ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

May 2024

Christ the King School

Regular attendance gives your child a boost—now and later

The end of the school year is approaching, but it isn't here yet. Attending school in these final weeks is essential. Being in class every day ensures that your child won't miss key learning opportunities. And it sets your student up for success in the future.



Here are four reasons to prioritize attendance through the last day:

1. **There is still lots to learn.** Teachers are still planning lessons and teaching new content. Arriving at school on time each day will help your child meet this year's learning goals.
2. **Teachers often plan group projects** for the end of the year. In addition to academic content, these projects help students learn collaboration, problem solving and responsibility—which improve school performance.
3. **Studies show that students** who miss just 10 percent of the school year in the early grades are still behind their peers when they reach high school.
4. **Your child is establishing habits** that affect academic achievement. When you insist on regular attendance, your elementary schooler is more likely to accept that getting up and ready for school is a non-negotiable part of daily life.

Source: H. Chang and others, "Rising Tide of Chronic Absence Challenges Schools," AttendanceWorks.

Experiment with science outdoors

Learning science outside is linked with better grades and more scientific knowledge, a recent study shows. While the research suggests the effects are greater for girls, doing experiments outside benefits *all* children.

Try these activities with your child:

- **Conduct an animal inventory.** Have your child use string to mark off one square foot of grass and observe the animals inside. Your child can draw and label spiders, beetles, worms, etc. Try this in various times and places. Does your child observe different animals after it rains or near a stream? In the morning or at night?
- **Compare shadows.** On a sunny morning, take turns measuring each other's shadows. Write down the results. Repeat the activity at noon and before sunset. Your child will see that shadows are shorter at noon, when the sun is higher in the sky.

Source: K.T. Stevenson and others, "How outdoor science education can help girls stay engaged with science," *International Journal of Science Education*, Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Use the 85-15 rule to teach

Discipline should teach children how to behave well. But too often, adults think it is about punishing misbehavior. To teach with discipline, remember the 85-15 rule. Focus:

- **85 percent** of your discipline efforts on explaining and encouraging the behavior you *want* to see.
- **15 percent** on correcting misbehavior. Set rules and consequences in advance, then enforce them consistently.

Unplug reading benefits

Reading is beneficial, whether your child reads in print or online. But studies show that some benefits are greater from reading a printed book.



Readers scrolling through digital media are more likely to skim than read for meaning. But when students read from paper books, the page doesn't move. Readers can take their time and turn back to refer to things they've just read. They are more likely to understand the reading, remember it in sequence, and recall more details.

Source: B. Hoffman, Ph.D., "Digital Versus Print: Which Mode Is Better for Learning?" Psychology Today.

Plan for a learning summer

Banish boredom this summer by planning a few local family field trips. Consider going to educational places such as:

- **A train station,** airport or marina. What's involved in making that kind of transportation run?



- **An arboretum.** Have your child bring a camera or sketchbook to record different trees. Look them up later.
- **A historic site.** Before going, read about that era in history.

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Q&A Can I get my child out of trouble at school?



Q: The school called to tell me my fourth grader shoved a classmate to the ground. My child is going to be suspended for a day. I know it's school policy, but my child says the other student started it by yelling insults. Should I try to change this decision?

A: Your child may have been provoked, but physical fighting is never an appropriate reaction in school. Elementary schoolers need to learn that they are responsible for their actions and poor choices have consequences. To help your child learn a lesson from this one:

- **Discuss the incident** with your child. Does your student admit to pushing the other student? Admitting the truth after a mistake is the first step in accountability. Explain that pushing people is never acceptable—even if they call your child names.
- **Talk about better ways to react.** Your child could have ignored the other student, told them to stop or walked away, for example.
- **Encourage your child to tell** an adult when taunting and aggressive speech is happening at school. If your child won't, then you should. The school needs to be aware of this behavior in order to address it.
- **Let your child experience** the consequence of shoving. On the day of the suspension, your student can spend school hours studying or reading.

Parent Quiz Are you teaching your child to plan time?

Time management skills become more important when students are working to finish end-of-the-year projects and assignments. Are you helping your child use time wisely? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

___**1. Do you ask** your child to record due dates and test dates on a calendar?

___**2. Do you help** your child break big assignments down into smaller parts?

___**3. Do you work** with your child each week to schedule time for studying and completing tasks?

___**4. Do you make sure** that your child has plenty of time each day for reading, exercise, family time and sleep in addition to schoolwork?

___**5. Do you review** the schedule each day with your child?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are building your child's time-management skills. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Commit to habits that keep kids healthy and learning

Healthy habits can have a lasting impact on your child's health and performance in school. Support your elementary schooler by making a year-round family commitment to:

- **Stay physically active.**
- **Eat healthy foods.**
- **Drink plenty of water.**

It's also important to take your child for regular medical checkups. Talk to the pediatrician about summer safety, vision, hearing and other health topics. Then, update your child's school medical records.

Get a jump on summer with fun writing prompts



Is your child dreaming of a summer of fun? Have your student put ideas about summer in writing. Here are some prompts to get the ball rolling:

- **When do you think** summer begins? Is it a date on a calendar, a hot day or ... ?
- **What's your favorite** summer memory?
- **Is summer awesome** or awful or both? Why?

Source: C. Dunmire, "Summer Writing Prompts," Creativity Portal.

Discuss progress and plans

At the end of every school year, sit down with your student and talk about how it went. Talk about:

- **Accomplishments.** What is your child proud of? What was challenging?
- **Progress.** Look over schoolwork you've saved and point out how much your child has learned.

Then, help your child figure out changes to make for more success next year.

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