

# Elementary School Parents<sup>®</sup> *make the difference!*

Midview Local Schools  
Robert Maxwell



## Strive for more balance in your child's after-school activities

**P**arents want their children to have every opportunity in life. But when children are over-scheduled, they can't do their best at anything. Get the most out of extracurricular activities by scheduling them carefully. To strike a healthy balance:

- **Focus on your child.** Some parents have regrets about activities they missed in childhood. Providing these opportunities for your child is helpful only if they're right for him.
- **Notice your child's reactions.** Does he complain about certain activities? Has he missed assignments or fallen behind in learning? These are red flags.
- **Put family time first.** After-school activities should not come at the expense of family relationships. Strive for time every day to focus on each other, and enjoy it!
- **Schedule downtime.** If your child doesn't have any free time in his schedule, consider eliminating a few of his organized activities. Kids need time to just hang out.
- **Build character.** It's wonderful to build a skill. It's even better to build character. Choose activities that teach fundamental values—and activity leaders who do, too.
- **Talk with your child.** How does he feel about his schedule? Is he committed to his responsibilities? Which activities mean the most to him?
- **Expect success.** Hold high expectations, but keep criticism low. Your support should be uplifting—not stressful—for your child.

**Source:** Dr. J. Taylor, "Are you enriching or overscheduling your child?" Today.com, <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/32544451/ns/today-parenting/t/are-you-enriching-or-overscheduling-your-child/>.

## A 'parachute parent' reduces confidence



We all want to help our children when they need it. But some parents take the help a little

too far. They "parachute in" to save the day every time their child faces a bump in the road.

So instead of letting two friends work out a minor disagreement, the parents step in. The next thing you know, a small problem has grown into a big feud.

Or a forgetful child can't seem to remember to take her lunch to school. A parachute mom is there to rescue her every day. The result? She never learns to be responsible.

These "parachute" parents are really sending their kids a negative message. "You can't handle this. I have to do it for you." Over time, that reduces a child's confidence in her ability to solve problems for herself.

Parents should *always* help when their child truly can't solve a problem. Otherwise, pack up the parachute and let your child figure it out!

**Source:** R. Craig, "Family Key to Building Child's Self-Esteem," National PTA, [www.pta.org/3497.htm](http://www.pta.org/3497.htm).

# Consistent attendance is key to your child's success in school



In winter, the mornings are dark. The weather can be nasty. And there are days when getting to school seems impossible.

But it's important to make daily attendance a habit. Because one day of missed school in elementary school can continue to harm a child throughout his school career.

Researchers at the University of Minnesota tracked what happened to kids who missed school in the early grades. Those with many absences in kindergarten struggled in first grade. Even worse, those same children were still struggling to keep up with their classmates when they reached fifth grade—and beyond.

Every day's learning builds on what students learned the day before. When a child misses a lesson, he also misses a critical building

block. That can lead to problems for the next several days and weeks. And over time, those absences are even more costly.

So get everyone in the attendance habit. And know that when you send your child off to school, you're helping him for today, tomorrow and the rest of his school career.

**Source:** *Racial Disparities in Minnesota Basic Standards Test Scores*, Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice, University of Minnesota.

**“The parents exist to teach the child, but also they must learn what the child has to teach them; and the child has a very great deal to teach them.”**

—Arnold Bennett

# Use one-liners to buy time when disciplining your child



Children study their parents all day, every day. It's no wonder that they know how to say just the right thing to drive

them crazy.

So when your child is facing consequences for misbehaving, she's likely to say something that will distract you. “You don't love me,” she might try. Or, “You never did that to Avery. You're not being fair.” Or, “Dad would never do this.” (This last one is especially effective if Dad no longer lives at home.)

At a time like this, you need to stay focused. You want to talk about her misbehavior, and you don't want to get taken down a side road.

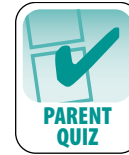
So it's good to have a one-liner or two. The phrase should be something that is as neutral as possible. It should be short so you get back to the real issue.

Here are a few one-liners you might try:

- **“I hate it when that happens, too.”** Then take the time to discuss the reason for the consequence.
- **“Nice try.”** This works well if your child is trying to make you feel guilty.
- **“I need some time to think about this.”** If you are uncertain how to handle a situation, buy yourself a little time.

**Source:** L. Pearson, *The Discipline Miracle*, AMACOM Books.

# Are you helping your child develop a love for math?



You may not love math. But you know it's important for your child to get a solid foundation in this important subject. Can

you help your child love math even if you don't? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

\_\_\_ 1. **Do you look for ways to use math every day?** For example, you can count the steps to the bus stop and add numbers on license plates.

\_\_\_ 2. **Do you cook with your child to teach the importance of accurate measurement?**

\_\_\_ 3. **Do you assure your child that learning math is more about sticking with it than about being *good* at it?**

\_\_\_ 4. **Do you invent math problems based on stories?** For example, if each of the Seven Dwarves drank a cup of water at every meal, how many glasses would Snow White pour?

\_\_\_ 5. **Do you make a game out of learning math facts?** How fast can your child multiply 9 x 7?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* answer means you're helping your child learn to love math. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

Elementary School  
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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1275

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Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit our website: [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com).

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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

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# Household chores offer five key benefits for elementary schoolers



On the frontier, children knew they mattered to the family's well-being. Children made a real and important contribution.

But today's children don't always have family responsibilities. That's too bad—because there are real benefits that grow out of doing chores.

Chores help children:

1. **Become “shareholders.”** When your child does some of the tasks that keep the household running, she has a real investment in your home. A child who swept out the front hall is less likely to walk through it in muddy soccer cleats.
2. **Develop skills.** Each time you give your child a new chore, she'll not only learn how to do the job, she'll

also be learning skills she'll use throughout her life.

3. **Understand that the world doesn't revolve around them.** We all know people who expect others to clean up the messes they make. Your child won't grow up to become one of those people.
4. **Develop a sense of pride.** Having a pile of clean laundry or a bed with clean sheets is an accomplishment. When you give your child responsibilities, she can take pride in what she has done.
5. **See that they are an important part of the family.** Your child will know she is helping to keep your home running smoothly.

**Source:** W. and M. Sears, *The Successful Child: What Parents Can Do to Help Kids Turn Out Well*, Little, Brown & Company.

# Experts recommend children practice writing at home daily



Good writing takes practice. There's little time in school for that. So experts recommend that your child spend 15

minutes a day writing at home.

Learning to write well will boost your child's confidence. He'll be able to express his feelings and ideas. Writing is also key to your child's success in school. He'll do better on tests, particularly essay questions.

To give your child writing practice, try these ideas:

- **Helping.** Let your child help you by writing. When you write a letter, make a grocery list or decide the dinner menu, dictate to your child. Have him write the words down.

- **Journaling.** Get a journal for your child and encourage him to write in it daily. Suggest he write about things that happen to him and how he feels about them.
- **List making.** Suggest that your child make lists. He can write lists of things he needs to remember or things he wants to do.
- **Copying.** Encourage your child to write down the words to his favorite songs. Your child may also enjoy copying down favorite quotations or poems.
- **Recording.** Take your child out. Ask him to bring a notebook and describe in it what he sees and experiences. Views from the car window or sights and sounds while walking in nature are good starts.

**Q:** I wondered why I didn't seem to be hearing about the school events that other parents knew about. Then I opened my son's book bag. Ack! There were crumpled papers, a dirty shirt and a smushed up dessert. His chronic disorganization is affecting his schoolwork—he loses things and can't find what he needs. How can I help him get on track?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** There are costs to disorganization, as your son is already discovering. Luckily, a child doesn't need to be born with a special organizing gene. These are skills that can be taught.

Talk with your son about *why* you're going to help him get organized. Wouldn't he like to know where his homework is? Wouldn't he like to find his assignments when he needs them?

Start by giving the book bag a thorough cleaning. He can uncrumple the wads of paper. Then together you can decide what's important and what can be tossed. (And you can also return the forms his teacher is probably waiting for.)

Make sure he has a binder or a folder for each subject. Color code them so he can remember that green = science and blue = math. Everything for that subject goes in the folder.

Teach him that the first thing he should do every day after school is empty his backpack. He can set papers and forms for you to review in one pile, and things he needs to do for homework in another.

He might never be super organized, but he'll be able to find his math homework!

—Kris Amundson,  
The Parent Institute

# It Matters: Building Character

## Talk to your child about cheating & why it is wrong



Research shows many kids think cheating doesn't happen in elementary school. But cheating often begins

during competitive elementary-school games. A child may say she wasn't "out," for example, when she really was. Other kids may think, "No fair! Now I have to cheat to win!" Unfortunately, this leads to more cheating.

You can play an important role in cheating prevention. It helps to know that:

- **Cheating is more tempting** to elementary schoolers than preschoolers, and the pressure increases in middle school. Make sure you discuss it before then.
- **Young kids are confused** about cheating. Research shows that although they believe it's wrong, they also think it might be okay on some occasions.
- **Peer pressure influences** cheating. When someone suggests cheating (such as by asking to copy homework), it can be tough to say *no*. Role-play possible responses with your child.
- **Cheating is an ethical issue** that affects many parts of life. For example, some people cheat in sports or lie to get a job.
- **Too much pressure** increases the risk of cheating. Let your child know that working hard and being honest is more important than getting a certain grade.

**Source:** "Cheating is a PERSONAL FOUL," Educational Testing Service, [www.glass-castle.com/clients/www-nocheating-org/adccouncil/research/cheatingfactsheet.html](http://www.glass-castle.com/clients/www-nocheating-org/adccouncil/research/cheatingfactsheet.html).

## Three strategies can help you promote respectful behavior

**Y**ou want your child to respect herself and others, and you've told her so. After all, without respect, it's hard to go far in life. Thankfully, there's more you can do to promote respect.

Take these simple steps:

1. **Discuss respect.** Pose questions such as, "What is respect?" and "Why is it important?" Listen openly to your child's opinions.
2. **Set an example.** Treat others with respect and choose relationships in which you're treated well. Point out other role models, too—both real and fictional, such as historical figures and book characters.
3. **Be a media critic.** Teach your child to think about behavior she



sees on TV, in video games and in advertising. Is it respectful? Why or why not? Does it reflect her values and beliefs? What can she learn from it?

**Source:** "Safe & Respectful Relationships for All," [SAFEANDRESPECTFUL.ORG](http://SAFEANDRESPECTFUL.ORG), [www.safeandrespectful.org/parents/home.html](http://www.safeandrespectful.org/parents/home.html).

## Show your elementary schooler the effects of persistence



It's wonderful for kids to be talented and smart, but research shows it's just as important to be persistent.

Pushing forward—even when it's tough—is a key to success. Whether your child is naturally persistent or gives up easily, it helps to:

- **Break big goals** into small parts. If your child is determined to get an A in math, support him by discussing steps. How exactly will he reach his goal? Help him develop a reasonable plan.
- **Enjoy the process.** Sure, it feels great to see an A on a report card, but it also feels great to study hard and do well on a test,

quiz or project. Even better, it feels great to learn! Talk with your child about his accomplishments and what makes them worthwhile.

- **Discuss persistence.** How has persistence already helped your child? Maybe he learned to ride a bike or play an instrument. What new challenge can he tackle now?
- **Compliment your child's hard work**—not just the end results. If he falls short of a goal, that's okay, as long as he tried.

**Source:** C. Jett, "Developing Persistence in Children: A Guide for Parents," [SelfGrowth.com](http://SelfGrowth.com), [www.selfgrowth.com/articles/developing-persistence-in-children-a-guide-for-parents](http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/developing-persistence-in-children-a-guide-for-parents).