

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



March 2011

Grenada Elementary Schools

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Prepare for standardized tests

You already know that standardized tests are important. But what you might not realize is exactly *why* they're so important. Standardized test results help you see how your child is doing in school compared to his peers. And they also help schools see how they're doing compared to other schools.

But don't let that importance get to you and your child! To ease the pressure on your family:

- **Learn about upcoming tests.** Ask your child's teacher what subjects will be covered. Ask about preparation. The teacher may send home a "practice test," for example, or provide information to review.
- **Practice following directions.** When studying at home, have your child read directions carefully. Check to make sure he understands them.
- **Use a timer.** Set a timer during math homework to help your child get comfortable with "timed tests." Turn it into a game—race to see if he can complete a certain number of problems before the timer goes off.
- **Brush up on skills.** Do reading, writing and math activities at home, but go beyond the basics. Look up new words. Write about a unique topic. Make graphs.
- **Relax.** Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep and nutritious food in the days leading up to a test. Provide happy distractions from stress, such as family walks.
- **Understand the results.** Find out how the scores will be used. How might a particularly low or high score affect a student?



Source: "Standardized Test Success," Family Education, <http://school.familyeducation.com/educational-testing/teaching-methods/37502.html>.



Rate your response at report-card time

Report cards inform parents about their children's progress in school. At report card time do you:

- **Remain calm?** If you're upset about poor grades, wait until you cool down to talk with your child or her teacher.
- **Ask what your child thinks?** Does she agree with the grades she received? Why or why not?
- **Develop a plan?** Even if your child has all A's, there will

be some things she wants to improve.

- **Contact the teacher** if you have questions or concerns? Together, work out a way to help your child improve.

During the next grading period review your child's work regularly. Report cards won't be a surprise if you check homework each day.

Source: Ball State University, "How to Handle Report Cards—The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," www.newswise.com/articles/view/510639.

Don't tolerate disrespect

Children who are expected to be respectful at home treat classmates and teachers with respect at school. *Never* tolerate disrespectful behavior. Say, "We don't talk like that in our family. Take five minutes to cool off. Then we can talk about what's upsetting you."

Organized students may have better attendance

Students who miss just one day of school each week miss more than two and a half years of class time before they graduate. And most lost hours of instruction can never be made up. Common excuses for absences and tardiness include:

- **Getting up late** and missing the bus.
- **Forgetting** an assignment at home.
- **Not being able** to find needed books.



These excuses have one thing in common: disorganization! Encourage your child to stick to a steady homework routine, pack her backpack the night before and wake up at the same time every day.

Source: "School Attendance: Helping Your Child Make the Best Start," www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/YourChildsWelfareAtSchool/DG_067554.

Spring into gardening fun!

Spring is just around the corner. For some seasonal fun that teaches responsibility, allow your child to pick out some seeds, like marigolds or radishes.



Help your child plant his seeds in potting soil and place his pots in a sunny spot. Expect him to be responsible for the watering and care of the plants.

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Q&A How can parents show the importance of hard work?

Q: My daughter's teacher says she does the bare minimum at school—and her grades reflect her lack of effort. If I ask her to do anything at home, it takes so much nagging it's easier to do it myself. How can I help my child develop a work ethic?

A: There's a saying that the parent has to teach the child how to work before the teacher can teach the child how to learn. Clearly, your daughter hasn't learned that first lesson—and as a result, her teacher is having trouble with the second! Here's what to do:

- **Rule out any health issues** first. Then start helping her develop a good work ethic. Household chores are a great way to do this.
- **Hold a family meeting.** Explain to your daughter that she is an important part of your family. You need her to do her share. "Dad's busy at work. I have a new job. We need your help." Putting it this way will make chores seem important and not like a punishment. They're actually a way to make the household run more smoothly. First, have her work with you. When you're fixing dinner, have her tear the lettuce. When you fold laundry, have her help. Later, she can do some chores on her own.
- **Be sure to share your thanks** and show your gratitude. Say, "You really helped our family." That praise will make her want to do more.



Parent Quiz

Are you supporting independent work?

Every child asks for help once in a while. But if your child asks for it every day, you may need to help him become more independent. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging self-reliance:

1. **Do you let** your child know you believe he's capable? "I know it's hard. But you've done hard things before."
2. **Do you help** your child break big projects into smaller pieces?
3. **Do you remind** your child of the importance of effort? "You couldn't ride a bike the first time you tried. But you kept at it. You'll learn this if you keep at it."
4. **Do you ask** your child questions when he gets stuck? "What did you learn when you read the chapter?"

5. **Do you try** to keep your child motivated with an occasional small treat?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you are helping your child learn how to work on his own. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"The greatest oak was once a little nut who held its ground."

—Author Unknown

Celebrate the joy of reading

Who can resist Dr. Seuss? From *The Cat in the Hat* to *Horton Hears a Who!* every child loves the rhymes and the whimsy found in his books. To celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2nd:

- **Choose books** that both you and your child will enjoy. Ask your librarian to recommend titles.
- **Use funny voices.** Your child will love it when you use a squeaky voice for a mouse or a really deep voice for an elephant.
- **Take turns.** If your child struggles, read the page first. Then have him read the same page.

Spend dinner time with family, not the television

According to one survey, more than half of all people watch TV while they eat dinner.

But experts know that dinner table conversations matter. It's a time when families can connect. Ask about your child's day. Tell funny stories. Regular table talk can keep the lines of communication open.

Stay connected with school

Research shows that when parents and schools work together, children are more likely to succeed in school.

Be sure to:

- **Review** homework. Ask your child about school every day.
- **Check out** the school website. Find out about resources provided for parents.
- **Tell** the teacher if you suspect your child is struggling with schoolwork.



Source: National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, www.ncpie.org

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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Pat Hodgdon. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1526-9264