

Elementary School Parents[®] make the difference!

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Midview Local Schools
Robert Maxwell



Review your child's schedule to maintain a healthy balance

It's natural to want to structure your child's life so she's on a path to success. But if almost every minute of your child's waking hours is scheduled with schoolwork, chores or extra-curricular activities, your child is overscheduled.

Overscheduled children become exhausted and overwhelmed. They get anxious, discouraged and ultimately unmotivated.

To be healthy and happy, every child needs some downtime. Time just to be, reflect and imagine.

To ensure your child isn't overscheduled:

- **Help your child select** one or two structured activities that match her unique interests and abilities.
- **Schedule one to two hours** of free time a day for your child. Make

sure she has access to art supplies, games, books, garden tools, etc.

- **Expect some boredom.** Boredom can motivate kids to listen to their inner voice. They tinker, write, draw and create.
- **Never let school** become secondary to extra-curricular activities. Make sure your child mustn't stay up late to finish homework. Remember, elementary-age kids need 10 to 11 hours of sleep a day.
- **Plan for "unrushed family time."** Have days that are completely open to just putter around the house and yard together. Listen to music. Take a walk. Do anything you both enjoy that has no goal.

Source: Beth Wilson Saavedra, *Creating Balance in Your Child's Life*, ISBN: 0-8092-2875-0 (Contemporary Books/McGraw-Hill, 1-877-833-5524, www.mcgraw-hill.com).

Show the link between effort, achievement



One of the greatest lessons you can teach your child is that effort pays off. Research shows

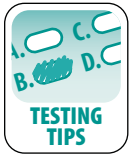
that kids who think they can do something hard if they just stick with it are usually right.

Here's how to help your child see the link between effort and outcome:

- **Be a role model.** Sometimes, kids think everything comes easily for parents. Say, "It's going to be hard to finish this form for work. I'll just keep working until it's done."
- **Remind your child** of a time when effort worked. "You studied those spelling words last week and got a 90. Your work really paid off."
- **Don't let your child** become discouraged if he doesn't earn all A's. Celebrate his progress.
- **Help your child think** of work as an investment. "It'll take time to learn these math facts. But once you master them, you'll know them forever."

Source: Jere Brophy, *Motivating Students to Learn*, ISBN: 0-805-84772-3 (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1-800-926-6579, www.erlbaum.com).

Help your child overcome test anxiety and do better on tests



Like it or not, today's kids are going to have to take a lot of tests. Some children seem to be naturally good test takers. But others freeze up. Even though they know the material, they can't do their best during the exam.

You can help your child do better on tests. Share the following tips to help your child succeed on anything from a weekly spelling test to a big state exam:

- **Breathe deeply.** Teach your child to take a few deep breaths before starting any test. Have her repeat a

positive phrase, such as, "I studied hard. I am prepared for this test."

- **Answer easy questions first.** In every test, there are bound to be some answers that your child knows right away. Teach her to answer those questions first. That will give her the confidence to move on to harder questions.
- **Get a picture in your mind.** Help your child "see" herself answering questions calmly and confidently.
- **Focus on one question** at a time.

Source: Douglas Bloch, *The Power of Positive Talk*, ISBN: 1-575-42127-5 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

Find ways to avoid top reasons children are absent from school



He woke up late and can't get going. Your sitter is sick and you have nowhere to leave your younger kids.

Things like this happen all the time. Parents wonder if going to school is all that important.

Yes. In fact, kids who miss a lot of school—even in the early grades—are more likely to drop out. They have more problems learning material that will help them succeed.

One school district asked families why their kids missed school. Here are their top answers and some ways you can deal with those problems:

- **He feels sick.** If your child doesn't have a fever and he isn't obviously sick (vomiting, coughing, diarrhea), he can probably go to school.
- **He just won't get up.** Make bedtime earlier. Help him get ready for school the night before.
- **You need him at home** to help with younger kids. If you work and

need child care, be sure to have a Plan B if your sitter gets sick. It's not fair to ask a child to miss school to care for younger kids.

- **He's worried.** Talk with your child. Is it a test that worries him? Help him review. If it's something more serious, talk with the teacher.

Source: Joyce L. Epstein and Steven B. Sheldon, "Present and Accounted For: Improving Student Attendance Through Family and Community Involvement," *Journal of Education Research*, May/June 2002 (Heldref Publications, 1-800-365-9753, www.heldref.org/jer.php).

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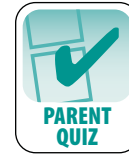
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Are you building a team with your child's school?



One great definition of a team—Together, Everyone Achieves More. Research shows that when home and school

form a strong team, kids are the real winners. They learn more and do better in school.

Now that the school year is underway, it's time to make sure you are you doing all you can to build a home-school team. Answer *yes* or *no* to each statement:

___ 1. I have met my child's classroom teacher at least once this year.

___ 2. I talk with my child about school each day. I review all of the information he brings home.

___ 3. I monitor my child's homework. If he struggles with an assignment, I ask the teacher how I can help at home.

___ 4. I make sure my child gets to school on time each day with everything he needs for school.

___ 5. I have reviewed the school handbook and expect my child to follow all school rules.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping build a strong home-school team. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Have an idea to share?

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Send ideas to *Parents make the difference!*, Editorial Staff, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474 (or www.parent-institute.com/ideas/pmd). Materials sent cannot be returned.

Give your child with LD, ADD consistent discipline, not lectures



There's no question that disciplining kids with learning disabilities requires new techniques.

Here are three things to

keep in mind:

1. **Do not lecture your child.** Save your breath. Kids with learning disabilities and ADD live in the here-and-now. Use as few words as possible. "Jake—TV off. Now."
2. **Make consequences immediate.** If your child misbehaves, you have to enforce the rule, even if you're

in public. Kids with LD and ADD won't remember when they get home what they did in the meat aisle to earn a time out.

3. **Be consistent.** These children need to predict what's coming. Kids are persistent. If they think there's even a chance to wear you down, they'll keep nagging. But if "no" always means "no," they're more likely to go along.

Source: Suzanne H. Stevens, *Classroom Success for the LD and ADHD Child*, ISBN: 0-895-87159-9 (John F. Blair, Publisher, 1-800-222-9796, www.blairpub.com).

Give your child the tools to get organized for school success



She rushed out the door, late for the bus again.

Five minutes later, you saw her math homework sitting on her bed.

Helping your child get organized is one of the most important ways to help her do better in school. After all, if she doesn't have her homework, she can't turn it in for a grade!

Here are some tips that will get your child organized this year:

- **Start with a daily checkup.** Each day, have your child clean out her book bag. All the way to the bottom (yikes!). Then help her make a list of what she has to do that day. She'll feel good as she checks off each item on her list. And you'll be happy when you don't find math homework on the bed in the morning.
- **Help your child set up a study space.** Kids who aren't naturally organized need all the help they can get. Studying in the same place every day is one way to help them focus. You don't have to buy a desk—the kitchen table can be a

good study spot. But collect pens, pencils, paper, erasers and other study supplies in a box. That way, they'll be ready when she needs them.

- **Start using a homework folder.** Buy a two-pocket folder and have her keep it in her book bag. All the homework goes in the folder at the end of the day. When she finishes it at home, it goes back in the folder so it gets to school.

Source: Janet S. Fox, *Get Organized Without Losing It*, ISBN: 1-575-42193-3 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

"In the search for what helps children grow up to be healthy, happy and successful, we have yet to discover anything that compares to having good parents who love, guide and respect their children."

—Laurence Steinberg, author,
*The 10 Basic Principles
of Good Parenting*

Q: This is going to be a stressful year for my son. He's in the fourth grade, and the work is much harder this year. His best friend moved away over the summer. My husband is on active duty overseas, so things at home are different. What can I do to help my son through this year?

Questions & Answers

A: It does sound like a lot of things have piled up on your son this year. And there's no question that some kids deal better with stress than others. But you can help your son get through the tough times.

Remember, your son can't deal with life's stresses alone. He needs you to help him. Here's what you can do:

- **Be a good role model.** Try to talk with your son about how you're dealing with his dad's absence. "I miss Daddy a lot. But I know that I can do some things to feel better. We could see a fun movie on Friday night."
- **Talk with his teacher.** Tell her that this year seems to be a challenge for your son. Ask if there are things you can do at home to boost his skills and confidence. Be sure she knows that your son's father is on active duty. When teachers know about family changes, they understand why a child may act out at school.
- **Help your son make some new friends.** See if he can join a team or club. Kids who have strong connections with friends are likely to overcome difficulties faster than those who don't. With your help and understanding, your son will make it through this year!

—Kris Amundson
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Responsibility

Teach your child how to measure time in minutes



Elementary school teachers put a lot of effort into teaching students about the concept of time. And there's a lot for students to learn. What's a second, minute, hour and day? What's a week, month and year? What are past, present and future? What's before and after?

The more your child understands time and how it's measured, the more responsible she can be. She can "be ready in 10 minutes" or estimate how much time it will take to do her homework.

A real mastery of time doesn't come until later elementary years. But the more you can do now to help your child understand time, the better.

To start, help your child get a feel for time:

1. **Have your child select a task** to do. For instance, jumping up and down 75 times. Drawing a picture. Completing three math problems. Or, eating a bowl of cereal.
2. **Have her estimate** how many minutes it will take to do the task.
3. **Set a timer** and have her do the task.
4. **Help her see** how close her estimate was to the actual time it took.

Do this—estimating and verifying time—for many tasks. Also, give your child a non-digital watch on which to track time as it passes.

Source: Jennifer Taylor-Cox, *Family Math Night: Math Standards in Action*, ISBN: 1-930556-99-3 (Eye on Education, 1-888-299-5350, www.eyoneducation.com).

Turn your child's mistakes into lessons for school success

When children make a mistake, they often think poorly of themselves. They might make excuses or blame others.

None of these responses will help your child learn to be responsible for his decisions. They won't help him learn from his failures or improve his grades.

To help your child learn from mistakes:

- **Tell your child**, "No one is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes, and everyone can learn from them. Ideally, we don't make the same mistakes twice."
- **Brainstorm the reasons** people make mistakes. These include being too tired, careless or bored. Being distracted. Not double-checking school work.



- **Help your child write a story** about a mistake he made that caused a problem. How did the mistake happen? If the problem was solved, how? What did he learn from the mistake? How might he avoid making such a mistake in the future?

Boost sense of responsibility with contributions to others



Children are born with a desire to be helpful and responsible. But that desire may lessen as your child grows older.

To nurture these traits:

- **Discuss with your child** how she can contribute to the household. Ask what she likes to do. Avoid calling her responsibilities "chores." Just say you really need her help. Show her how to do certain tasks. Then make a schedule with deadlines.
- **See if she can tutor** another child at school. Or assist the teacher with tasks before or after school.
- **Research** what kind of community service programs your child can get involved in. If she likes pets, visit an animal shelter. If she likes going to the park, perhaps she can take part in clean-up day.
- **Decide together** what charities to support—through volunteer work or donations of clothing.
- **Model** how to be a contributing member of the community. Vote in elections. Donate blood. Recycle.
- **Praise your child** when she takes on new responsibilities and helps others.