

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



May 2020

ELMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Vary activities to inspire your child's interest in summer reading

The more your child reads, the easier reading will be for him. This summer, show your child that reading is an activity he can enjoy over and over without ever getting bored.

Set one summer reading rule: Everyone reads for 30 minutes a day. Then help your child discover the amazing variety of ways to read and subjects to read about.

Try these activities:

- **Share the comics.** Get a newspaper or look at a news website for comics. Ask your child to tell you which comic is funniest. Or cut the printed panels apart, mix them up and have him put them back into the right order.
- **Put on a show.** Have your child choose a simple scene from one of his books and assign character roles to family members. Discuss what happens first, second, next. Then act it out, adding lots of dialogue.
- **Take reading outdoors.** Climbing a tree to read can add to the fun.
- **Promote practical reading.** Ask your child to read the recipe while you bake cookies. Or involve him in reading the instructions to build or repair something.
- **Create reading jobs.** Ask your child to alphabetize the cans in your cupboard or the books on your family's bookshelf.



## Unplug and enjoy valuable time with your child

May 4–10 is Screen-Free Week. Experts say the easiest way to give up a digital media habit is to replace screen time with other appealing activities. Your family could:

- **Watch** a sunset.
- **Play** charades.
- **Draw** one another's portraits.
- **Invent** a new game.



Source: "101 Screen-Free Activities," Screenfree.Org.

## Plan for year-end projects

A long-term project with many steps can be challenging for a student who is used to shorter daily assignments. To help your child work through a big project:

- **Make a schedule together.** Create deadlines for each step.
- **Celebrate successes.** Each time she finishes a step, help her find a small way to reward herself.
- **Check in often** to see how things are going and to help her stay on schedule.



## Experiment with everyday ingredients to encourage scientific thinking

Science is something everyone can do! Show your child by using materials from your own kitchen to conduct these kid-friendly experiments:

- **Mystery eggs.** Give your child a raw egg and a hardboiled egg. Can she figure out which one is which without cracking them? Here's how: Have her spin the eggs on their sides on the table. The raw egg—whose liquid insides shift—wobbles, while the hardboiled one spins smoothly.
- **Sinking/floating orange.** Fill a sink with water and drop in a whole orange. It floats. Have your child peel the orange and drop it in again. Now it sinks! Tiny air pockets in the peel make the whole fruit less dense (so it can float). Without its peel, the fruit is more dense, so it sinks.
- **Vinegar volcano.** Working in the sink, put a little baking soda in a cup. Pour in some vinegar. The fizzy rush happens because the baking soda—a base—reacts with the vinegar—an acid.

## Review progress and help your child set new goals

Your child has come a long way since September. Take time to recognize his accomplishments this school year and help him think ahead. Discuss:

- **Highlights.** What was your child's favorite project this year? In what subject did he improve the most?
- **Growth.** "You worked hard to master division this year. You've proved you can do challenging things when you try."
- **The future.** What is he excited about for next year? Is there a subject he'd like to do better in? Have him make a list of goals for the year to come.



## How can I help my child get back on track this summer?

**Q:** My fourth grader is passing this year, but barely. I know she needs help, or next year will be worse. But I don't have money for summer classes or a fancy camp. What can I do over the summer to help her catch up?

**A:** Don't wait until summer! While school is still in session, meet with your child's teacher and work out a learning plan. Try to find out exactly what seems to be giving your child trouble, and ask the teacher to suggest resources that you can use to help her. Then, over the summer:



- **Rule out physical issues.** Have your child's vision and hearing tested.
- **Set learning goals.** Make a list—the number of books she'll read, the math skills she wants to master, etc. Let your child have a say in choosing her goals. Post the list where you both will see it daily.
- **Choose a regular time each day** to work on school skills. Use the resources the teacher provided to structure your child's learning time.
- **Plan for "out-of-school" learning.** Visit the zoo or a museum together. Attend a free concert. Check out a book on constellations from the library and spend a warm evening stargazing. These are all experiences that build your child's background knowledge—a foundation for learning.



## Are you helping your child bounce back?

Whether it's a poor test result or a snub from a classmate, a disappointment can weigh your child's attitude down. Are you showing him how to rise above disappointments? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you talk** about what *can* and *can't* be changed? "You can't change the weather, but you can change your plans."
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you brainstorm** with your child about positive responses when something unexpected happens?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you help** your child learn from mistakes? "What could you do differently next time?"
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you encourage** your child to figure out solutions on his own?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you acknowledge** your child's disappointment, then enforce a no-sulking rule?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your child learn to handle letdowns and move on. For each no, try that idea.*

"If things go wrong, don't go with them."  
—Roger Babson

## Consistent summer routines support school readiness

Summer vacation is a time for students to relax. But maintaining a few key routines makes it easier for kids to adjust when school resumes in the fall. Stick to routines for:

- **Sleep.** Your child's bedtime and rising time may be later, but choose a schedule that lets him get at least nine hours of sleep and stay with it.
- **Meals.** Make it a priority to have at least one family meal a day.
- **Screen time.** Extra free time should not mean more screen time. Maintain limits.
- **Exercise.** Daily physical activity keeps your child's body and mind healthy.

## Watch math skills sprout

Planting a garden with your child is a perfect summertime activity to help her apply math skills to a real life situation. Involve her in the entire process. "We have a 10' x 4' plot. If tomatoes need to be planted two feet apart, how many should we buy? Will we have room for other plants? How much fencing will we need?"

## Achieve chore cooperation

If you've assigned your child a chore to encourage responsibility, but all you are getting is an argument, try these strategies:

- **Schedule family work time**, when everyone does chores together.
- **Make a game of it.** Set a timer and see if your child can beat the clock.
- **Curb criticism.** Don't say what he did wrong and redo his work. Just explain gently what he can do better next time.
- **Follow chores** with fun. "Let's get this done so we can go for a swing!"



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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

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

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