ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

February 2024

Christ the King School

Self-regulation skills help your child stay focused and achieve



Research shows that learning to control impulses and work toward goals improves children's success in school. With family support, even young children can learn these key self-regulation skills.

To improve your elementary schooler's ability to self-regulate:

- **Help your child set goals** that are tough but achievable, like reading a whole chapter book or learning to jump rope. Ask your child to picture what it will be like to reach the goal. Then, have your child imagine possible obstacles and ways to overcome them. Your child might ask for help with unfamiliar words in the book or practice jumping rope on grass so tripping and falling won't hurt.
- **Coach your child before heading into situations** where self-control may be a challenge. Say things like, "We have to run errands today. What can you do if you feel frustrated?" Together, brainstorm solutions, like playing I Spy in the grocery store or stacking coins at the laundromat.
- **Praise your child for showing self-control.** Be specific so your student can repeat the behavior in the future. You might say, "I know you really wanted pizza, but you ate your chicken without complaining," or "I noticed you practiced your addition facts every day this week—way to go!"

Source: University of Zurich, "Early self-regulation boosts children's educational success," ScienceDaily.

Take steps to ensure safety online

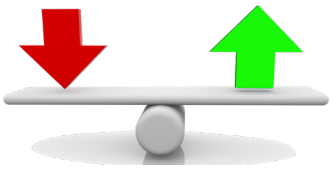
Students' digital safety is a growing concern for elementary school teachers and families. Fortunately, adults can protect children by supervising their online activities and teaching them to make positive choices. At home, you can:

- **Filter out** inappropriate content. Keep devices where you can see them, and use parental controls. Talk with your child regularly about what is and isn't allowed.
- **Keep young children** off social media. More than a quarter of teens report using social media before meeting network age requirements. Insist on waiting until at least the minimum age.
- **Monitor online gaming.** Cyberbullying is on the rise among gamers. Playing only with people your child knows and trusts in real life reduces the risk. Tell your child to report cyberbullying to you.
- **Discuss online privacy.** Teach your child never to share full names, passwords, etc.

Source: F. Martin and others, "Teacher and School Concerns and Actions on Elementary School Children Digital Safety," *TechTrends*, AECT.

Discuss the pros and cons

Children's experiences with the world are limited, so it's hard for them to imagine the possible results of their actions. So even if your child knows whether an action is right or wrong, consider the pros and cons together. What could happen in the short and long term? After your talk, your child will understand *why* the right choice is right.



Set expectations that fit

High family expectations for students are linked to high outcomes. But to be motivating, your expectations for your child also need to be realistic. Consider these questions when setting expectations:

- **Are they geared to my child?** Take your child's development, personality and maturity into account.
- **Are they important?** Choose a few expectations that focus on school success behaviors you want your child to develop, such as effort and responsibility.
- **Are they easy to understand?** State your expectations in clear terms.

Source: M. Pinquart & M. Ebeling, M., "Parental educational expectations and academic achievement in children and adolescents—A meta-analysis," *Educational Psychology Review*.

Play a math strategy game

A box of toothpicks is all you need to play a game that helps your child practice math reasoning. To play Last One Wins, lay 12 toothpicks on the table. Take turns with your child to remove one or two toothpicks. The player who takes the last toothpick wins. (A winning strategy is to try to leave three toothpicks on the table to guarantee a win on your next turn.)



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Q&A How can I stop my child from turning into a bully?



Q: Last year, my child was picked on by a group of kids in school and was miserable. So I was shocked when the teacher told me that my fifth grader is now part of a group who is being mean to another child. How can I stop this?

A: Watching your child be mean can be just as painful as watching your child be a target of nastiness. Unfortunately, your situation is not uncommon, particularly among families of girls at this age. And you are right, it's essential to take action.

Here are some things to do:

- **Make things clear to your child.** Say that you can appreciate that it feels good to be part of a group. However, just as it was wrong for others to be mean to your child last year, it is wrong for your student to do it now. Remind your child how it felt to be teased—and that it is important to take a stand against such behavior.
- **Find out the school's policies** about bullying and review them with your child. Your student may face consequences if this behavior continues.
- **Talk with the teacher.** Ask what the classroom rules are about teasing and exclusion. Explain what you are doing at home, and work together to redirect your child's focus onto learning—and away from mean behavior.

Parent Quiz Are you positive about math?

Research shows that family attitudes can affect how well students do in math. Kids do better when their families show that math is useful, interesting and fun. Is your math attitude helping your child? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___**1. Do you express** confidence that your child can do well in math?

___**2. Do you avoid** saying things like "Math is so hard. I hated it, too"? Instead, say, "This is a challenge, but I know you can figure it out."

___**3. Do you play** math games with your child?

___**4. Do you talk** with your child about the ways you use math in your daily life?

___**5. Do you create** opportunities for your child to use math, such as looking for bargains at the grocery store?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are showing that you think math is worth learning. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"Math is like going to the gym for your brain. It sharpens your mind."
—Danica McKellar

Reinforce responsibility

So many student success factors—effort, timeliness, diligence, etc.—are tied to responsibility. To raise a responsible student:

- **Assign meaningful tasks,** such as getting up to an alarm, caring for pets or plants, seeing jobs through by tidying up afterwards, etc.
- **Let your child make decisions** and learn from consequences of poor choices.
- **Teach your child about budgeting** and saving, as well as spending.
- **Adjust rules and limits** as your child shows more responsibility.

Encourage practice tests

Studies show that when students practice recalling information, it helps them remember it better. That's why taking practice tests is an effective way to study. Your child can take advantage of this study strategy:

- **In class.** Taking quizzes is an opportunity to practice recalling the material.
- **In groups.** Your child might invite a friend or two over to study and quiz one another. Or you can call out questions.
- **Independently.** Help your child look over notes, reading and handouts and create questions the teacher might ask. Then, your child can answer them.

Send a confidence boost



Give your child's self-confidence a boost this Valentine's Day by sending a valentine fan letter. Praise your student's efforts in school in a note, poem or silly riddle. Then, send it through the post office or tuck it somewhere your child will be sure to find it. Sign it, "From your biggest fan."

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