

# Parenting Matters™

A RESOURCE FOR PARENTS  
OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN



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## What kind of family do you want to have this year?

It isn't New Years Day, but it is the beginning of a new school year.

Think about how you would like the year to go for your family.

Should you set up a chore chart?

Is having a regular time for homework a reasonable goal?

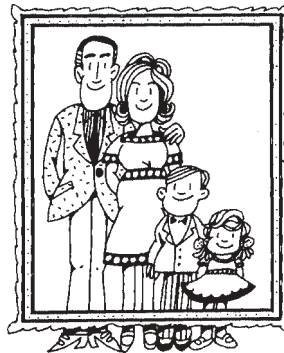
Can you expect your child to read for a certain amount of time each day?

How could you be involved at school this year with your schedule?

Think about the school year you would like this to be.

What would make it a better year than ever before?

Make it happen.



## Ask About School

Each day your child comes home, find out about his day. You would ask him about it if he went to camp, so why not ask about school? Then be quiet and listen.

Make sure he is happy with what is going on at school. Listen for his excitement about his progress. Pay attention to what he says about lunch and playtime.

There is a lot happening at school. If he knows you are really interested, he will tell you a great deal.



## A Partnership

In order for children to succeed in school, parents and schools need to form partnerships.

Let us hear from you.

Be involved.

If there is a problem, call. If something isn't working, let us know.

Your child's success is important to you and to us.

## Learning Words While You Read Together

When you are reading with your child who is just learning how to read, help her learn how to sound out the word. Let her work on the sound of the letter, the sound of several letters together, and help her blend those into a word. You can help her by breaking the word apart into syllables. If the word is "remember," you can start by seeing if she can come up with the sound of "r," and then break the word into re-mem-ber. See if she can blend the sounds of the syllables together to come up with the word.

Reading is a bit like a puzzle. After you figure out what it is supposed to be, it is a lot easier to put it together.





## Feeling Good About School

Children who have difficulties in school often think they can't learn. It is important for you to help your child develop a positive image of himself. You can help by:

- \* showing you are interested
- \* encouraging him to talk about things he is interested in
- \* praising what he does well
- \* when he makes a mistake, correcting it and moving on,

Success will build his confidence.

## Look for Signs of Maturity

You know your child better than anyone else, and she knows that.

Comment on her behavior when you see her showing signs of growing up and acting more maturely. Talk about her behavior with friends when she waits for her turn during a game. (This is patience.)

Give her a "bravo" for noticing the changes you made in the living room or the yard. (This is being observant.)

Make a big deal out of the fact that you overheard her thanking a friend's mother for having her over for lunch. (This is social awareness.)

Rewards for our behavior are very special. They make us feel good about who we are and make us want to try even harder.



## Emphasize Sounds

When your child is just beginning to learn about words, it is an important time to emphasize sounds. Remind him that the letter **B** usually stands for the sound that we hear at the beginning of **boy**. Ask him what other words begin with that sound. He can have fun doing this and learn a lot.

## Healthy Kids Learn Better

For information on the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), call 1-877-KIDS-NOW.

Families with low or moderate incomes, including working families, may be eligible to get free or low cost insurance for their children under the age of 19.



## Consequences

Sometimes it is difficult to think of ways to make the consequences fit the "crime." Here are a few suggestions.

- Didn't feed the dog.....miss one walk in the park
- Didn't make bed.....bedtime a half hour earlier
- Didn't brush teeth.....no candy for a day or week
- Didn't put clothes in hamper.....extra help with laundry

It is very important for children to learn that there are consequences if they don't do what is asked. The time to begin teaching this lesson is right away.



As your child enters 4th or 5th grade, you are likely to see rather rapid changes in her moods. One day you are a great mother and the next day you are the meanest ogre in the world. Hang in there; things will change.

## School is Back in Session: Keep In Touch

If you have any questions about this newsletter, please call Parenting Matters Foundation at (360) 681-2250 or call your elementary school. We want this material to be helpful to you and welcome your suggestions and comments. This newsletter is sponsored by the Sequim School District and Sequim School District Title 1/LAP.



**"P**arents are the single most important influence on children's decisions to smoke, drink, or use drugs, yet many parents do not fully understand the extent of their influence."

-The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

## SOME THINGS HAVEN'T CHANGED



School is different today than when you attended. But some things are the same.

**Show and tell** is still used because it helps children learn to present things clearly and allows others with a different perspective to understand something new.

The **"classics"** are still used because they are interesting, lively, and educational even today.

**Handwriting** is still practiced even though children will be using voice recognition in the near future. But just as you did, they learn to print first and by 2nd or 3rd grade begin learning cursive letters.

**Spelling and vocabulary** are still part of school. Spelling begins in 1st or 2nd grade and then expands from there.

**Practice** still makes perfect. Some children love this kind of learning and other find it drudgery.

**Good teaching** still is a key factor. While teaching methods have changed, a good teacher is always a valuable tool in learning.

**Parents who care** still make a difference. Children learn more when their parents become involved, check on their progress, and encourage them.

Ramey, S. L., and Ramey, C. T., *Going to School: How To Help Your Child Succeed*, Goddard Press, NY, 1999.



## Make It Clear

When you have something you want your child to do, be very clear about what you expect. When you tell him to "Clean up your room," it really isn't as clear as, "Please pick up your toys, put the dirty clothes in the hamper, and straighten up your desk." Make sure that when he is finished, you comment on the things he did correctly.

## Peers Becoming Important

"To make the journey toward independence less lonely, young adolescents latch onto one another." As your child becomes 10 and 11, you can see her friends becoming more and more important to her. That doesn't mean you should bow out. Remember that the struggle for independence is very real to her even though it may seem petty. Your role is to still be there to give her a safe haven for her to talk about the days happenings and where she can review the "social steps or missteps of the day." Be available to hear about her changing life. She needs you.

Giannetti, C. and Sagarese, M., *Cliques*, Broadway Books, NY, 2001.



## LOOK IT OVER FIRST

When you are reading a story with your reader in the early years, don't start too quickly. Go through the book and look at the pictures and point out characters and things that will be in the story. Ask questions, such as, "Why do you think the woman is doing that?" Talk about what might happen next in the story. Read the title and then you are ready to begin reading the book.

By doing this, your child who is learning to read has some clues about the story. It will help him make good guesses when he is stuck on words. Actually, it is a good way to learn about books in general and to recognize that you can learn a great deal about the subject without reading each word. This will help him in years to come.

## Pick a Problem, Any Problem

Pose problems to your child and ask her what she would do if...

- ? she were locked out of the house
- ? she forgot her lunch money
- ? she were walking the dog and he ran away
- ? she lost her library book

These problems are fun ways to practice problem solving and planning ahead.

They also give her a chance to be creative, talk with you, and have a fun time.



## Ready for School

Children often move slowly in the morning and this can be stressful for the parent who is trying to send them off to school. You can do something to help your child be ready for school with no fuss and no hassle. Plan ahead. Have her pick out the clothes she will be wearing to school the night before.

If she takes her lunch, pack it the night before.

Have her gather up her papers for the next day.

Trying to find them in the morning causes lots of stress.

Each of these makes the day start better.

Add a good healthy breakfast of cereal, milk and fresh fruit, and she's ready to start the day.



## The Practical Side of Learning

Help your child be curious. This motivates her to seek new information and makes learning fun. For example, if you have an ant problem, let her help you find the solution. Ask her to figure out where the ants are coming from. Every time someone finds an ant, call her. Let her follow them as they come and go and see if she can solve the problem. Problem solving is a skill she needs to develop and ants can give her some help.

## Figuring Out the Tip

As your child learns more math, get him involved in figuring out the tip when you go out to eat.

If the bill is \$15.90, show him how to get 10% really easily.

First tell him to round up the \$15.90 to \$16. Then let him see how you move the decimal point one place and a 10% tip would be \$1.60. Then show him that by adding half that amount you are up to 15%.

These are fun things to learn as a family.



Keep your child active.

Have playtime outside even when the weather isn't perfect. Limit television time.

## "Are You An Average Family?"

Answering this question is a great activity for your child. Talk about what things make an average family.

Then help him learn how to get the answer.

The questions he answers should be based on his skill level.

For example, he can figure out the average age of people in your family.

Add up the ages and divide by the number of people.

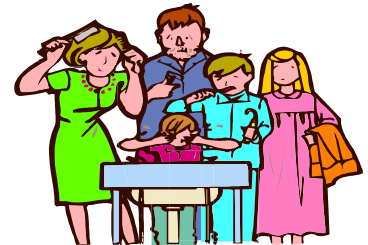
Maybe you should add the dog, too.

Find out the average height of the people in your family.

What is the average number of years that your family members have gone to school?

Think of other ways to learn about averages for your family--the amount of milk you drink, the number of books you read in a month, or the number of phone calls you receive.

Have fun with math at home and your child will have more fun with it at school.



## Memory Booster

Play a memory game with your child.

Look at something (an object, a picture, or a person) for 30 seconds. Then turn around and take turns telling a fact about it.

See how many things you can remember.

This game helps you both to pay attention to detail and improves your memory.

## Being A Great Big Brother

As soon as your child is reading, have him read to his younger sibling. It will help his reading skill, but it will also help hers. This is one friendly way for children to spend time together. Actually, any way that you can encourage your children to read is worth it.

