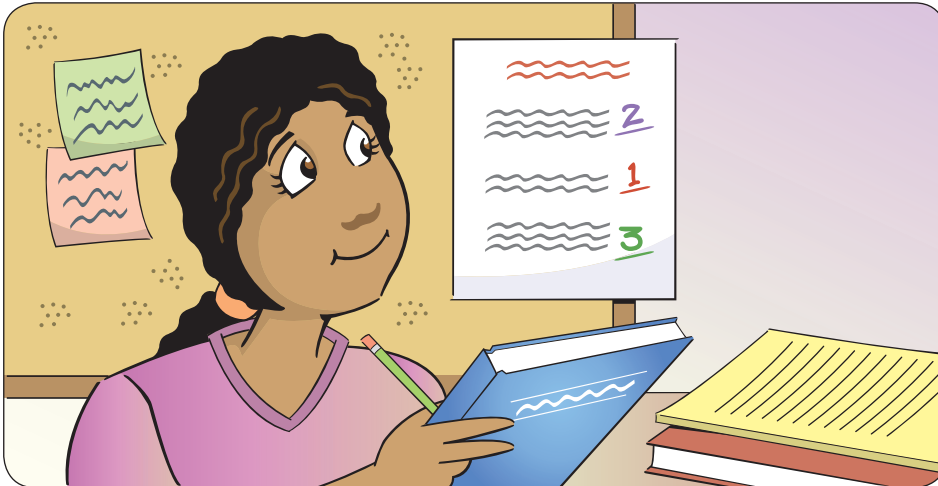


Elementary School Parents[®] make the difference!

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Desert Star School



Learning responsibility yields lifelong rewards for students

Educators agree that responsible children do better in school. Luckily, parents have countless opportunities to teach responsibility—and more influence on their children than anyone else!

To build responsibility:

- **Use rules and consequences.** Enforce a few age-appropriate rules and consequences. State them in easy-to-understand language so your child knows exactly how to behave.
- **Trust your child with tasks.** School-age kids are capable of handling responsibilities such as picking up their rooms and helping you with the laundry.
- **Let your child make decisions,** such as which homework assignment to tackle first. Making decisions builds confidence.
- **Talk about financial responsibility.** Many kids receive an allowance or are paid for extra chores. This is a great opportunity to teach about budgeting, spending, saving and giving.
- **Find ways to help others.** Discuss what it means to be responsible. Help your child find meaningful ways to contribute to her family and to the community, such as doing household chores and donating clothes to charity.
- **Adjust rules and responsibilities.** As your child matures, her abilities will change. Perhaps she can take on more grown-up chores. Or maybe she can make new, exciting decisions. Talk about how great it feels to be responsible!

Source: M. Purcell, "Building Responsible Kids,"
Psych Central, niswc.com/elem_responsible.

Special days in April offer fun and learning



April may bring showers, but it also brings days parents can use to promote learning.

Here are some fun things you can plan to do with your child this month:

- **April 2**—International Children's Book Day. This day is designed to inspire a love of reading. Grab a handful of books and spend some time reading together.
- **April 12**—National Library Workers Day. Have your child make a card for his school librarian thanking her for all she does.
- **April 22**—Earth Day. As a family, think of something you can do to protect the earth, such as recycle.
- **April 23**—Shakespeare's birthday. With your child, act out a scene from one of Shakespeare's plays. Or, challenge your child to try writing his own play.
- **April 30**—National Honesty Day. Talk to your child about the importance of being honest *every* day!

Learning how to say *no* is an important skill for all children



Most kids face peer pressure when they get to middle or high school. But did you know that even in elementary school, children can feel pressure to fit in and to do what everyone else is doing?

Sometimes, that means going along with teasing or bullying on the playground. Other times, it means watching a movie at a friend's house that they would never be allowed to watch at home.

Now is the time to teach your child how to handle peer pressure. Help him learn to say *no* to things that don't fit with your family's discipline rules or values.

Here are some sentences your child should repeat to himself:

- I can say *no* to things that would put me in danger.
- I can make good choices for myself.
- I can say, "You're my friend, but I don't choose to do that."
- It's OK if I make choices that are not the same as the choices my friends make.

Source: D. Bloch, *The Power of Positive Talk: Words to Help Every Child Succeed*, FreeSpirit Publishers.

"We need to learn the slow *yes* and the quick *no*."

—Tom Friel

Five simple strategies help you encourage respectful behavior



There are days that parents and teachers feel like Aretha Franklin. All they're asking for is a little R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

But in today's society, where disrespect is common, it can be even more of a challenge to raise respectful kids. Fortunately, there are still some things that work.

Here are five ways to encourage respect in your child:

- 1. Be a good role model.** Respect, like most values, is *caught*, not *taught*. When your child sees you treating everyone with respect—from his teacher at school to the homeless person on the street—he'll learn that that's the way to behave.
- 2. Name it when you see it.** When you see other people behaving in respectful ways, make a positive

comment. "Did you see how that man on the bus gave up his seat so that elderly woman could sit down? What a respectful thing to do." No lecture is necessary. Your child will get the message.

- 3. Praise it when he demonstrates it.** "Cole, I felt very proud of your respectful behavior when you held the door for Mrs. Jones. I know she appreciated that gesture."
- 4. Correct it.** If your child slips up, help him make a course correction. "Remember when we talked about how to greet guests?"
- 5. Report what you hear.** If a teacher or neighbor tells you your child greeted her politely, let your child know how proud you are of his respectful behavior.

Source: R.J.A. Silverman, "10 Tips on Teaching Respect to Children: You can't get it if you don't give it!" niswc.com/elem_respect.

Are you reducing your child's test anxiety?



Some kids get butterflies in their stomachs before tests. But others go into full-blown panic. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are helping your child overcome test anxiety:

- 1. Do you help** your child create a study plan to prepare for the test?
- 2. Have you talked** with your child about *your* expectations? Remind her that your love for her does not depend on a test score.
- 3. Have you shared** calming techniques with your child? Deep breathing, counting backwards from 100—find things that work for her.
- 4. Do you encourage** your child to talk to her teacher? If she is especially nervous, her teacher may be able to reassure her that she is, indeed, well-prepared.
- 5. Do you encourage** positive self-talk? When your child gets stuck during a test, she can say, "I know this. The answer will come to me."

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are helping your child reduce test anxiety. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Self-esteem is linked to higher grades and improved attendance



Studies show that when children participate in structured after-school activities, their grades are likely to rise.

Their attendance is also likely to improve. Why? It may have to do with self-esteem.

After-school programs give kids opportunities to succeed at various activities, and their positive feelings of success may carry over into the classroom.

To do the same thing for your child during afternoons at home, focus on:

- **Homework time.** Take a “same time, same place” approach to homework on school days. This encourages independence and responsibility.
- **Academic activities.** Incorporate math, science, history and more

into your child’s everyday life.

Help her manage her allowance, for instance. Do a science experiment together. Visit a historical site, if possible. Show your child that learning is fun and useful!

- **Non-academic activities.** When kids make progress in sports, art, music, technology and other areas, they gain confidence. This helps them become better students. Support and praise hard work in all areas.
- **Setting goals.** Ask your child what she’d like to accomplish in and out of school. Set a few reasonable goals. “I want to read a chapter book this week.” “I want to build a model plane.” Help her make a step-by-step plan for success.

Sources: “Academic achievement improved among students active in structured after-school programs,” SMU Research, niswc.com/elem_self-confidence.

Q: My son has never had a lot of friends. But there was one boy in his class who spent time with him—that is, until recently. This boy has moved on to a new group of friends and has joined these other students in teasing my son.

Now my son doesn’t want to go to school. I don’t know how to handle this. Should I call the former friend’s mother to ask her to make her son stop?

Questions & Answers

A: As much as we want school to be solely a place for learning, experts know that there’s also an important social aspect. When teasing gets to the point that it affects a child’s desire to go to school, you need to take action.

Calling the other parents hardly ever works and it could actually result in more heartbreak for your son. Instead:

- **Talk with his teacher.** Has she noticed that your son is being teased? Ask for her assistance in stopping the teasing and making your son feel included in class activities.
- **Find opportunities** for your son to make friends outside of school. Think about things like the Boy Scouts or other youth organizations. Sometimes, a structured setting makes it easier for kids to get along.
- **Look into clubs and activities** at the school. Connecting with students who share his interests—whether it’s making robots, playing chess or singing in the chorus—can help your son find his peer group.

If your son continues to struggle, talk with his pediatrician or the school counselor.

Help your child gain a better understanding of fractions



Many kids find learning fractions challenging. But in their adult lives, they’ll use fractions every day.

When they cook, they’ll measure one-fourth cup of water. And when they go out to eat with friends, they’ll figure out what one-third of the bill amounts to.

Pointing out all the ways you use fractions will help your child understand the importance of this math concept. Here are some other things you can do at home:

- **Pour a pile of cereal on a tray.** To illustrate the concept of one-fourth, divide the pile into four equal sections. Rearrange the pile

to illustrate other fractions. Then challenge your child to illustrate some different fractions.

- **Use measuring cups and spoons.** There is no easier way to see how many one-third cup measures it takes to make one cup. Let your child experiment to find out.
- **Make up fraction facts** with your child. One-third of the rooms in our house have windows. One-half of our family members have birthdays in October. One-fifth of the cars on this street are red.
- **Mark the passing of time** with fractions. Say, “If it takes us 20 minutes to go to Grandma’s, how long will it take us to get halfway there?”

It Matters: Technology

Make online safety a priority in your home



Technology has changed how students learn and how they socialize. Millions of kids in all age groups are online every day—at home, at school, at friends' homes, at the library—and many are creating online content.

To keep your child safe online:

- **Discuss rules and expectations.** Use software that helps protect kids, but supervise carefully, too. Allow your child to communicate online only with people you both know.
- **Set limits.** Establish times when technology is not allowed, such as during meals. Set a time when all devices must be turned off for the evening.
- **Remind your child** not to reveal personal information online, such as her name, phone number, school, passwords or location.
- **Keep Internet access** out of your child's room. Let her go online only if you can see what she's doing.
- **Learn about the websites** your child wants to visit and the apps she wants to download. Do you approve of their content?
- **Encourage your child** to tell you if something inappropriate occurs while she's online. Report your concerns to the authorities.
- **Stay informed** about online safety. For more safety tips, visit www.fosi.org (Family Online Safety Institute) and Netsmartz.org (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children).

Help your elementary schooler evaluate information online

Your child has to write a report, and he wants to do research online. Take this opportunity to teach about a safe, reliable way to do his research:

- **Prepare.** Find websites you trust, such as online encyclopedias for kids. Jot down safe Internet addresses.
- **Supervise.** Sit at the computer with your child. Search for information together. As you pick resources, evaluate them carefully. Who is the author? What makes him or her trustworthy?
- **Talk.** Discuss what makes a site likely to be legitimate. For example, is it run by a trusted source? Does it end with *.gov* or *.edu*? These indicate government or educational affiliations.



- **Inspect.** Look closely at information on the page. How recently was it written or updated? Does it represent facts or opinions? Does it refer to other reputable sources? Is it designed for kids?
- **Ask.** Talk with your child's teacher about sites. Also review the school's website to find teacher-recommended links.

Choose appropriate websites for your child ahead of time



"Can I go online?" your child asks. You want to say yes, but you're not sure which sites are appropriate.

It's a good idea to visit educational sites when your child isn't nearby. Then note the ones you've approved and visit them together. Some to consider include:

- **Funbrain**, www.funbrain.com. This website features more than 100 games that develop skills in math, reading and literacy.
- **Time For Kids**, www.timeforkids.com. Your child can read about current events and explore

countries around the world. There is even a homework helper with tools such as a flash-card maker, grammar wizard and writer's toolbox.

- **Starfall**, www.starfall.com. Phonics is fun when it involves play! Whether your child likes comics, tongue twisters, plays, fables or other reading materials, there is something on Starfall for everyone.
- **PBS Kids Go!** pbskids.org/gollgames. This site is packed with educational games, videos and quests featuring PBS television show characters.