

Elementary School Parents[®]

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West Orange Elementary
Jennifer Bourgeois, Ph.D., Principal

make the difference!



Family meetings can teach responsibility, communication

Regular family meetings provide opportunities for families to connect and for children to learn important life skills. Led properly, these meetings can teach your child about responsibility, communication, negotiation and cooperation.

To get the most out of your family meetings:

- **Meet regularly**—once every week or two. In addition, allow family members to request a meeting if they have something important to discuss.
- **Make an agenda.** Before each meeting, ask family members what they would like to discuss. Schedule enough time to discuss each topic, but try to keep the meeting under one hour.
- **Put someone in charge.** The chairperson must stick to the

agenda and give everyone a fair, uninterrupted say. Initially, the chairperson should be an adult. After a few meetings, consider letting your child give it a try!

- **Take turns.** After one person describes an idea or problem, everyone else can explain how they feel about it. Brainstorm solutions, giving each person time to contribute. Choose an idea—or a combination of ideas—to try, with parents having the final say.
- **Write down decisions.** As each decision is made, record the family's plan. Keep notes in a journal or post them as a reminder. You may need to revisit certain decisions or solutions at future meetings to discuss whether or not they are working.

Source: T.W. Phelan, Ph.D., *1-2-3 Magic*, ParentMagic, Inc.

Remember the three keys to discipline



Some parents think that *discipline* means punishment. But the most effective discipline

helps your child learn what he did wrong—and how he can make a better choice in the future.

Here are three keys to productive discipline:

1. **Remain calm.** When you lose your temper, you also lose the upper hand. Giving in to an urge to yell at your child teaches him that it's okay to lose control when he's upset.
2. **Be consistent.** It doesn't take long for your child to learn whether you really intend to enforce rules. Say *yes* just once to watching TV before school and you'll have a battle every morning. Don't set rules unless you will consistently enforce them.
3. **Avoid criticizing.** Just describe the behavior. "It was your sister's turn to go on the computer and you wouldn't quit playing your game." Then remind your child of the rule and of the consequence.

Teach your elementary schooler the different aspects of respect



Schools teach students about respect, but it's parents who have the most influence on how respectful kids become.

To instill respect, tell your child to:

- **Practice the Golden Rule.** How does your child want to be treated? That's how she should treat others.
- **Speak politely.** Your child should say kind things and use good manners. Avoid inappropriate language and mean comments.
- **Appreciate diversity.** All people deserve fair treatment, no matter what makes them an individual—age, race, beliefs and more.
- **Resolve conflicts peacefully.** Encourage your child to express feelings with "I statements," not blame. "I was angry when you borrowed my pencil without asking."

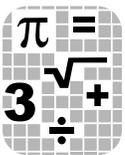
- **Distinguish right from wrong.** Talk to your child about values such as honesty, courage, generosity and learning from mistakes. Talk about how to respond when others are being disrespectful.
- **Respect herself.** Self-respect is the foundation for respecting others. Help your child take pride in her skills, accomplishments and good decisions.

Source: "My Child's Academic Success: What Does 'Strong Character' Mean?" U.S. Department of Education, niswc.com/character_mean.

"Respect for ourselves guides our morals; respect for others guides our manners."

—Laurence Sterne

Put an end to procrastination by doing the crummy job first!



Your child has math homework, a book report and spelling homework. He hates spelling. So that's why you're going

to tell him to do the spelling first. Here are the reasons:

- **Crummy jobs are a part of life.** We all have to do some things we don't like. Talk to your child about some of the jobs you don't enjoy doing, but have to do anyway. Taking out the trash every week isn't a fun task, but what's the alternative?
- **Putting off a difficult task just makes it—well, more difficult.** Until you get that job finished, it's going to occupy your mind and hang over your head.
- **All it takes is a little push.** Set a timer for 15 minutes and say, "Work on your spelling for 15 minutes. Then you can stop." Once your child gets started, it may not be as painful as he thought.
- **Finishing that dreaded task is going to feel wonderful.** Help your child learn to focus on how great he'll feel when the job is finished—not how he feels while he's doing it. But let him know that it's also okay to build in a small reward for finishing an unpleasant task, such as spending 10 minutes shooting hoops.

Source: R. Emmett, *The Procrastinating Child: A Handbook for Adults to Help Children Stop Putting Things Off*, Walker & Company.

Are you teaching your child to make good choices?



Parents want children to make wise choices. When the time comes, you hope your child will say

no to peer pressure and *yes* to positive things. Are you doing all you can now to teach her to make these wise choices? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you give your child opportunities to make choices every day?** Sometimes they are small, but she has to live with the choices she makes.
- ___ **2. Do you talk about family decisions together?** Do you brainstorm about possible solutions and come up with the best one together?
- ___ **3. Do you sometimes think out loud, talking about how you are making a choice?**
- ___ **4. Do you encourage your child to ask questions?**
- ___ **5. Do you teach your child that every decision has consequences?**

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your child make better choices today and in the future. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Five ways chores can help your child become more responsible



One of the best ways to help your child develop responsibility is through chores. Here are five reasons why:

- 1. Chores help your child learn** the basic skills he'll need in life. Before your child leaves home, he should know how to prepare a few simple meals and how to care for his clothes. The sooner he learns these lessons, the more prepared he will be.
- 2. Chores can help your child do better in school.** Learning how to follow directions when baking cookies is no different from following directions when taking a test.
- 3. Chores help your child feel a sense of investment.** A child who has swept the floor is less likely to track in mud from outdoors.
- 4. Chores help your child take pride in his work.** This good feeling can carry over to times when he has to face a daunting task, like finishing a long-term project.
- 5. Chores help your child feel like he is needed.** Let's face it—this is something *everyone* needs. So be sure to recognize your child's contribution. "Wesley made some delicious cookies. We will enjoy them in our lunch tomorrow."

Source: W. Sears and M. Sears, *The Successful Child: What Parents Can Do to Help Kids Turn Out Well*, Hachette Book Group.

Ask the right kinds of questions to improve your child's thinking



Experts recommend asking questions to build your child's thinking skills. But how do you know

what the right questions are?

A well-known classification system, Bloom's Taxonomy, divides thinking skills into six categories. Ask your child questions that fall under these categories:

- 1. Knowledge.** Find out what your child knows about a topic. Talk about facts. Start with the basics, such as who, what, when and where. "When did the war start?" "Who was the President?" The answers should be clearly right or wrong.
- 2. Comprehension.** Test how well your child understands the subject. Ask him to describe, explain or predict something. "If we were tadpoles, where would we live?"
- 3. Application.** Encourage your child to connect previous learning to new experiences. "Chickens hatch from eggs. Do you think ostriches hatch from eggs, too?"
- 4. Analysis.** Discuss how something works or how it's organized. "Name the different kinds of animals you studied."
- 5. Synthesis.** This involves thinking about old information in new ways. "What if Christopher Columbus lived today? Where could he explore?"
- 6. Evaluation.** Help your child be creative without worrying about *right* or *wrong*. "Imagine you could go back in time. What would you do during the Civil War?" "How might you change history?"

Source: The Council for Exceptional Children, "Improving Your Child's Thinking Skills," familyeducation.niswc.com/six_thinking.

Q: My daughter has just been diagnosed with asthma. She does not want anyone at school to know because she says she still wants to "have fun with her friends" at recess. How should I work with the teacher—without having my daughter singled out?

Questions & Answers

A: Asthma is a serious health problem. It's the biggest reason why children miss school. Asthma causes nearly 14 million absences a year.

So you can't agree to keep her illness from her teacher. You need to work with the teacher to create plans that will protect your child's health and safety. To do so:

- **Check with the school** about rules for medicine at school. See the school nurse or talk to the office to fill out needed forms. You should also be sure that your daughter knows how to take her medication.
- **Talk with the teacher** about times when your daughter may be at risk. Overactivity during recess can often trigger an attack. Teach your daughter to self-monitor so she avoids situations that bring on an attack.
- **Take precautions** during times of the year when asthma attacks are more frequent. Pollen, for example, can often act as a trigger. At these times, your daughter will need to pay closer attention to how she feels.

Let your daughter know that asthma won't prevent her from having fun at recess or in other physical activity. But she will have to learn to respect her limits so she can stay healthy.

It Matters: Reading

Talking with your child promotes reading skills



Did you know that each time you talk with your child, you promote reading skills? Talking builds vocabulary,

language abilities and interest in reading.

Here are some things to discuss with your child:

- **Everyday events.** Visit new places and use new words. You might say, “Look at that huge *backhoe!* I wonder what they are building.”
- **Books.** Ask her about what she is reading. Tell her about books you love. When her friends stop by, start conversations about books.
- **Characters.** Do any of them remind your child of herself? What would she do in their shoes? Can she guess what might happen to them later in the story? What if they had made different choices? How might the ending be different?
- **Questions.** Wonder about things, such as, “Why don’t clouds fall out of the sky?” Brainstorm, and then read to find the answer.
- **Words.** Choose a “Word of the Day.” Look up its meaning in the dictionary. Challenge each family member to use it three times that day. At night, review how you did.

Play word games, such as “Dictionary.” One person finds a strange word in the dictionary. Everyone else guesses what it means. Take turns picking words.

Build interest in reading by being a reading role model

Children who see their parents reading usually grow up to be readers themselves. Show your child that reading is important to you by doing these things:

- **Let your child see you reading** every day. Pick up a newspaper, magazine or a book. Your child will see that reading is important to you, and will want to read, too.
- **Tell your child why you’re reading**—for information, to check out something you think you know. Or you may be reading just for fun.
- **Look up a word** in the dictionary if you come across one you are unsure of. Ask your child if he knows the meaning of the word.
- **Read aloud to your child.** When you come across something you think your child might find interesting, read a small part of it to him. He may be motivated to finish reading it himself.



- **Get your own library card** and use it. When you take your child to the library, find something to check out for yourself.
- **Join your child.** When you see your child reading, pick up something to read yourself and bring a snack to share.
- **Give books as gifts.** Show your child that books are valuable to you by giving them as gifts. Encourage your child to give his friends books as gifts, too.

Six simple ways to help your child practice reading aloud



Children are expected to read aloud frequently in school and for many children it’s a skill they must practice to be good at. It’s easy to find ways to read aloud if you think about it:

1. **Ask your child to read a recipe** to you while you are cooking.
2. **Ask an older child** to read to a younger child.
3. **Take turns reading aloud** while you and your child read together.
4. **Invite family members** to bring a book to the dinner table once a week and read a favorite section to the entire family.
5. **Ask your child to read aloud** from a library book while you are riding in the car. Everyone in the family can take turns reading aloud on a long trip.
6. **Have your child read you** the weather report from the newspaper or a weather app each morning before school.