

Elementary School Parents[®] *make the difference!*

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Don't forget to celebrate your child's achievements

She did it! She raised her math grade this quarter. Or she finally finished reading that book series.

There is no better motivation for a child than setting a goal and reaching it. But sometimes, a major accomplishment also calls for a celebration. So when your child sets and reaches a challenging goal, try one of these fun ideas:

1. Take a picture of your child showing off her report card. Or, get a snapshot of her holding up the book series she's just finished. You could even ask your child to draw a picture of her accomplishment.

Frame the picture and put it by your child's bed. That way, every

time she wakes up, she'll see an image of herself as an achiever.

2. Plan a special surprise. On one side of a piece of paper, write down a goal your child wants to achieve. On the other side, write down a small reward—such as having a friend over for a sleepover.

Roll up the paper, put it into a balloon, and then blow up the balloon. Tell your child that when she reaches her goal, you'll pop the balloon together and she'll find out what she's earned!

3. Host a victory family dinner to celebrate your child's success. Set a "fancy" table and serve your child's favorite foods.

Get more out of conversations with your child



Are you tired of asking your child questions about school and getting little response?

Then try this strategy:

Instead of asking your child lots of questions when he gets home from school, tell him a few things about your day first. For example: "I've had such a busy day. I had a meeting with my boss in the morning. I took Grandma to her doctor's appointment this afternoon. Then we stopped by the store to pick up groceries. It was good to get home."

After you've finished, ask your child to tell you a little bit about his day. Prompt him with open-ended questions if necessary: "What was the best part of your day?" "Tell me about what you learned today."

You can also use this strategy to start discussions about schoolwork. If your child brings home a picture from school, look at it and make some observations about what you see. Comment on the colors. Say what you like about it. Tell what it reminds you of, etc. Then ask your child, "What does it mean to you?"

Promote skills that will prepare your child for middle school



Long before your child enters middle school, her teachers will start preparing her for its challenges. To support this effort at home, encourage your child to:

- **Manage her time.** Show her how to use short periods of time in productive ways. She could study flash cards on the way to practice. Or, she could review a few math problems in the car.
- **Get organized.** Have her use a planner to keep track of school assignments. Help her find ways to organize school papers and recommend she clean out her backpack once a week.

- **Take notes.** If she doesn't have the opportunity to practice this skill at school, she can try it at home while reading. Help her identify key words and information. Then have her summarize essential points.
- **Plan ahead.** Show her how to make a study schedule, and help her stick to it. Encourage your child to divide up study time into short tasks.

“The best preparation for good work tomorrow is to do good work today.”

—Elbert Hubbard

Use simple strategies to develop your child's responsibility



Young children are still learning how to be responsible students. So they sometimes forget their books, their homework and even their lunches.

It's tempting to keep track of your child's things for him. But this won't help him in the long run. His success in school depends on his ability to take responsibility for himself and his belongings.

Here are ways to help him become more responsible:

- **Write down what you expect** your child to do. Post lists of his responsibilities, weekly chores, and items he needs for school.
- **Ask your child to check off** tasks when he completes them. He can put a question mark next to a task if he needs your help.
- **Help your child figure out** where to store his things when he's not using them.
- **Set a good example.** Have a designated spot for your keys and wallet. Check your calendar to prepare for the next day.
- **Show your child how** to keep track of activities and assignments on his own weekly calendar.
- **Let your child experience** the consequences of forgetting. Don't bring his homework to school if he forgets it.
- **Let your child experience** the consequences of losing an item. If he can't find his library book, expect him to pay the fine.
- **Praise your child** when he demonstrates responsibility and does what he's supposed to do.

Are you helping your child read fluently?



Studies consistently show that students who read aloud with *fluency* are most likely to have a strong understanding

of what they've read. Your child reads fluently if he reads aloud smoothly, accurately and with expression.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your child develop this valuable reading skill:

___ 1. **Do you set aside time** for your child to read to *you* in addition to the time you spend reading to him?

___ 2. **Do you let your child pick** what to read? Even if you think it's too easy, nothing succeeds like success.

___ 3. **Do you try not to interrupt** when your child reads a word incorrectly?

___ 4. **Do you offer help** if your child asks how to pronounce a word, and then encourage him to keep reading?

___ 5. **Do you discuss a book** after your child is finished reading?

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you're helping your child develop fluency. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Encourage your elementary schooler to become a leader



Some children seem to be born leaders. They have the self-confidence, helpfulness and friendliness that make other people want to work with them.

But all children, whether they are born leaders or not, have the ability to *become* leaders. Here are some ways you can help your child develop leadership skills:

- **Look at leaders in the news.**

Whether you're watching a story about a winning football team or a community effort to build a park, help your child see that someone was the leader of that group. Talk about what makes people good leaders.

- **Be a leader yourself.** When you take a leadership role—whether it's at school, in business or in your community—tell your child about

what you're doing and why. "I'm volunteering to help your school raise money so they can purchase more classroom computers."

- **Teach your child** to see things from other people's points of view. Good leaders aren't bossy. They make people *want* to work together.
- **Find leadership opportunities.** Children can learn leadership skills in houses of worship, clubs, Scouts, athletic teams and many other organizations. Family meetings are another good way to develop "home-grown" leadership. Let children take turns chairing the meetings and managing family projects.
- **Don't push.** Pressuring a child beyond his abilities will destroy self-esteem, not build it. If your child seems stressed or unhappy, it's time to lighten up.

Everyone wins when parents volunteer and get involved!



Have you ever thought about volunteering at school? Now is the perfect time to give it a try. Here are six reasons to get involved:

1. **Your child will benefit.** Even if you're not in her classroom, your child will know you're at school. She'll feel important and she'll know you think learning is important, too.
2. **You'll get to know teachers** and other school staff. That makes it easier to ask for help when your child needs it.
3. **You'll get to know other parents.** They can be valuable resources and provide advice when needed.

4. **The school will benefit.** Whether you read to a class, help in the cafeteria or tutor students in the library, you'll be freeing school staff to spend more time with kids who need it. And that leads to more learning.
5. **Volunteering is easy.** Many schools offer training to volunteers. And there are volunteer jobs that can be done at home, at night or on weekends. So every parent can get involved.
6. **Volunteering is fun.** You'll meet lots of interesting students and adults. You may learn new skills. And you'll get a good feeling from knowing you've done something worthwhile.

Q: My daughter has no patience. If she wants something, she wants it immediately. Her teacher says her impatience is becoming a problem at school. What can I do to fix this?

Questions & Answers

A: In this era of on-demand entertainment and instant communication, it can be challenging for kids to learn to wait. However, patience is a vital ingredient for school success.

Here's how to help your child develop more patience:

- **Explain that everyone** has to learn to wait, and that you're going to help her with this skill.
 - **Be empathetic.** Let your child know you understand how hard it can be to wait for something.
 - **Give her opportunities** to be patient. When she asks for something, say, "In a minute." If you're on the phone, develop a hand signal that means, "When I'm finished."
 - **Help your child save money** for something she wants instead of buying it right away.
 - **Enjoy activities together** that require patience, such as playing board games, putting together puzzles, baking and planting.
 - **Help your child develop** strategies for waiting—like singing songs quietly, playing "I spy" or reading a book to pass the time.
 - **Be patient yourself.** Stay calm when you're stuck in traffic, for example. Say something like, "It looks like we're going to be in the car for a while. Let's use the time to play a game."
- With some practice, your child will learn the patience she needs to be successful in school—and in life.

It Matters: Building Character

What should you do if your child is caught cheating?



Your child has just come home with a note from the teacher that says she was caught cheating. Your first instinct may

be to ground her for the rest of her life.

Instead, experts suggest setting aside time to talk and really listen to your child. Ask her what happened and find out why she felt the need to cheat.

Here are four common reasons some students cheat:

1. **They are afraid** of what their parents will do if they bring home a bad grade. Make sure your child knows that a low grade would not be the end of your love for her. You would be more concerned about the situation than angry with her.
2. **They have high expectations** for their own academic achievement. Tell your child not to put too much emphasis on grades. Grades don't reflect a person's worth or intelligence.
3. **They think cheating is no big deal.** Tell your child that cheating is wrong. Cheaters rob themselves of learning the material and they are unfair to honest students.
4. **They were asked to.** Tell your child that letting someone look at her test or copy her homework is wrong. A real friend would never ask her to do that. Help her role-play turning down a request to cheat: "I'd like to help you, Jane, but I don't like cheating. Besides, we could get into a lot of trouble."

Source: J. Craig, Ph.D., *Parents on the Spot! What to Do When Kids Put You There*, Hearst Books.

Use role models to encourage positive character traits

Although you are the primary role model in your child's life, you don't have to be the only one. Here's how to draw upon people he knows to help instill positive character traits:

- **Talk about relatives**, friends or celebrities who show respect, responsibility, compassion or other desirable traits. Make it a point to say how much you admire them and why.
- **Share your heroes** with your child. Talk about people such as Anne Frank, Martin Luther King, Jr., Abraham Lincoln and Mother Teresa. Discuss the traits you admire in them.
- **Encourage your child** to find or draw pictures of people he admires and tell you why he thinks highly of them. Heroes



can be fictional—from books or movies—or people he knows, such as an uncle who helps build houses for people in need or a grandmother who worked to put a child through college.

Teach your child to persevere when faced with challenges



If your child has a goal he wants to reach, such as earning an A on a project or making the competitive soccer team, achieving it will probably take hard work. And there may be times your child will feel like giving up. That's why it's important to teach him to persevere, even when things are difficult. Here's how:

- **Discuss past successes.** Did your child save to buy something with his own money? How did he do it? What did success feel like? What did he learn?
- **Choose a fun, realistic goal.** Make it something your child is likely

to complete soon. If he wants to read an entire series of books, start small. Have him set a goal to read the first book. Achievement is a great motivator to keep going.

- **Listen for ideas.** Kids often mention goals without actually setting them. ("I'd love to be in the talent show" or "I hope I finish my report on time.") Together, create a step-by-step plan for success.
- **Be a cheerleader.** Say things like, "You are really sticking with this. I'm very impressed!" Even if your child misses the mark, praise his efforts. Trying hard and learning from mistakes are major accomplishments on their own!