

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Uniontown Area School District
www.uniontown.k12.pa.us

March 2005

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Teach that telling isn't tattling

When a friend is in trouble, kids may not say anything because they're afraid to tattle. While it's important for children to solve their own problems, there are many times when they need input from a grown-up. Here are some ways to help your child tell the difference between telling and tattling:

- **Have your child ask herself**, "Why do I want to tell?" If she is scared, in danger or concerned about someone, for example, telling is a good idea.
- **Give your child examples.** You might say, "On the playground, Mary sees a kid hurt a classmate. If she reports it to a teacher, is she telling or tattling?" In this case, Mary is telling, because she is worried about safety.
- **Discuss your child's actions.** If she complains about a conflict, talk about whether she's telling or tattling. If she's tattling, help her figure out alternatives: "How could you solve this by yourself?"
- **Compliment your child when she tells.** Say, "I am so proud of you for telling an adult. It was the right thing to do."



Source: Kathryn M. Hammerseng, *Telling Isn't Tattling*, ISBN: 1-884734-07-3 (Parenting Press, 1-800-992-6657, www.parentingpress.com).

HOMESCHOOL

Make group projects a team success

Group projects teach students about working together, being responsible and exploring subjects in depth. Here are some ways to make sure they go smoothly:

- **Communicate.** When the project begins, ask to see the assignment sheet. What kind of help will your child need? Does she have to meet with her group after school? Have her call or email teammates. Consider hosting a gathering at your home.
- **Coordinate.** Make sure the group decides who will do what. Help the children consider each group member's resources. One may have a computer, for instance, while another may not. Have them write down individual assignments and when they are due. Suggest that the students hand this in as part of the project. That way, the teacher will know how each person contributed.

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Reduce the stress caused by standardized tests

Today state tests are often "high-stakes" exams—they have real consequences for students. That makes some kids anxious.

You can help. Start by talking with your child's teacher. What subjects will be on the test? Ask how you can help your child review at home.

Before test day, make sure your child gets plenty of sleep. Fix a favorite breakfast so he doesn't have to work on an empty stomach. Tell him that he'll do great—and remind him that you love him no matter what.

ENCOURAGING READING

Read just for the fun of it

If your child enjoys reading in his spare time, reading homework may not be difficult. Let your child read for fun. Try magazines, books, articles and even comic strips.

Help him find materials that match his interests.

Source: Kathryn Perkinson, "Helping Your Child Use the Library," U.S. Department of Education. www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Library/index.html.

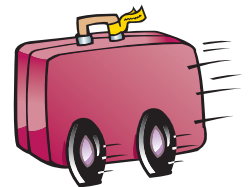


MAKING TIME COUNT

Learn on spring vacation

Planning a spring vacation? The trip can be a learning experience.

Help your child find your destination on a map. Talk about how you'll get there (driving north, for example, or flying over several states). Call ahead and get interesting brochures to browse together.



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents encourage math memorization?

Q: My child has difficulty in math because he hasn't memorized enough facts. How can I help him?

A: Memorization is an essential part of math. To make it easier, parents can provide flash cards and suggest strategies such as these:

- **Daily dose.** Review one math fact a day. You might start with, "Nine times six is 54," for example. Challenge your child to repeat it often. He can say it during breakfast and at the bus stop. You could both say it while loading the dishwasher. Say it in a high voice. Say it in a low voice. Say it in a whisper. By the end of the day, it may be memorized.
- **Start with "square numbers."** Learn the sums of $1 + 1$, $2 + 2$, 1×1 , 2×2 and so on. This gives your child fundamental number sense. If he's having trouble remembering 6×7 , he can recall that 6×6 is 36, so 6×7 must be 6 more: 42.
- **Practice "fact families."** When your child is learning 7×6 , focus on the whole family of facts: $7 \times 6 = 42$, $6 \times 7 = 42$, $42 \div 6 = 7$ and $42 \div 7 = 6$. This is a good way to help division make sense.



Source: Jean Kerr Stenmark, Virginia Thompson & Ruth Cossey, *Family Math*, ISBN: 0-912511-06-0 (Equals Publication, 1-800-897-5036, www.lawrencehallofscience.org/equals).

PARENT QUIZ

Do you promote school bus safety?

Good behavior on and around the school bus—and being on time for the bus—are part of being a good, safe student.

Here's a quiz to see if you're encouraging these qualities in your child. Give yourself five points for something you always do, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

- ___ **1. I don't allow** my child to walk to the bus stop alone.
- ___ **2. I help my child** arrive early for the bus.
- ___ **3. I remind my child** that the bus driver has many "blind spots" near the bus.

___ **4. I talk with my child** about bus behavior rules.

___ **5. I encourage my child** to use bus handrails.

How did you score? *Twenty or above is good. Fifteen to 19 is average. Below 15? Use the ideas in this quiz to improve trips to and from school for your child.*

"The joy of learning is as indispensable in study as breathing is in running."
— Simone Weil

BUILDING CHARACTER

Find volunteer activities to do together as a family

Although the idea of volunteering sounds time consuming, it doesn't have to take long. Think of small, meaningful things your family can do. Spend a few hours doing a walk-a-thon, for example, or cleaning up a park. Help make sandwiches for a homeless shelter. Ask your child for more suggestions.

Source: Ruth Peters, *Laying Down the Law*, ISBN: 1-579-54585-6 (Rodale Publishers, 1-800-848-4735, www.rodalepress.com).

SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

Know the signs of ADHD

If you've ever wondered if your child has ADHD, here are some signs to look for:

- **Trouble** in two or more settings, such as home and school.
- **Difficulty** sitting still.
- **Taking action** without considering results.
- **Lack of attention** to tasks.

If your child has symptoms that concern you, get help from a professional, such as a counselor or doctor.

Source: Tedd Mitchell, M.D., "Does Your Child Have ADHD?" *USA Weekend*, August 13-15, 2004 (Gannett, 1-800-487-2956, www.usaweekend.com).

PARENT TO PARENT

Make a book to celebrate your child's dreams & goals

Does your child have specific dreams for the future? Make up a story about them—starring her, suggests mom **Jonia Nelson** of **Kingsburg, California**.



Cut out pictures of people doing related activities, but replace their faces with a photo of your child. Combine the pictures and story.

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