

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School
Cumberland County Schools



November 2021

Foster self-respect to help your child behave respectfully to others

In order to interact in positive ways with others in school, students need to have a sense of self-respect. When children don't value themselves, they find it hard to value other people and treat them with respect.

Several factors contribute to your child's sense of self-respect. Here are some ways to bolster:

- **Competence.** It feels great to be able to do things well. Give your child lots of chances to learn and practice skills—everything from reading to playing sports to doing chores.
- **Accomplishments.** Notice your child's progress and successes. "You worked hard to make your report great. That should make you feel proud."
- **Confidence.** Encourage your child to stay positive in challenging situations. Help him see mistakes as opportunities to learn, and show your confidence in him by displaying a "you can do it" attitude.
- **Independence.** Allow your child to make age-appropriate choices. For example, "Would you rather organize your binder now or this evening?"
- **Support.** Show your child that you accept, appreciate and love him for who he is. Ask about his day and listen attentively to his answers.
- **Imitation.** If you have self-respect, your child is more likely to have it, too. Stick to your principles. Take care of yourself and believe in your worth.



Post a problem-solving guide to math

There is usually more than one way to solve a problem. This is definitely true when students are struggling with a math assignment.

To help your child remember the strategies to use if she gets confused while doing math, have her create a visual reminder to hang in her work area. Give her some posterboard, and help her list everything she can try to get herself back on track. Her list might include:

- **Reread the instructions.**
- **Restate the problem** in my own words.
- **Draw a diagram.**

- **Look for a similar sample** problem in my book or handout.
- **Think about how I solved** other problems like this one.
- **Estimate an answer** and then check it out.

The next time your child is stuck on a math problem, she can refer to her poster to find several ways to approach it.

Source: D. Ronis, *Brain-Compatible Mathematics*, Skyhorse Publishing.

Avoid activity overload

Concerns about what your child missed during the pandemic may make it tempting to sign her up for every enrichment activity available. Keep in mind that your child also needs time—not in the car—to concentrate on her schoolwork, as well as some time to relax and avoid stress. If too many activities have her overwhelmed, ask her to choose one or two that she truly enjoys.

Asking questions improves reading comprehension

Your child will get more out of reading if he asks and answers some questions along the way. Help him consider questions such as:

- **Does the title** of the book, chapter or unit offer clues to the content?
- **Are there words** he doesn't know? He can jot them down to look up later.
- **Is this topic** similar to anything else he knows? What ideas are familiar? What new things did he learn?



Promote scientific discovery

An understanding of science is vital in today's world. To encourage your child to learn and enjoy the subject:

- **Investigate nature.** Observe the moon and stars together. Compare the weights of cups of snow, ice and water.
- **Ask questions.** "Why do you think ... ?" "What might happen if ... ?" "How could we find out ... ?"
- **Discuss** science happening in your home. Why do old apples shrink and get wrinkly?
- **Give your child** something to take apart to figure out how it works. Try a ballpoint pen, a candle or an old toy.





My child loves screens and hates rules. What can I do?

Q: Mornings at our house are hectic. In order to get everyone ready on time, I've established a rule: No screen time before school. My nine-year-old constantly tries to break it. Aside from taking away her games and videos forever, what can I do?

A: All kids break the rules once in a while. When your child does, calmly enforce the consequence you have established (banning screen time for a few days, for example). Then remind her that she's responsible for her choices. To help her avoid making the same poor choice again:



- 1. Have your child name the problem.** "I want to watch videos and play games after breakfast, but Mom says that slows me down and I'm not ready when it's time to get going."
- 2. Help her brainstorm solutions.** "If I do my math and reading right after school, I'll have time to watch a video after dinner." Or "If I put my game device away before bed, I won't see it lying out and be tempted to play with it in the morning."
- 3. Discuss her options** and help her decide which to try first.
- 4. Try her solution.**
- 5. Evaluate the outcome.** Did it work? Fantastic. Did it fail? Help her choose one of her other ideas to try or brainstorm some more.



Do you use these read-aloud strategies?

Daily read-alouds with your child develop his reading skills and help him associate reading with enjoyable times with you. Are you using read-aloud strategies that make the most of this time? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- 1. Do you set aside** at least 20 minutes a day to get cozy and read with your child?
- 2. Do you take** turns being the one to read aloud?
- 3. Do you let** your child choose where and what you'll read sometimes?
- 4. Do you pause** from time to time to discuss what you've read so far?
- 5. Do you stop** reading at an exciting place in the story so your child will want to continue the next day?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child become a better reader. For each no, try that idea.

"Reading should not be presented to children as a chore or duty. It should be offered to them as a precious gift."

—Kate DiCamillo

Supporting homework helps you stay in the know

Homework is a link between home and school. When you supervise your child's efforts, you find out what she is learning. Completing assignments is your child's responsibility, but it helps if you:

- 1. Make sure your child understands** the task. Have her explain it to you. If she's confused, read the instructions together. Display a positive attitude.
- 2. Review completed work.** This tells your child that schoolwork matters.
- 3. Let the teacher know** if your child repeatedly struggles with assignments. Ask how you can help.

Should you pay for grades?

As a form of motivation, paying students for excellent grades shows inconsistent benefits and some serious drawbacks: It misses a lot of effort and progress. Your child is less likely to enjoy the satisfaction of learning for its own sake. And he may lose motivation to do anything he isn't being paid for.

Instead, help your child focus on what he's learning. Help him recognize his new skills. And praise him for working hard and doing his best.

Jump-start writing ideas

If your child can't think what to write about, brainstorming is a good way to get her creative juices flowing. Encourage her to:

- Try a new point of view.** What would a picnic look like to an ant?
- Use visuals.** Have her look at a picture and write down everything it brings to mind.
- Add actions** to her ideas. What will happen next? How quickly?



Source: D.B. Reeves, Ph.D., *Reason to Write*, Kaplan Publishing.

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