

Elementary School  
**Parents**<sup>®</sup>  
Desert Star School  
*make the difference!*

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## Summer volunteer work can build character & leadership

**T**he world's problems can seem overwhelming. But kids can learn that every person can make a difference, and when people work together, the results are amazing! Summer volunteering is a great way to teach this lesson to your child—all while building his confidence, compassion and leadership skills.

To get started, talk with your child about:

- **Interests.** What subjects interest him most? How do they relate to others' needs? If he loves animals, he could help an animal rescue group. If he's interested in business, he might help with a charity fundraiser. Your child's enthusiasm is a great motivator.
- **Skills.** Your child's strengths can be gifts to others. He might hold a bake sale or read to younger children. Sometimes it's fun to learn new skills, too, such as how to help with landscaping or home repairs.
- **Needs.** Perhaps your child has noticed a park that needs sprucing up. Or maybe a homeless shelter needs food. Go online with your child and search for upcoming community service events in your area. You could even ask your child's teacher if the school needs help over the summer.
- **Schedules.** Volunteering takes time, and families are busy! Set realistic goals that leave room for other priorities. Depending on your family's commitments, you and your child might volunteer just a few hours here and there—or decide to take on one large, exciting project!

## Three reasons attendance is *still* important!



Summer vacation is on the horizon. But it's not here yet. Here are three reasons to

make sure your child comes to school on time every day:

- 1. Learning hasn't stopped.** Teachers are still planning lessons and teaching new content. Kids who aren't in school won't learn this information. Students who miss just 10% of the school year in the early grades are *still* behind their peers when they reach high school.
- 2. Teachers often plan** group projects for the end of the year. These projects help students learn cooperation, problem solving and responsibility. These are skills they'll eventually need in the workplace. If your child isn't in class, she won't benefit from these lessons.
- 3. Regular attendance** teaches kids to be dependable—which is an important quality for everyone to develop.

**Source:** H.N. Chang and M. Romero, *Present, Engaged, and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades*, National Center for Children in Poverty, [niscw.com/elem\\_attend](http://niscw.com/elem_attend).

## Persistence will help your child stay motivated all year long



It took Thomas Edison more than 1,000 tries to invent the light bulb. Imagine what would have happened if he'd called it quits at try #999. Perhaps we'd still be reading books by candlelight!

So when your child starts losing her motivation to do schoolwork before the end of the year, encourage her to keep going.

Researchers have studied successful people in many fields, from athletics to science to business. You may be surprised to learn what these people all had in common. It wasn't their intelligence. It wasn't their talent. Instead, it was their *persistence*—their ability to keep going when things were challenging.

Regular, daily practice is important for success. That's true whether

people are learning to play the piano or kick a soccer ball. And it's just as true for people learning to read or solve math problems.

So help your child set some goals for what she wants to accomplish before the end of the year. Write those goals down and post them where she can see them. When she feels a lack of motivation, remind her of how good it will feel to reach her goals.

**Source:** A.L. Duckworth and others, "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, [nswc.com/elem\\_perseverance](http://nswc.com/elem_perseverance).

**"What you do today can improve all your tomorrows."**

—Ralph Marston

## Reflect on the school year with your child & celebrate success!



As the school year winds down, it's a good time to help your child look back, look forward, give thanks and celebrate.

Here's how:

- **Talk to your child's teacher.** Get her thoughts on your child's strengths and weaknesses. How has she improved? Where does she need more work? Ask what you can do to help your child over the summer.
- **Talk to your child about the school year.** Ask what she thinks went well. Help her figure out what changes she should make next year.
- **Review your child's successes.** Look over schoolwork you've saved during the year. Point out how much she's learned—how many new words, for example. Or how she can add and divide. Or how her writing has improved.
- **Help your child list learning goals for the summer.** Guide her, based on suggestions from her teacher.
- **Encourage your child to thank those who have made the year a good one—the teacher, bus driver, food service worker, etc.** This will help her appreciate how many people have helped her.
- **Celebrate with a special activity and enjoy some one-on-one time with your child.**

## Are you helping your child think and plan ahead?



Brain scientists now know what parents have always suspected: Most children aren't very good at planning ahead. But that doesn't mean parents can't help them develop this skill.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are teaching your child to think ahead:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you talk** with him about all of the steps involved when he has a big project for school?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you help** him make a list of the things he needs to complete every day?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you help** him make a plan to earn and save the money he needs to purchase something special?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you make sure** he does homework *before* relaxing with TV or playing games?
- \_\_\_ **5. Will you make a plan** with him of things you want to do together this summer?

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're helping your child learn to think and plan ahead. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

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# Studies show that good summer health leads to school readiness



Studies show that when kids are physically healthy, it's easier for them to learn and succeed. How your child spends his summer will affect his health—and how he does in school next year.

Emphasizing healthy habits on vacation doesn't have to be boring or intimidating. It can be fun! All it takes is a little extra focus on:

- **Being active.** Most kids should exercise for at least one hour a day. Instead, many watch TV and play video games for hours on end. Make a list of alternatives, such as taking family walks, gardening, visiting local parks and joining a sports team. Ask your child, "Which would you like to do?"
- **Eating well.** Involve your child in making healthy meals. You might borrow a cookbook from the library and try some new recipes with fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. Avoid potentially harmful or unnecessary ingredients, including excess sugar.
- **Staying hydrated.** This is especially important during hot summer activities. Remember that every drink doesn't need to be sweetened or flavored. Water is refreshing—and free! If you serve juice, consider diluting it with water. The earlier you start doing this, the less your child will notice.
- **Promoting wellness.** In addition to taking care of your child when he's sick, work with his doctor to prevent illness. Discuss vaccines, summer safety, vision, hearing, allergies and other critical topics. Be sure to keep his medical records up to date!

## Remember the 85-15 rule when it comes to discipline



Too often, discipline gets a bad rap. Many parents think it means punishing children when they misbehave, which isn't very enjoyable for children or parents.

However, the word *discipline* actually comes from the Latin word *disciplina*, which means "teaching." So try thinking about discipline in a different way. Think of discipline as a way to give your child the tools he needs to succeed in life.

Most of your discipline—roughly 85 percent—should focus on encouraging the behavior you want to see in your child. You can do this by being a good role model. For

example, if you want a kind child, be kind to others. If you want a responsible child, keep your own commitments.

You can also point out others who display the behaviors you'd like to encourage. And when you see your child doing the right thing, notice and compliment him.

That leaves just 15 percent of the time to focus on correcting your child's negative behavior. While you will still have to set rules and enforce consequences, you'll get to spend most of your time focusing on the positive.

**Source:** W. Sears and M. Sears, *The Successful Child: What Parents Can Do to Help Kids Turn Out Well*, Little, Brown and Company.

**Q:** My daughter is usually very well-behaved. But lately, she has been acting out at home and at school. She's heading to middle school next year and I know she's anxious about that. Could this be why she's causing so much trouble? I'm at a loss about what to do.

### Questions & Answers

**A:** When kids are anxious, they tend to act out with the people they feel the closest to—usually parents and teachers. Transitions are hard on all kids, and even harder on some. The move to middle school can be a scary time. Your daughter may have a lot of concerns: Will she still see her friends? Will she be able to handle the schoolwork?

As you suspect, these fears may be causing her misbehavior. Letting her get them out in the open will be a first step in dealing with them.

Here's how to help:

- **Talk with your daughter.** See if you can get her to express her fears out loud. A low-key approach usually works best. To open up a conversation, you might say, "I bet you're wondering about who will be in your classes next year."
- **Address her concerns.** Once she begins to talk about her worries, work with her teacher to address them. Perhaps the teacher can lead a few class discussions about life in middle school. Or, if your daughter knows someone who is already at the school, suggest that she ask the person about what it's really like.
- **Remind your child** that she still needs to follow the rules at home and at school.

# It Matters: Summer Learning

## Six educational field trips to take with your child



“I’m bored!” Do you dread hearing this phrase over the summer? Then start planning now!

In addition to collecting supplies, such as books, recipes and games, schedule a few field trips. Local educational destinations are often free and fun to visit!

Consider going to:

1. **Museums.** Call or go online to check upcoming exhibits. Which would your child like to see most? Add them to your summer calendar.
2. **An arboretum.** Kids love walking through gardens, admiring flowers and learning about habitats. Bring a camera or sketchbook so your child can capture the plants and animals.
3. **The zoo.** This trip is almost always a hit with kids. Before leaving, you and your child can read about the animals you’ll see. Talk about what they eat and how they spend their time.
4. **A fire station.** Call ahead to see if a summer “open house” is planned. If not, request permission for a special visit.
5. **An airport.** Simply driving by the airport is interesting. Can your child spot the control tower? Planes taking off and landing?
6. **Parks.** Find a guide to local parks and keep it handy. Consider visiting hiking trails, historic battlefields and more. Add a nature guide and maybe even some binoculars, and you’re ready for an adventure!

## Don’t let your child waste the summer in front of a screen!

The lazy days of summer can often lead to lazy hours in front of the TV, computer and other electronic devices. But experts say it’s important to limit recreational screen time—even in the summer. For most families, that’s easier said than done!

Replace screen time with activities such as:

- **Acting.** Instead of watching a show, your child can create one! She can choose a story line and act it out with friends or stuffed animals.
- **Classic games.** Fill a bucket with traditional summer toys, including sidewalk chalk, balls, bubble stuff and water sprayers. When the weather is right, your child can take it outside for hours of fun.



- **Scavenger hunts.** Give educational instructions, such as, “Let’s find an oak tree leaf.” “Pick three daisies.” Or, “Find three things that are round.” Remember, you can have a scavenger hunt anywhere, even in a store or on vacation.

## Make summer reading sizzle for your elementary schooler



Research shows that when kids don’t keep up with reading over the summer, they can lose up to three months of learning—and feel the effects for a long time! Fortunately, this doesn’t have to happen.

To encourage summer reading:

- **Join a reading program.** Ask the librarian at your local library for a list of programs your child can attend.
- **Be creative.** Remember that *all* kinds of reading materials can help your child maintain and

build skills—comic books, craft magazines and even cookbooks.

- **Focus on your child’s interests.** Ask him if there is something he would like to learn more about during the school break? Maybe he wants to identify stars and constellations at night or learn how to camp. Help him find books about subjects he loves.
- **Plan a book swap.** Have your child invite friends to participate in a book exchange event. If a child donates two books he has read, he can exchange them for two books he hasn’t read.