

Elementary School Parents[®]

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Kern County Supt. of Schools Office
Daryl Thiesen, Title IV/TUPE Coord.

make the difference!



Talk over lessons learned with your elementary schooler

It's the end of a busy school year. Your child has learned a lot. He's read new books. He's mastered new skills. Now is a good time for the two of you to talk about the lessons he's learned.

Find a time when the two of you can have a relaxing chat about school. You might even plan something special—going out for ice cream or making pizza or some other favorite meal.

Take time to look back—and to look forward:

- **Take a look back.** What was your child's favorite project this year? In what subject did he improve the most? Which book that the class read was his favorite? What goals did he accomplish?

As he talks about these positive things, help him see the ways he

has grown. "You really worked hard to master division this year. You can do hard things when you put your mind to it!"

- **Take a look forward.** What is he looking forward to this summer? What is he excited about next year? Is there a grade or a subject he'd like to improve next year? Are there books he wants to read?
- **Talk about** how learning doesn't stop at the end of the school year. One of the great things about summer, however, is the chance to learn something that isn't related to school. Help him think about something he'd like to learn during the summer. Then together, make a plan to help him achieve that goal.

Source: Legacy Project, "Look Back, Look Forward," www.legacyproject.org/activities/lookbackfor.html.

Don't just turn off the TV—turn on the fun!



Today, most kids already spend hours staring at a TV screen, a computer screen or their cell phones. During the summer, those hours can really expand.

That's why it's even more important for parents to set limits on screen time. Experts say the easiest way to do that is by replacing screen time with other fun activities.

Here are some ideas:

- **Get a hula hoop.** Even indoors, a hula hoop is an easy way to get exercise. Besides twirling it, your child can use it as a jump rope.
- **Explore local playgrounds.** There are lots of ways for your child to let off steam—and build muscles.
- **Draw a hopscotch game** on a sidewalk or driveway. Take turns playing.
- **Learn to juggle.** Check out a book on juggling from the library. This is a great way to teach fine motor skills.

Source: Nancy Hellmich, "In Summer, Kids Need Real Play Time," USA Today, www.usatoday.com/news/health/2009-06-24-play-exercise_N.htm.

Boost your child's independence, responsibility over the summer



One of the best ways to help your child become more responsible is by helping her develop independence. Summer is a great time to help her learn how to do things for herself. Here are a few ideas:

- **Don't be afraid** of unstructured time. Today's families often think that children need to have a planned activity every minute of the day. But all those structured activities keep your child from making decisions for herself.

During the summer, try to see that your child has regular blocks of unstructured time. If she says she's bored, tell her you're sure she can figure out something to do. (And she will.)

- **Teach your child adult skills.** The summer months offer good

opportunities to practice doing laundry or preparing a meal. The more adult skills your child learns, the more responsible she can be.

- **Back off this summer** if you've been doing too much for your child. First graders can make their own beds (maybe not perfectly). Second graders can fold laundry. Yes, they will take longer to do these tasks than you would. Let them practice over the summer.

Source: Rebecca Kahlenberg, *Like, Whatever*, ISBN: 9781-9331-0247-4 (Capital Books, www.capital-books.com).

“Setting an example is not the main means of influencing another; it is the only means.”

—Albert Einstein

Be clear, strong and quiet to avoid arguments with your child



Effective discipline begins when parents set clear expectations. The best way to do that, experts say, is to make your request *clear, strong* and *quiet*. Your requests need to be:

- **Clear** because your child needs to know what you want him to do.
- **Strong** because he needs to know you mean it.
- **Quiet** so that your child listens to the message and not to your underlying frustration.

In the past, you've probably walked by your child's room and said, "Clean up that mess." Instead, try saying:

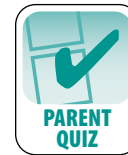
"I want you to hang up your clothes and put away the toys on the floor before dinner."

This same approach works with other requests. You might say, "Once you have read for 20 minutes, you may watch 30 minutes of television. If you don't get your reading finished before dinner, there will be no TV today."

The more clearly you state your expectations, the less room there is for argument. That means less frustration for you and your child.

Source: Michael P. Nichols, *Stop Arguing with Your Kids*, ISBN: 1-572-30284-4 (The Guilford Press, www.guilford.com).

Will you motivate your child to learn over the summer?



Over the summer, kids can lose up to 60 percent of the math and reading skills they learned during the year! Will your child stay motivated to learn this summer? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

- ___ **1. Does your child** have a library card? If your library has a summer reading plan, sign your child up!
- ___ **2. Have you made** a list of places in your community to visit? Try historic sites, places to enjoy nature and even a local fire house.
- ___ **3. Do you look** for everyday ways to practice school skills such as measuring for a recipe or figuring out the change?
- ___ **4. Does your** summer schedule include daily time for reading?
- ___ **5. Have you helped** your child think of new things to learn this summer? Learning the back stroke or a new computer game will keep your child's learning "muscles" strong.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're keeping your child motivated. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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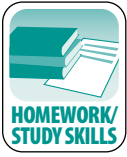
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Share these ways for your child to study vocabulary words



Learning vocabulary words is a big part of studying any subject. It's something students need to do throughout their school careers.

Here are ways to spice up your child's study of vocabulary words:

- **Write a sentence using each word.**
- **Create a word game** (bingo, word search, crossword) to study the words on the list.
- **Create a word wall** bulletin board. It should include each word along with its definition.
- **Create a song, a rhyme or a rap** for each word on the list.

- **Work with a partner.** The partner says the word, and then the child defines and spells it.
- **Make up movements** to act out the meaning of each word.
- **Use an audio recorder to practice.** Have your child state the word, then pause; give the definition, pause again; then spell it. To review, your child should play back the recording and try to give the definition in the first pause and spell the word in the second.

Source: Kathleen Kryza, Alicia Duncan and S. Joy Stephens, Inspiring Elementary Learners: Nurturing the Whole Child in a Differentiated Classroom, ISBN: 9781-4129-6064-9 (Corwin Press, a SAGE Company, www.corwinpress.com).

Make organization a top priority for your elementary schooler



Disorganization is a common problem among students. Kids may lose papers, forget to study or mismanage their

time. Thankfully, most solutions are simple, and the benefits are immediate! To help your child get organized:

- **Start at night.** Pick an outfit and make sure it's ready for the next day. Prepare school supplies and put them by the door. Stick to a reasonable, set bedtime.
- **Wake up early.** Choose a wake-up time that allows "wiggle room" (15 minutes) for unexpected delays. Put the alarm clock far enough away that turning it off requires getting up.
- **Avoid clutter.** Have your child clean out her backpack daily. It helps to have folders at home, for "Notes for Mom and Dad," "Study Sheets" and "Graded Papers." Clean them out often, too.

- **Use to-do lists.** Some schools give students planners for writing down homework. If your child doesn't have one, show her how to use daily assignment sheets.
- **Schedule homework time.** It should be at the same time, in the same place, each day. Suggest that your child start with the toughest assignments first.
- **Put studying first.** Extracurricular activities shouldn't interfere with family and school success. Put all obligations on one calendar, and add new commitments *only* if your child has time for them.
- **Encourage success.** Stay nearby during homework time in case your child has questions. This will reduce her temptation to give up or procrastinate.

Source: Maria Gracia, "Ideas To Help Students Get Organized," OnlineOrganizing.com, www.onlineorganizing.com/NewslettersArticle.asp?article=423&newsletter=go.

Q: My son struggled this year in fourth grade. He will pass—but just barely. I don't have money to send him to summer school or an expensive camp. But I know he needs help or next year will be worse. What can I do over the summer to help my child catch up so he can keep up next year?

Questions & Answers

A: It sounds like your child has had a rough year. But there are ways to make sure he doesn't repeat it in fifth grade.

Here are four ideas to help you get your son back on track:

1. **Meet with your child's teacher** before the end of the year. Together, lay out a summer learning plan. If he's struggling in math, find out exactly what seems to give him trouble—fractions? Multiplication and division?
2. **Take care of some basics.** Have your son's vision and hearing tested. It may be that he can't see to read the board, or that he can't hear the teacher. So rule out these problems early.
3. **Set some learning goals.** How many books will he read? (Sign him up for the library reading program.) Let him pick the books—don't worry if they are "classics" or not.
4. **Set aside time each day** to work on school skills. Perhaps the teacher will give you work sheets or an old math book so he can practice.
5. **Have some fun together.** Learning doesn't have to be drudgery! So visit the zoo or a museum. Look for a free concert. All these are ways to learn that don't cost money.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Summer Learning

Prevent summer reading loss by getting involved



Your child has worked on reading skills all year long. You don't want him to lose them over the summer!

Yet research shows that summer reading loss is a real problem. Thankfully, there are countless ways you can encourage your child to maintain—and even improve—reading skills during vacation.

Here are a few ideas:

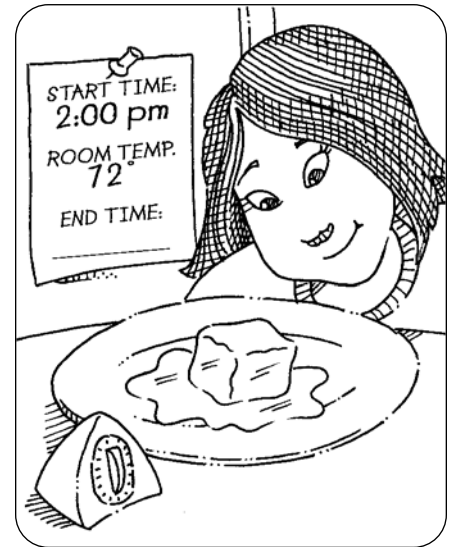
- **Read together daily.** In addition to reading books, ask for your child's help with following recipes, using the phone book and making lists.
- **Keep reading materials handy.** Leave comics, magazines, books, newspapers and other materials around the house so your child is likely to pick them up.
- **Choose irresistible materials.** Look for books and articles about your child's interests, such as sports, art, fashion or even a favorite TV show.
- **Talk with experts.** Ask your child's teacher or a librarian for summer reading suggestions.
- **Visit the library.** Give your child frequent opportunities to find materials that appeal to him.
- **Take books with you.** Bring them on trips, into waiting rooms and anywhere else your child might complain, "I'm bored!"
- **Be creative.** Listen to audio books. Play word games. Visit a museum and read about displays. Start a book club. Have fun!

Source: Maryann Mraz and Timothy V. Rasinski, "Summer Reading Loss," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/articles/15218.

Disguise summer learning with fun activities for your child

When parents are honest about it, many admit that "educational activities" aren't at the top of their summer to-do list! Yet they know summer learning (or lack of it) can affect school-year success. One solution is to play games that don't feel like learning. You can:

- **Conduct science experiments.** Spend time in the kitchen answering questions like, "What's the best proportion of lemon juice to water for lemonade?" "Why do we use baking soda in recipes?" or "How long does it take for an ice cube to melt on a plate?"
- **Combine reading and math.** Many board games use word and number skills. Simple tasks, such as following instructions, reading cards, strategizing and counting points are great



practice. Consider taking some games outside. Research suggests outdoor greenery can boost attention, mood and creativity!

Source: Barbara Rowley, "16 Fun Brain-Boosting Games," Parenting, www.parenting.com/article/Child/Daycare--Education/16-Fun-Brain-Boosting-Games.

Find ways to connect math to your elementary schooler's life



Your child needs to practice math this summer, but like many parents, you may dread it. Instead of telling your child, "I can't stand math! I'm terrible at it," take a positive approach. Show your child (and remind yourself) that math is a helpful, fun part of life.

Start with basics, including:

- **Addition and subtraction.** How many hours a week is the pool open? How much do two ice

cream cones cost? How many days of summer are left?

- **Multiplication and division.** If your car gets 30 miles per gallon of gas, where could you go on a full tank? Two tanks? How far would half a tank go?
- **Estimation.** How many pitchers of lemonade will it take to serve neighborhood friends on a hot day? Guess, and then check your answers!

Source: Evelyn Porreca Vuko, *Teacher Says*, ISBN: 0-399-52997-7 (The Berkley Publishing Group, www.penguin.com).