

Elementary School Parents®

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Ryerson School

make the difference!



Stay CALM when dealing with your child's report card

Report cards can bring out powerful emotions. The key to dealing with your child's report card—good or bad—is to stay CALM. Before discussing your child's grades, be sure you can stay in Control, Affirm, Listen and Motivate:

C Control. If the report card was disappointing, your first instinct might be to get angry. If it was very good, you might want to gush. Neither response will be helpful. Overreacting about your child's grades will only demotivate him.

A Affirm. Separate the report card from your child. Even if the grades were bad, he's not a bad kid. Start from the position, "I love you

always. Now let's talk about this report card."

- L Listen.** Your child may have a very good idea of why he got good (or poor) grades. Ask, "What did you do this marking period that worked so well?" Let him say that doing homework paid off by leading to a better math grade. Similarly, if the report card is disappointing, help your child figure out what he could do better.
- M Motivate.** Come up with a plan for the next report card. If things are working well, encourage your child to continue doing his best. If there are changes, help him make a plan so he can do better next time.

Kids who wash their hands miss less school



When your child is too sick to go to school, she misses out on important learning. You may

have to miss a day of work, and your child's illness may spread to other family members.

But studies show that there is one simple way to reduce illness and improve school attendance: regular hand-washing. A medical study found that children who learned about the importance of hand-washing missed less school.

Having unclean hands is the primary way that many diseases are spread from child to child. Be sure your child washes her hands after playing outside, after using the rest room and before eating. She should also wash her hands every time she coughs or blows her nose.

Tell your child to wash her hands for at least 20 seconds. (That's about how long it takes to sing the ABC song.)

Source: "Proper Hand Washing Keeps Kids in School," PreventDisease.com, http://preventdisease.com/news/articles/kids_handwashing.shtml.

Help your child gain a better understanding of fractions



Many kids find fractions a challenge. But in their adult life, they'll use fractions every day. When they cook, they'll measure one-half teaspoon of salt. When they drive, they'll know they are eight-tenths of a mile away from the store. And they'll check the clock to see there is one-half hour before their favorite show comes on TV.

Pointing out all the ways you use fractions will help your child understand this important math concept. Here are some other things you can do at home:

- Collect a large pile of cereal, plastic animals or Legos. To illustrate the concept of one-fourth, divide the pile into four equal sections. Rearrange the pile to illustrate other fractions.

- Use measuring cups and spoons. There is no easier way to see how many one-third cup measures it takes to make one cup.
- Make up fraction facts. One-half of our family's birthdays are in October. One-third of the rooms in our house have windows. One-fifth of the cars on this street are red.
- Mark the passing of time with fractions. Say, "It will take us 20 minutes to go to Grandma's. How long will it take us to get halfway there?"

"The beautiful thing about learning is that nobody can take it away from you."

—B.B. King

When teaching responsibility, focus on what you can change



"My son needs to be more responsible. He never does his homework," you say.

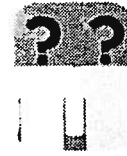
That is a situation that should concern you. But in order to correct it, you need to focus on what you can actually change. You cannot make a child suddenly become more responsible. But you can change specific behaviors. Here's how:

1. **Make a list of the things you would like your child to do.** Be specific. You want him to come home from school with his homework. You want him to have a regular homework time. You want him to do homework without your nagging. Share this list with your child.

2. **Offer support and ask him how you can help.** Does he need help organizing his backpack? Does he need a little break before he starts homework?
3. **Give him organizational tools.** Create a checklist of what he needs to bring home each day. Set a schedule so he has time for both after-school play and homework.
4. **Offer praise and recognition when you notice changes.** "You brought home all your assignments for the week. That's great!" Over time, by focusing on what you can change, you will also help him become more responsible.

Source: L. Metcalf, *Parenting Toward Solutions: How Parents Can Use Skills They Already Have to Raise Responsible, Loving Kids*, Prentice Hall.

Do you know how to deal with a school problem?



Sooner or later, most children are likely to have a problem at school. The way parents deal with it can affect the outcome.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are prepared to deal with school problems positively:

- ___ 1. Do you communicate regularly with your child's teacher, whether there's a concern or not?
- ___ 2. Do you keep an open mind when your child has a problem at school? Be open to the fact that your child may be helping to cause the situation.
- ___ 3. Do you contact your child's teacher *first* if you have a concern, rather than calling the principal?
- ___ 4. Do you write down your thoughts and questions before meeting with the teacher?
- ___ 5. Do you ask for an action plan at the end of the meeting so you can work together to address the issue?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are dealing with school problems positively. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

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Self-esteem is linked to higher grades & improved attendance



A recent study shows that when kids do structured after-school activities, their grades are more likely to rise. They're also likely to have better attendance. Why? It may have to do with self-esteem. After-school programs give kids chances to succeed at various activities, and those feelings of success may carry over into the classroom.

To create similar opportunities at home, focus on:

- **Homework time.** Take a "same time, same place" approach to homework on school days. Your child might study at the kitchen counter each day after school, for example. This encourages independence and responsibility.
- **Reading time.** Find creative, appealing ways to fit reading into your schedule. You might read at bedtime, take books to the park, act out a story or read a book and then see the movie version.
- **Academic activities.** Incorporate math, science, history and more into everyday life. Help your child manage his allowance, for instance. Do a science experiment just for fun. Visit a historical site, if possible. Show your child that learning is fun and useful!
- **Non-academic activities.** When kids make progress in sports, art, music, technology and other areas, they gain confidence. This helps them become better students. Support and compliment all kinds of hard work.
- **Goal setting.** Ask your child what he'd like to accomplish in and out of school. Set one or two reasonable goals. "I want to read a chapter book this week." "I want to build a model plane." Make a step-by-step plan for success.

Sources: "Academic achievement improved among students active in structured after-school programs," *e!* Science News, <http://tinyurl.com/caal9hu>; and "Club Schedules," Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Dallas, www.bgcdallas.org/ClubSchedules.aspx.

Learning how to say *no* is a crucial skill for your child



You're probably aware of the peer pressure your child will face when she gets to middle or high school. But even in elementary school, kids can feel a pressure to fit in—to do what everyone else is doing.

Sometimes, that means going along with teasing or bullying on the playground. Sometimes, it means watching a movie at a friend's house that you wouldn't allow at home.

So start teaching your child "refusal skills" now. Help her learn

to say *no* to things that don't fit with your family's discipline rules or your values.

Here are some sentences she can repeat to herself:

- I can say *no* to things that would put me in danger.
- I can make good choices for myself.
- I can say, "You're my friend, but I don't choose to do that."
- It's OK if I make choices that are not the same as the choices my friends make.

Source: D. Bloch, *The Power of Positive Talk: Words to Help Every Child Succeed*, FreeSpirit Publishers.

Q: My son has never had a lot of friends. But there was one boy in his class who spent time with him. That is, until recently, when this boy seems to have moved to a new group of friends. Now he has joined with these other students in teasing my son.

My son doesn't want to go to school any more. I don't know how to handle this. Should I call the former friend's mother to ask her to make her son stop?

Questions & Answers

A: As much as we want school to be only about what kids learn, we know that there's also an important social aspect. When teasing gets to the point that it affects a child's willingness to go to school, you do need to take some action.

Calling the other parents hardly ever works and it could result in more heartbreak for your son.

Instead:

- **Talk with his teacher.** Has she noticed that your son is being teased by his former friend? Ask for her help and support in helping your son feel valued and included in class activities.
 - **Look for other opportunities** for your son to make friends. Think about things like the Boy Scouts or a Boys and Girls Club. Sometimes, a structured setting makes it easier for kids to get along.
 - **Check out after-school activities** and clubs at the school. Finding other students who enjoy interests like making robots or singing in the chorus, for example, can help your son find his peer group.
- If your son continues to struggle, talk with the school counselor or his pediatrician.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Technology

Make online safety a priority in your home



Technology has changed how students learn and how they socialize. Millions of kids in all age groups are online every day—at home, at school, at friends' homes, at the library—and many are creating online content.

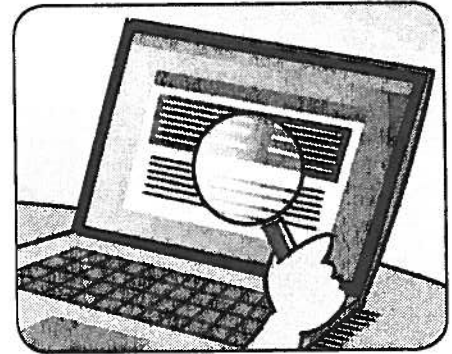
To keep your child safe online:

- **Discuss rules and expectations.** Use software that helps to protect kids, but supervise carefully, too. Only allow your child to communicate with people you both know when he's online.
- **Set limits on screen time**, such as 10 hours or fewer per week. Remember that screen time includes TV, computer and video game use.
- **Do not allow your child** to reveal personal information online, such as his name, phone number, school, passwords or location.
- **Keep Internet access** out of your child's room. Only let your child go online if you can see what he's doing.
- **Learn about websites** your child wants to visit. Are they safe? Do you approve of their content?
- **Encourage your child** to be honest with you if something inappropriate occurs online. React calmly if this happens. Report your concerns to the authorities.
- **Stay informed** about online safety. Visit sites such as *www.fosi.org* (Family Online Safety Institute) and *Netsmartz.org* for more tips.

Help your elementary schooler evaluate information online

Your child has to write a report, and she wants to do research online. Where should she start? What should she avoid? Take this opportunity to teach about safe, reliable Internet research. It's important to:

- **Prepare.** Find websites you trust, such as online encyclopedias for kids. Jot down safe Internet addresses. Ensure that your computer's settings help protect your child.
- **Supervise.** Sit at the computer with your child. Search for information together. As you pick resources, evaluate them carefully. Who is the author? What makes him or her trustworthy?
- **Talk.** Discuss what makes a site likely to be legitimate. For example, is it run by a trusted source? Does it end with *.gov*



or *.edu*? These indicate government or educational affiliations.

- **Inspect.** Look closely at information on the page. How recently was it written or updated? Does it represent facts or opinions? Does it refer to other reputable sources? Is it designed for kids?
- **Ask.** Talk with your child's teacher about sites. Also review the school's website to find teacher-recommended links.

Technology offers solutions for kids with learning disabilities



Technology does wonderful things for all kids, but if your child has a learning disability, you may especially appreciate its benefits. It's a bonus that kids view technology as "cool," and they're often naturals at using it.

Depending on your child's needs, consider using:

- **Computers.** If you don't have one at home, visit your local library. Computers can help your child with reading, writing, math and more.
- **Tablets and smart phones.** It's wonderful when devices can be used on the go. They can do simple things, such as provide reminders and check spelling, or complicated tasks, such as assisting with speech.
- **MP3 players and iPods.** These give kids access to recordings of podcasts and books. Some have programs that help kids with social skills.

Source: "On the Go: What Consumer Products Can Do for You (If You Know Where to Look!)" LD OnLine, <http://tinyurl.com/255r73b>.