

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



December 2017

Prince Edward County Elementary School

Dr. Julie Gilliam, Dir. of Instruction

Promote honesty and help your child resist cheating

Whether they're playing a board game or coveting a cookie, kids are often tempted to cheat. When that temptation sneaks into schoolwork, it is a serious concern.

Sometimes students cheat because they don't want to admit that they are struggling with a lesson, or that they didn't do the required work. For many young children, the line between what is right and what is wrong is still blurry.



To prevent your child from cheating:

- **Talk about what it is and why it's wrong.** Tell your child that cheating is dishonest. It won't help her learn, and it's not fair to others.
- **Reward honesty.** Let your child know how much you appreciate hearing the truth, even when it's unpleasant.
- **Show an interest in what your child is learning.** Ask her questions and review homework to get a sense of how she is doing. If your child seems confused, let the teacher know.
- **Encourage your child to ask for help.** Admitting that she's having difficulty—or even that she didn't do the work—may seem scary. Let her know that you and the teacher are there to help her.

Source: S. Shellenbarger, "How Could a Sweet Third-Grader Just Cheat on That School Exam?" The Wall Street Journal, nswc.com/elem_cheat.



Help your child get more from reading

Reading comprehension is a skill that your child will use in nearly every class during his school career. When he reads, help your child:

- **Summarize.** Ask your child questions about the characters, setting and plot. Then ask questions that require some thought: What problems did the characters face? Why did things turn out the way they did?
- **Explore points of view.** Can your child imagine how a different character would tell the story? Would your child make the same choices if he were that character?
- **Make connections.** Has your child already read or learned something that relates to this book? If the book is about life on a farm, what does he know about farms that matches or doesn't match the story?
- **Get the message.** Was the author making a point? What was it? Does your child agree with it?

Source: Reading Comprehension and Higher Order Thinking Skills, "K12 Reader, nswc.com/readthink.

Focus on attendance now for success in the future

Has your child missed some school days so far this year? It's not too late to get back on track so she can have a successful year—and school career.

Studies show developing good attendance habits in the early grades positively affects achievement in later years.



Will + What + When = Success

Writing goals down helps motivate students. Children should also define the steps they'll take to meet their goals. Teach your child the *will + what + when* formula:

1. **Will.** This is your child's commitment to action. Have her write down the words *I will ...*
2. **What.** Next, she should add what she will do to work toward her goal: *study my spelling words ...*
3. **When.** Finally, she should write when she will take the action: *every Tuesday and Thursday.*

Source: T. Lickona, *Character Matters: How to Help Our Children Develop Good Judgment, Integrity, and Other Essential Virtues*, Touchstone.

Encourage your child to write many different ways

Give your child frequent opportunities to practice organizing and expressing his thoughts in writing. Ask him to:

- **Write instructions.** He could write steps for how to wrap a gift or make a sandwich.
- **Make lists.** What does he want to do over winter break? What does he need to remember to take to Grandma's?
- **Keep a journal.** He can write how he feels about things that happen to him.





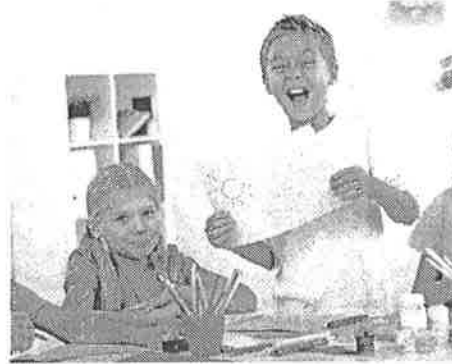
How can I get my child to stop clowning around?

Q: My son is the class clown. His teacher says his behavior is disruptive. He also uses laughs to get out of doing tasks at home. But how can you get angry at a kid when you are laughing your head off? What should I do?

A: Sounds like a bright kid. Other kids openly rebel against adults and get into trouble. Your son does the same thing, but he does it in such a way that adults react to his appealing clownishness rather than the rebellion. You don't have to get angry. Instead, change your response to his clowning:

- **Don't label him "the clown"** or talk about this trait to others—it will only reinforce his silliness.
- **Ignore him when his humor is inappropriate.** Leave the room if you can't avoid laughing in his presence. Clowns need an audience in order to continue their performance.
- **Apply discipline consistently.** If he is clowning to avoid a responsibility, he'll have to face the consequence. If he's trying to manipulate you into a *yes* when a *no* is appropriate, stick to your *no*.

Your effective handling of this behavior at home will likely decrease his clowning at school, as well.



Parent Quiz

Are you making history come to life?

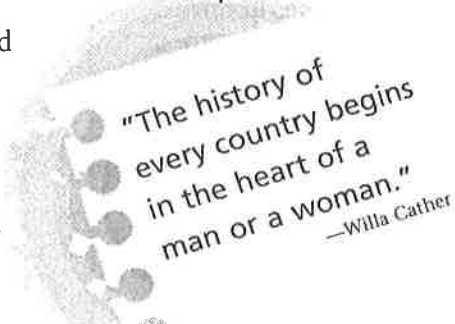
One of the best ways to help kids get excited about history is to make them feel connected to it. Sharing family stories and traditions can do just that. Are you helping your child learn family history? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you look** at old family photos with your child and talk about the people and events in them?
- ___ **2. Do you talk** about places your child's ancestors came from and the routes they traveled? Help your child find them on a map.
- ___ **3. Do you encourage** your child to ask older relatives questions about their lives?
- ___ **4. Do you involve** your child in preserving family history by making scrapbooks and recording family stories?

- ___ **5. Do you ask** your child to help you cook family recipes?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are making family history personal for your child. For each no, try that idea.



Gifts of time are priceless

Many families will be shopping for holiday gifts this month. Teach your child that it is giving, not buying, that matters. Encourage him to give gifts of his time and effort. Your child could:

- **Create a 2018 calendar** and decorate each month with his artwork as a gift for a teacher, coach or family member.
- **Write a story** about a favorite time spent together as a gift for a loved one.
- **Record himself** singing children's songs as a gift for a younger sibling.

Learning is the main goal

It's wonderful when kids want to get good grades. But it is important that they focus on the learning process, too. Sure, it feels great to see an A on a report card, but it also feels great to go into a test with confidence, knowing they've studied hard. Even better, it feels great to learn and get smarter! Talk with your child about what makes her school accomplishments worthwhile.

Chores foster pride of accomplishment

Doing chores is a great way for children to learn lessons that benefit them at home and in school. Chores help your child:

- **See the results of his labor.** After he does his laundry, that stack of folded, clean shirts is a visible reminder of his successful effort.
- **Take responsibility.** Your child will be less likely to walk on the rug in muddy cleats if he's the one who vacuums it. And he'll learn that he can contribute to improving life for the whole family.



Source: R. Rende, Ph.D. and J. Prosek, *Raising Can-Do Kids*, TarcherPerigee.

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Daily Learning Planner

Ideas parents can use to help children
do well in school

Prince Edward County Elementary School
Dr. Julie Gilliam, Dir. of Instruction



THE
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December 2017

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Children Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Cut out pictures of people from a newspaper. Ask your child to make up a story about each picture.
- 2. Visit the library with your child. Check out a book about science.
- 3. Post a list on your refrigerator of contact numbers your child should call in an emergency. Role-play what to say.
- 4. Have a contest with your child. Who can name the most parts of the body? (Organs count, too.)
- 5. At breakfast, find an interesting word in the dictionary. Challenge family members to use it three times during the day.
- 6. Save the seeds from a fruit you've eaten. Help your child plant them in a paper cup and place it on the windowsill. Water and see if they grow.
- 7. Use math to give your child instructions. For example, ask him to pick up $3 + 2 + 1$ toys.
- 8. Have your child put a leafy stalk of celery into colored water. Watch the color rise into the stalk over the next week.
- 9. Ask a librarian to recommend some award-winning books.
- 10. Bake cookies with your child. If you're doubling a recipe, have your child do the math.
- 11. Trace around your child on a big piece of paper. Have her research and draw what her insides look like.
- 12. Ask your child to estimate how many times he blinks in a minute. Then, check to see!
- 13. With your child, think of examples of *onomatopoeia* (words that sound like what they mean), such as *buzz*, *smash*, *hiss* and *thump*.
- 14. Talk with your child about healthy ways to handle stress.
- 15. Teach your child to make paper snowflakes. Decorate your windows.
- 16. Spend some one-on-one time with your child today.
- 17. Enjoy some physical activity as a family.
- 18. Assign a letter to each day of the week. With your child, plan daily menus featuring foods that start with that day's letter.
- 19. Pay your child a specific compliment today.
- 20. Ask your child to measure the dimensions of objects in your home.
- 21. Tonight is the longest night of the year. Give everyone in the family a flashlight so they can read in bed.
- 22. Do a craft project with your child. Perhaps she can give it as a gift.
- 23. Ask your child to help you make dinner.
- 24. Read a book that you and your child can both enjoy.
- 25. Have your child talk to older relatives about their childhood days.
- 26. Talk to your child about the importance of writing thank-you notes.
- 27. Encourage your child to talk with a student who is home from college about what college is like.
- 28. Play Concentration together using math flash cards. Problems with the same answer (9×2 , $15 + 3$) make a pair.
- 29. Help your child write and mail a letter to a friend.
- 30. Notice trees with your child. Which are *evergreen*? Which are *deciduous* (trees that shed their leaves)?
- 31. Help your child make a timeline of the past year.

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

January 2018

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- 1. With your child, read the label on a food your family eats. How much nutrition does it provide? How much sugar is in it?
- 2. Make a list of favorite activities you did with your child last year. Schedule time on the calendar to do some again this year.
- 3. Talk with your child about things we get from plants (food, clothing).
- 4. Pick a category, such as vehicles. Let your child pick a letter. How many items in the category can you each name that begin with that letter?
- 5. Make a chore chart with your child. List chores he's responsible for and when they should be completed.
- 6. Put an assortment of objects on a tray. Have your child look at them, then close her eyes and name as many as she can remember.
- 7. Hold a family meeting. Discuss everyone's goals and achievements.
- 8. Help your child find fractions in the newspaper. Which sections have the most fractions?
- 9. Have your family try eating with chopsticks tonight.
- 10. Post a new vocabulary word and its definition on the bathroom mirror your child uses. Change it every three or four days.
- 11. How many farm animals can your child name?
- 12. Ask your child what he thinks he is good at and why.
- 13. What skill would you and your child like to learn? Check out a how-to book or video.
- 14. Have your child alphabetize things, such as books or spices.
- 15. Ask your child to close her eyes and describe sounds that she hears.
- 16. Avoid overscheduling. Kids need downtime to think, imagine and play.

- 17. After dinner, have a family sing-along. Ask family members to share their favorite songs.
- 18. Ask your child what he would do if he were invisible for a day.
- 19. It's National Soup Month. Make soup with your child—and enjoy the book *Stone Soup* together.
- 20. Ask your child to help you organize something, such as a closet.
- 21. Challenge your child to invent a delicious drink, such as "banana hot chocolate."
- 22. Have your child pretend to be "Mayor for a Day." Brainstorm ideas to make your community a better place.
- 23. Ask your child to read to you while you cook.
- 24. Start a sentence-a-day story in a special notebook. Have your child add one sentence each day.
- 25. Hunt for treasure. Make a map that will lead your child to a small treat.
- 26. Check in the newspaper or online to see if there's a nearby place you and your child can go skating.
- 27. Teach your child how to take her pulse. Have her jump up and down 15 times and take it again. Has it changed?
- 28. Do a crossword puzzle together. It's a great way to learn new words.
- 29. Suggest that your child write a letter to his favorite living author.
- 30. At the store, have your child figure how much tax you will be charged.
- 31. Watch a nature program on TV together.



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February 2018

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- 1. Play "my day, your day" with your child. Each of you ask questions about the other's day.
- 2. It's Groundhog Day. How many words can your child make from the letters in GROUNDHOG?
- 3. Have your child pretend she's a character from a book. Ask questions until you figure out who she is.
- 4. Start a "chain of hearts." Cut out small hearts. Each day, write a reason you love your child on one and add it to the chain.
- 5. Check ads for items with prices ending in 98 or 99 cents. Have your child round off and estimate—how much would four of them cost?
- 6. Watch TV with your child. Help him be a critical viewer by asking him questions about what he sees. Would he do what the character did?
- 7. Test your child's observation skills. Can she describe someone that just passed her on the street?
- 8. Choose a recipe from another country or culture. Prepare it together.
- 9. Make today punctuation day. See how many types of punctuation you and your child come across. What does each do?
- 10. Talk with your child about a recent choice you have made and its consequences.
- 11. Get in the habit of using Sunday nights to talk with your child about the week ahead.
- 12. Do "body arithmetic." Ask your child how much his fingers, knees, toes and nose add up to.
- 13. When your child brings home a test, talk about what she got right before discussing her errors. What can she learn from both?
- 14. With your child, learn how to say "I love you" in three other languages.

- 15. Look at car ads in the newspaper or online. Encourage your child to design and name a new car.
- 16. Play a game that uses math skills, such as Go Fish or Gin Rummy.
- 17. Help your child turn snapshots of family members into a mobile. Hang it where everyone can see it.
- 18. When your child comes home, have him draw something that he did in school. Then talk about it.
- 19. Help your child start a family newsletter.
- 20. Save old socks to make puppets with your child. Encourage her to put on a puppet show.
- 21. Have your child rank homework assignments in order of priority.
- 22. It's the birthday of George Washington. Help your child learn a new fact about this famous president.
- 23. Have your child draw a window picture. He can look out the window and draw what he sees!
- 24. Set aside time today to work on a hobby with your child.
- 25. Have a silent supper. During dessert, have family members share what they were thinking about.
- 26. On a map, have your child find countries her ancestors came from.
- 27. Talk with your child about courage and people who exemplify it.
- 28. At bedtime, allow a few minutes after the light is off for a quiet conversation with your child.



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