

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



December 2011

Westside Elementary School
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Enjoy family time during winter

The winter school holiday is a great opportunity to spend a little extra time with your child. To keep your child learning during the break:

- **Get outside.** Be sure you schedule time every day to be outdoors. Walk, bike, skate, ski—just get active outside with your child. Active children tend to do better in school!
- **Volunteer.** Set aside time for a family volunteer activity. Feed animals at the animal shelter. Make sandwiches for people living on the street. Your child will learn the best gift is the gift of service.
- **Look for a movie** based on a children's book. (Ask about selections at your local library.) Read the book first, then watch the movie. Discuss how the two were alike and what differences you noticed.
- **Prepare food together.** Many families have some special foods associated with the holiday season. With your child, prepare foods you remember from your childhood. Share your memories. Or do some research and prepare a dish you've never tried. Either way, your child will be reinforcing math and science skills as you cook together.
- **Attend local events.** Every community has places that will interest kids—if you know where to look. Check out a neighborhood museum (see if they have a day when admission is free). Look for free concerts you can attend or plays at the high school. See if your public library has any performances or story hours. Or get creative and put on a family play or concert—and invite friends and neighbors!



Make attendance your first priority in December

Special events and activities may crowd your family's December calendar. Enjoy the festivities, but don't let learning take a holiday. Make sure your child gets plenty of rest, keeps up with homework and is in school on time every day.

Play 'collect a sentence'

Play a learning game with your child. Set a time limit of one or two minutes. Have players list on a sheet of paper all the words they see—actual printed words, the names of nearby objects or descriptions of objects. For example, if you're in the kitchen, players might write *cookbook*, *table*, *red* (for apples in a bowl) or *hot* (for the stove top).



When the time limit is up, players should use the words they have "collected" to create as many sentences as they can. The winner is the player who creates the most sentences. Next time, try to beat that record!

Source: "Collect a Sentence," FamilyEducation.com, <http://newsletters.fen.com/article/0,1120,66-1274,00.html>.

Online safety ideas protect children

A computer can help your child find facts and complete homework. But surfing the Internet may also create problems. To keep your child safe:

- **Put** the computer where you can supervise Internet activities.
- **Check** out your Internet service provider's safety features.
- **Establish** rules for your child's computer use.
- **Discuss** why your child should never share personal information online.
- **Have** your child tell you if she receives an inappropriate email or other message.
- **Go** online together. Let your child show you her computer skills and favorite sites.

Remember, your child may also go online in other locations, such as at a friend's home. Take steps to ensure safety no matter where the Internet is used.

Source: "Safety Tips," NetSmartz, www.netsmartz.org/safety/safetytips.htm.

Your involvement affects your child's achievement

Research shows that family support is key to student achievement. To promote academic success:

- **Tell** your child you think education is important.
- **Support** your child's teacher and school rules.
- **Ask** to see homework. Know what your child is learning.



Source: "The Relationship Between Family Involvement and Student Success," National PTA, www.pta.org/2128.htm.



How can parents discourage dawdling in the morning?

Q: Every morning it's the same thing: It's time to leave. But my second grader is not ready. Again. This is the fourth morning this week she's been late to school! What can I do to get her moving?

A: Some kids just seem to have only one speed—*slow!* But there are ways parents can help these kids learn to “get a move on.” Here's what to do:

- **Take time at night** to lay out clothes and pack your daughter's book bag. If all of her school-related belongings are in one place before she goes to bed, your daughter might not waste time in the morning looking for her homework or favorite sweater.
- **Make sure** your daughter gets to bed on time so it's easier for her to get up in the morning. Most children this age need about nine hours of sleep.
- **Be sure your daughter** knows, step by step, what she has to do to get ready in the morning. Sticking to a routine might help her hurry along!
- **Give your daughter** the “two-minute warning” to help her prepare for transitions between activities. “You have two more minutes to finish up breakfast, and then you have to go brush your teeth!”



Do you make the most of travel time?

When you're traveling with your child—walking to the store, taking the bus downtown or enjoying a family road trip—you have a gift of uninterrupted time together. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're using travel time to talk and build learning skills:

1. **Do you encourage** your child to direct you on familiar routes? This strengthens recall and memory, two important skills for test success.
2. **Do you ask** your child to practice his spelling words while you ride along?
3. **Do you strengthen** your child's observation skills, such as by looking for out-of-state license plates?
4. **Do you offer** opportunities to practice math, such as by asking your child to estimate how far you're going?
5. **Do you have** your child read road signs?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're putting that travel time to good use. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

“All the world is a laboratory to the inquiring mind.”
—Martin H. Fischer

Share book report basics

To help your child with a book report, make sure he follows instructions from his teacher. Most book reports include:

- **Facts.** Mention the book's title, author and illustrator. Describe the story briefly.
- **Setting and plot.** When and where did the story take place? What happens?
- **Characters.** Who is the main character? What other people are involved?
- **Main idea.** Does the book have a theme, such as “don't give up”?
- **Conclusion.** Give some final opinions. For example, what did you like or dislike about this book? Did you agree with the choices characters made?

Bystanders should speak up

“Tattle tales” have never been popular, but as incidents of bullying increase, explain to your child that it's important to tell an adult if she observes a child being bullied. Tell your child that speaking up is brave.

Source: “Bystander,” Eyes on Bullying, www.eyesonbullying.org/bystander.html.

Explore other countries & cultures with your child

Children often know little about the world. To expand your child's horizons:

- **Learn** about holiday customs of people around the world. Use the library to discover how other people celebrate their special days.
- **Keep** a globe or an atlas nearby when you watch the news to learn more about the countries mentioned.
- **Learn** simple words in different languages, such as *hello* and *thank you*.



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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Pat Hodgdon. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1013