

Elementary School Parents[®]

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Ryerson School

make the difference!



Summer volunteer work can build character & school skills

The world's problems can feel overwhelming. But kids can learn that every person makes a difference, and when people work together, the results are amazing! Summer volunteering is a great way to achieve this—all while building your child's confidence, compassion and talents. This will make her an even better student next year.

Start by discussing:

- **Interests.** What subjects interest your child most? How do they relate to others' needs? If she loves animals, she might help an animal rescue group. If she's interested in business, she might help organize a charity fundraiser. Enthusiasm is a great motivator.
- **Skills.** Your child's strengths, such as baking or reading, can be gifts to others. She might hold a bake

sale or read to younger children. Sometimes it's fun to learn new skills, too, such as how to help with landscaping or home repairs.

- **Needs.** Perhaps you've noticed a park that needs sprucing up. Or maybe a homeless shelter needs food. Your child's school may even need help over the summer. Find out who's organizing volunteers. You are likely to find lots of volunteer opportunities in your community.
- **Schedules.** Volunteering takes time, and busy families only have so much of it. Set realistic goals that leave room for other priorities. Depending on your commitments, you might volunteer just a few hours here and there—or take on one large, exciting project!

Pay attention to how you say no to your child



Kids who understand that they can't always get their way have a much easier time

in school. Help your child learn how to deal with disappointment by paying attention to how you say *no*. For example:

- **Pause before saying anything.** Say, "Let me think about this for a minute." This will help your child see that you are listening.
- **Think out loud.** Children need to see how adults make decisions. "If I let you go to Mason's house to play, we won't have time to eat dinner together."
- **Acknowledge your child's feelings.** Sometimes, just saying, "I know you're disappointed" can help.
- **Give a "fantasy" OK.** If your child wants an expensive toy and you can't afford it, say, "I wish I could get that for you. But it is not in our budget." This may lead to a plan to save money for the toy.

Source: "Positive Ways to Talk and Listen," PBS Parents, www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/strategies.html.

Reflect on the school year with your child & celebrate success



The last few weeks of school can make a positive difference in how your child does next year. Now's the time to look back, look forward, give thanks and celebrate. Here's how:

- **Talk to your child's teacher.** Get her thoughts on your child's strengths and weaknesses. How has he improved? Where does he need more work? Ask what you can do to help him this summer.
- **Talk to your child about the school year.** Ask what he thinks went well during the year. Help him figure out what changes he should make next year.
- **Review your child's successes.** Look over schoolwork you've saved during the year. Point out how much he's learned—how many new words, for example.

Or how he can add and divide.

Or how his writing has improved.

- **Help your child list learning goals for the summer.** Guide him, based on what you've learned from his teacher.
- **Encourage your child to thank those who have made the year a good one—the teacher, bus driver, food service worker, etc.** This will help him appreciate how many people have helped him. Help him write thank-you notes to them.
- **Celebrate with a special activity and enjoy some one-on-one time with your child.**

"It is not what is poured into a student that counts but what is planted."

—Linda Conway

Review sheets can help your elementary schooler ace tests



Sometimes kids forget they have a test, they study the wrong material, or they study for the wrong type of test.

To avoid such surprises, help your child come up with a strategy for test review—a routine to follow for every test. Help him create a test review sheet that includes:

- **The date of the test.**
- **The test content.** Will it be a quiz on definitions? Will it cover a specific chapter or class activity?
- **The type of test.** Will it be multiple-choice, true-false or an essay test? Knowing the test type should affect how your child studies for it. He'll need to know more

about a term if he has to use it in an essay, for example, than if he simply has to match a term with a definition.

Tell your child it's important to ask the teacher for this information. He should also follow any review guidelines provided by the teacher.

The review sheet should also include your child's plan for reviewing for the test. Which days will he study? What times? What reference materials will he use?

Also encourage your child to think of study strategies he'll use. Will he review a study guide? Highlight class notes? Make flash cards? Prepare sample test questions? Study with a buddy?

Are you planning a healthy summer for your child?



Kids who stay active during the summer months are more likely to go back to school ready to learn. Answer

yes or *no* to the questions below to see if you are you making plans to keep your child active and healthy over the summer:

- ___ 1. Have you talked with your child about the kind of exercise she enjoys? Whether it's biking, walking, shooting hoops or swimming, there's a form of exercise for everyone!
- ___ 2. Have you mapped out some routes for family walks?
- ___ 3. Have you researched kids' activities that will be offered at community centers, pools or parks?
- ___ 4. Have you set limits on TV time? During commercials, challenge everyone to move!
- ___ 5. Have you helped your child set personal fitness goals for the summer.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're on track for a healthy summer. And that will mean a better start to the school year in the fall. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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