ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

April 2024

Christ the King School

Help your elementary schooler move forward after a setback

It's important for students to learn how to recover from setbacks, because they happen to everyone at one time or another.



Your reaction to a failure or setback can help your child move on to academic achievement. To help your elementary schooler bounce back:

- **Praise what you can.** A test grade may be low, but you may still be able to say "Hey, you got more answers right than wrong!"
- **Discuss what your child** can learn from the situation. Brainstorm together about things to do differently in the future.
- **Be realistic.** If your child has been trying, but isn't making progress, try not to seem unhappy. Instead, focus on creating a plan for improvement. Consult with the teacher for guidance.
- **Let your child take** responsibility for making changes. Discuss ways to improve, then let your child put them into action.
- **Set an example.** Try to handle your own mistakes and setbacks in positive ways. "That didn't work. I'm going to look up another way to do it."
- **Look forward.** Don't dwell on the failure or try to get the teacher to change a grade or a decision. Spending too much time talking about setbacks can make it harder to get past them, and children need to learn to respect teachers' decisions.

Foster your child's interest in reading

Books offer fascinating stories, interesting facts and all kinds of knowledge. But compared to colorful, flashing screens, they may not seem as appealing to your child. To generate an interest in reading:

- **Add a social element.** Have your child read to a younger sibling, grandparent or a favorite stuffed animal.
- **Offer variety.** Perhaps your child would like to read a mystery, a how-to book or a biography. Consider all types of books.
- **Encourage hobby reading.** Does your elementary schooler like baseball, gaming or crafts? Look for titles on topics your child is already interested in.
- **Go beyond books.** Short materials such as articles, comics and recipes count! Your child may also like listening to an audiobook in the car or while doing chores.
- **Find out about events** for children at the library. Ask about other reading-related activities, such as contests or games.

Enjoy some living history

When your child is learning about a historic person, try this role-play activity. Have your child learn all about the person. Then, you pretend to be a TV reporter, and have your child be the person. Ask questions your child will likely be able to answer: "Mae Jemison, when did you fly your historic mission into space?" Adding life to history makes it more fun!

Distribute math study time

Research shows that *distributed practice* is key for long-term learning. This means that instead of practicing math for an hour one day a week, your child should break up that time into shorter chunks and practice every day. Try these fun ways to practice together:

- **Play with coins.** Say to your child, "I have three coins. Together they are worth seven cents. What are they?"
- **Pretend** your calculator is broken. Say, "Imagine our calculator has no number 8. What other ways could you represent that number?" Your child could enter 10 - 2, or 4 + 4, or 24 ÷ 3.



Source: G.M. Donoghue and J. Hattie, "A Meta-Analysis of Ten Learning Techniques," *Frontiers in Education*.

Put science skills to work

One easy way to support science learning is to encourage your child to use newly learned information in life. After watching a nature program or reading books about nature, for example, go outside together. Ask your child questions like: "That tree has needles instead of flat leaves. What's that type of tree called?" "The flowers we planted last year grew back. Are they *annuals* or *perennials*?" "Look at that fly. Do flies have four wings or two?"



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Q&A How can I help my child feel less stressed-out?

Q: Lately, my 10-year-old has been bursting into tears and even yelling when something goes wrong. Study time is very stressful. This is not how my child used to be. What can I do?



A: Studies show that many children are feeling more stressed than they did a few years ago. They worry about grades, tests, deadlines and fitting in. They worry about events in the world around them. This stress can affect their schoolwork and their health.

To help de-stress your elementary schooler's life:

- **Stay calm when your child** loses control. Strong emotions from you will only add more stress. Try to take a deep breath, then offer support.
- **Encourage your child to express** feelings and concerns. Don't try to minimize them. Instead, acknowledge the emotions and express confidence in your child's ability to cope with stressful situations.
- **Encourage creative problem solving**—so your child can make the most of opportunities that might arise out of a stressful situation.
- **Help your child set realistic goals,** such as turning work in on time. Keeping up eliminates sudden overwhelming pressure to get things done.
- **Promote good nutrition and exercise.** Also teach your child some relaxation exercises—like concentrating on deep breathing.

Parent Quiz Are you giving your child needed time?

Frequent, meaningful, undivided attention from the adults in their families helps children thrive in school and life. Are you spending time with your elementary schooler in beneficial ways? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___**1. Do you eat** meals together at least once a day?

___**2. Do you make** time for reading, relaxing and talking with your child every day?

___**3. Do you include** at least five minutes in your child's bedtime routine for talking and listening?

___**4. Do you schedule** one-on-one time with each of your children each week?

___**5. Do you make** family time device-free? Digital devices can cause separation even when family members are together.

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are giving your child quantities of quality time. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"Even taking a child to school can be a time of togetherness where you can talk to each other…."
—T. K. Oliver

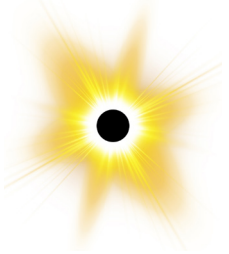
Prepare for peer pressure

You can help your child fend off pressure from peers to do things that break rules or don't feel right. Teach your child to repeat and remember these statements:

- **I can say** *no* to things that would put me or others in danger.
- **I can make** good choices for myself.
- **I can say,** "You are my friend, but I don't choose to do that."

Plan some April activities

April is the designated month for many activities that offer learning opportunities. Here are three to recognize with your child:



1. **Global Astronomy Month.** On April 8, a total solar eclipse will be visible over parts of the United States, Canada and Mexico. Help your child learn more about eclipses.
2. **National Poetry Month.** Read "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams. Try to write poems using fewer than 20 words.
3. **Financial Literacy Month.** Have your child make and keep a spending log.

Add movement to reading

Did you know that movement can help students get more out of reading? Research shows that it can help children make connections—between letters and the sounds they make, and between printed words and real-life actions. Encourage your child to:

- **Choose a movement** for each letter sound, and move when decoding words.
- **Act out stories** after reading them, using words from the books.

Source: University of Copenhagen, "Whole-body learning can boost children's letter sound recognition—the first step toward reading," Science Daily.

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