming, dancing or painting. As your child succeeds in other areas, her confidence can spill over into schoolwork.

PARENT QUIZ

Is your child ready to read for fun?

During the summer, kids can finally read just for fun. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're promoting reading for fun:

1. **Have you and your child** made a list of books he liked this year?
2. **Have you checked** out the summer reading program for kids at your local library?
3. **Do you look** for fun places to read—in a tent, under a picnic table?
4. **Do you try** different kinds of reading in the summer? (Even comic books can be fun.)

5. **Have you asked** your child's teacher for a summer reading list?

How did you do? Each yes means you're raising a child with a love of reading. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in."

— Deepak Chopra

TALKING AND LISTENING

Don't always rescue your child from problems

Your child has a problem at school. What should you do?

- **Wait** before giving advice. First listen to your child.
- **Ask** for details. Use phrases like, "Tell me more."
- **Repeat** what your child has told you to make sure you understand the problem.
- **Ask** your child to suggest some possible solutions.
- **Ask** if your child needs your help.

Finally, ask the teacher to get involved if the problem continues.

Source: Chuck Moorman, *Parent Talk: How To Talk to Your Children in Language That Builds Self-Esteem and Encourages Responsibility*, ISBN: 0-7432-3624-6 (Simon & Schuster, 1-800-456-6798, www.simonandschuster.com).

BUILDING RESPECT

Discuss the responsibilities of being a 'good citizen'

Take time to talk with your child about what it means to be a good citizen. Many children today focus on the rights that they deserve. Talk about responsibilities as well. Ask your child how she can be a good citizen at school and in your community.

YOUR CHILD AND YOU

Take advantage of summer library programs

Build reading skills over the summer and you will be giving your child a head start on success for the next school year. Start with your local library. Enroll your child in the summer reading program. Check out special events. Turn weekly trips to the library into a summer tradition.



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