

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



May 2017

Clairton City School District
Dr. Hunt, Superintendent

Time management prevents a big project from becoming a crisis

At the end of the year, elementary school students are often assigned large projects. These are a great way for kids to explore topics in depth, do something creative and have fun while learning. But when a child puts off work until the last minute, it often means that family routines get disrupted in a scramble to make sure the poster gets made and the report is written.

Don't let your child's project become a family emergency. Instead, help her learn about time management. Here's how:



- 1. Make a plan.** As early as possible, sit down with your child and a large calendar. Have her write down the project due date. Ask questions about the steps she'll need to take to complete the project. "What supplies will you need to make a poster? Let's see if we have them."
- 2. Make a schedule.** Together, figure out when your child is going to complete each step. Set deadlines and have her write them down on the calendar. Thinking about one small step at a time is easier than thinking about completing the whole project by the final date.
- 3. Celebrate successes.** Each time your child meets a small deadline, let her give herself a small reward, such as a few minutes of game playing or chatting with a friend.

From time to time, check in with your child to see how she's progressing and to keep her on track.



Look back at the school year and set new goals for forging ahead

Your child has learned a lot this year. Now is a great time to talk with him about his progress and think about setting new goals. In your discussion:

- **Take a look back.** What was your child's favorite project this year? Which book did he like best? In what subject did he improve most? Which of his goals did he accomplish?
 - **Look ahead.** What is your child excited about for next year? Is there a subject he'd like to improve in? What books would he like to read?
 - **Discuss the fact** that learning can happen anytime, anywhere. Help your child think of something he'd like to learn this summer. A new sport? Digital coding? Together, make a plan to help him achieve his goal.
- Help your child see the positive results of his efforts this school year. "You really worked hard to master division. You can certainly do hard things when you put your mind to it."

Experiment with science

Doing science experiments with your child can seem more like fun than learning. Help her find answers to questions like, "What can we add to water to make an egg float?" or "What's the best proportion of lemon juice to water for lemonade?"

Look online for more experiments to try together. A good place to start is Science Kids www.sciencekids.co.nz/experiments.html.

Give reading skills a regular workout



Don't let your child lose his hard-earned reading skills over the summer! To help him maintain them:

- **Read together daily.**
- **Leave irresistible reading matter** around the house—try comics, magazines and books on your child's interests. Ask his teacher for suggestions.
- **Take books with you** on trips or anywhere your child might be bored.
- **Be creative.** Listen to audiobooks. Play word games. Visit local sites of interest and read about them. Start a book club.

Take steps to stifle swearing

Has your child's growing vocabulary begun to include swear words? Kids often try out these words to get a reaction from friends or adults. But swearing doesn't belong in a respectful environment. To discourage it:



- **Say, "In our family,** that kind of talk is unacceptable. We speak respectfully and use appropriate words."
- **Talk about how swear words** can hurt people's feelings.
- **Remind your child** that people judge others by their language. They may think worse of her if she uses bad language.

Source: "My Child Won't Stop Swearing!" Parent News, niswc.com/swearing.



How can I prepare my child to do better next year?

Q: My son will pass fourth grade—but just barely. I am unable to send him to summer school or an expensive camp. But I know he needs help. What can I do over the summer to help my child catch up so he can do well next year?

A: It sounds like your son has had a rough year. But there are ways to make sure he's prepared to succeed next year. Here are four ideas to help you get him back on track:



- 1. Meet with your child's teacher** before the end of the year. Find out exactly what seems to give your son trouble. Then together, lay out a summer learning plan.
- 2. Rule out other problems.** Have your son's vision and hearing tested. It may be that he can't see well enough to read the board, or that he isn't hearing the teacher clearly. Eliminate these problems right away.
- 3. Establish some learning goals.** For example, how many books will your child read over the summer? Let him choose the books—and don't worry if they aren't classics.
- 4. Set aside time each day** to work on school skills. Ask the teacher for some worksheets your child can do to practice key skills.
- 5. Have some fun together.** Visit the zoo or a museum. Look for a free concert. These are all ways to keep your child actively learning.



Are you teaching your child to handle disappointment?

All people face disappointments from time to time. When grades, social life, or even the weather get your child down, are you helping her learn how to take disappointment in stride? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- 1. Do you help** your child see what *can* and *can't* be changed? "You can't change the weather, but you can change your plans."
- 2. Do you help** your child make positive choices when the unexpected happens?
- 3. Do you help** your child learn from mistakes? "Next time, you'll study more and earn a better grade."
- 4. Do you help** your child see that it's OK to feel disappointed, but sulking doesn't help?

- 5. Do you help** your child figure out solutions for herself?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are teaching your child to cope when things don't go her way. For each no, try that idea.

*"We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope."
—Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Have some screen-free fun!

New guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that parents make a plan that limits their children's screen time and promotes healthful, screen-free activities. Here are a few to try with your child:

- **Learn to hula hoop.** Even indoors, it's an entertaining way to exercise.
- **Explore new playgrounds.** Your child can let off steam and build muscles.
- **Play hopscotch.** Use chalk to draw a grid on the sidewalk or driveway.
- **Take up juggling.** Get a how-to book and see if you can teach each other!

Source: "Media Use in School-Aged Children and Adolescents," *Pediatrics*, niswec.com/screen-free.

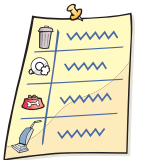
Connect with volunteering

Volunteering as a family teaches your child about responsibility, generosity and compassion. This summer, build some volunteering into your family's plans. Perhaps you could clean up an area near your home, help at a food bank or visit someone who is house-bound. You'll help your child connect to the community—and the family.

Put chores on the to-do list

Research has shown that doing chores from an early age makes kids more likely to achieve in school and in a career. When assigning your child chores:

- **Choose age-appropriate tasks.** An eight-year-old probably shouldn't climb a tall ladder to clean the gutters, but he can clean toothpaste off the bathroom sink.
- **Create a chart** so your child knows exactly what he is expected to do and when he should do it.
- **Keep chores positive.** Don't assign chores as punishments.



Source: J.B. Wallace, "Why Children Need Chores," *Wall Street Journal*.

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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: L. Andrew McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1013