

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

INDIAN LAKE CENTRAL SCHOOL
Dave Snide PRINCIPAL

September 2008

BUILDING ROUTINES

Kick off the school year by sticking to a morning routine

Get your child off to a great start this school year by creating a “morning routine.” Part of the “morning routine” starts the night before. Each night, have your child:

- **Pack her backpack** with everything she needs for the next day.
- **Check to make sure** she has completed all of her assignments.
- **Prepare her lunch**, whether it's making a sandwich or getting out her lunch money.
- **Lay out her outfit** so she doesn't waste time in the morning deciding what to wear.
- **Go to sleep at a regular time**—every night.

In the morning, she should:

- **Have a regular “wake up” time.**
- **Follow her own “getting ready” routine**—shower, brush teeth, get dressed, etc.
- **Leave time for breakfast.** Kids who eat breakfast are better prepared to learn when they get to school.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, “Helping Your Child with Homework,” www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/homework/index.html.

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Communicate with your child's teacher

The beginning of the school year is a great time to build a partnership with your child's teachers. When parents and schools work together, children are more comfortable and more likely to be successful. Be sure to:

- **Meet your child's teacher.** Share any special needs or other information that will help her work best with your child.
- **Attend** back-to-school night and parent conferences.
- **Give** your contact information to the teacher—your daytime and evening phone numbers, along with your email address.
- **Familiarize** yourself with the school website and handbook. Know the rules—and share them with your child.
- **Ask** the teacher what the best way for you to contact her is.
- **Ask** your child questions about what he's learning. You'll be more informed when you speak to his teacher.

WHEN YOU NEED HELP

Starting at a new school?

Your family moved over the summer—and now your child is worried about being “the new kid.” It's always hard to start out at a new school, but you can help your child get comfortable. Find out if there are any teams or clubs he can join. After-school activities are a great way to meet other kids with similar interests.

ENCOURAGING READING

Boost your child's learning with a ‘new vocabulary’ list

To help build your child's vocabulary:

- **Ask** your child to tell you a new word she learned at school. Or pick one out of the dictionary.
- **Discuss** what the new word means. Use it in a sentence. Then have your child use it in a sentence.
- **Add** the word to a “New Vocabulary” list. Post it on the refrigerator. Review the list weekly.



Source: Marcia Kosanovich and others, “Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension,” Florida Center for Reading Research, www.fcrr.org/curriculum/PDF/GK-1/K1BookTwoIntro.pdf.

HOMEWORK

Create a homework chart with your child

A homework chart helps your child make sure that he finishes homework properly. Have your child ask himself:

- **Is the work neat?**
- **Is my name on the paper?**
- **Did I look for spelling mistakes?**
- **Did I follow the directions?**



Source: Mary Ann Smialek, *Don't Miss the Bus!* ISBN: 1-589-79053-7 (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1-800-462-6420, www.rowmaneducation.com).

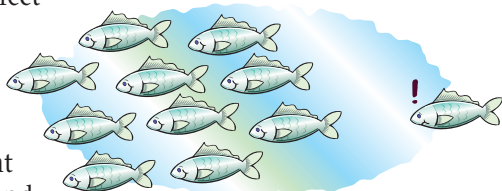
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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents promote good school attendance?

Q: I know that attendance is important, and I want my child to do well this school year. How can I make sure he has good attendance?

A: Attendance definitely has an effect on your child's achievement. Research shows a link between *being* in school and *doing well* in school. If your child misses even one lesson—and doesn't get caught up quickly—he will likely fall behind.



Clearly, if your child wakes up with a fever, he needs to stay home. But many kids miss school when they're *not* sick. Here are some of the top reasons for school absences—and how you can help your child avoid them:

- **Doctor's appointments.** Try to schedule such appointments after school, or during school vacations.
- **Oversleeping.** If your child is having trouble waking up in the morning, make his bedtime earlier. Sleep is important—but so is school.
- **Disorganization.** If your child is consistently late to school, help him prepare at night for the next day.
- **School refusal.** If your child keeps saying he doesn't want to go to school, talk to his teacher. See if there are issues you can resolve together. But make it clear that he will go to school every day—it's not optional.

Source: Illinois State Board of Education, Truant's Alternative and Optional Education Program, "Causes/Contributing Factors of Truancy," <http://mcdonough.k12.il.us/optionaleducation/TAOEP/truancy.htm>.

PARENT QUIZ

Are you teaching respect at home?

Children who understand the importance of having respect for themselves, others and authority are more likely to be successful in school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're raising a respectful child:

- ___ 1. **Do you treat** your child with respect?
- ___ 2. **Do you teach** your child to respect rules by following them yourself?
- ___ 3. **Do you model** polite behavior, such as saying "please" and "thank you"?
- ___ 4. **Do you explain** the reasons behind rules to your child?
- ___ 5. **Do you encourage** your child to be honest by admitting your own mistakes?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're promoting respect at home. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"All children behave as well as they are treated."

— Anonymous

BUILDING CHARACTER

Help your child become more aware of others

It's normal for kids to think about *themselves* a lot. But they also must learn to think of *others*. Help your child:

- **Find magazine photos** of various situations. Talk about what you see. How do the people look physically? Warm? Comfortable? How about emotionally?
- **Watch and listen to people.** Discuss how they seem to feel. Happy? Sad? Insecure? How can you tell?

Source: Linda & Richard Eyre, *Teaching Your Children Values*, ISBN: 0-671-76966-9 (Fireside Publishing, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).

BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Share book report tips

Even kids who love to read can dread writing book reports. To make the job easier, teach your child to:

- **Find** out what the teacher expects.
- **Divide** the task into small parts.
- **Use** sentence starters, such as, "The most exciting part of the book was"
- **Build** in extra work time just in case.

Source: Cheri Fuller, *Teaching Your Child to Write*, ISBN: 0-425-15983-3 (Berkeley Publishing Group, 1-800-788-6262, www.penguinputnam.com).

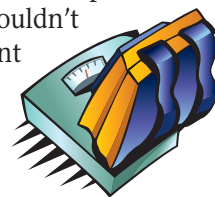
WELLNESS

Weigh your child's backpack

A heavy backpack could cause your child to develop neck strain, shoulder pain or a backache. Weigh your child's backpack after she has filled it. It shouldn't weigh more than 15 percent of your child's weight.

If it does weigh more, work together to take out anything she doesn't need daily. And if you're still worried, contact your child's teacher.

Source: "Backpack Health Alert," *Parents Magazine* (Gruner + Jahr USA Publishing, 1-800-727-3682, www.parents.com).



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