

Elementary School Parents[®] make the difference!

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Support your child as the end of the school year approaches

By May, some students act like summer vacation has already started. They “forget” to do turn in schoolwork. They stop giving their best effort and start avoiding anything that seems difficult or challenging.

But the school year isn’t over yet. Students need to stay focused on learning until the last day of school. Here’s how to help your child:

- **Review past schoolwork papers,** quizzes and tests. Use them to talk about how much your child has learned this year. Having these papers close at hand will also be useful when studying for end-of-year tests.
- **Shape year-end learning** around your child’s interests. If there is

one more book project due, suggest choosing a book on a favorite topic. If there is a social studies report, suggest focusing it on something your child is interested in learning more about.

- **Help your child manage** big end-of-year projects. Long-range assignments can be overwhelming. So, in addition to helping your child break the assignment down into smaller steps, encourage this rule of thumb: Move the deadline for finishing the project earlier by two days. If a report is due on Wednesday, your child should plan to get it finished by Monday. That way, your child will have a cushion if something comes up.

Offer your child motivation to keep learning



Students who remain motivated to learn are likely to be more successful in school than those who are not. Motivation comes from within your child, but the right words and actions from you can encourage it.

Try these ideas:

- **Be a learner yourself.** Let your child see you read books. Watch educational programs. Attend school functions. Try new things. Show curiosity.
- **Share what you learn.** Talk about new ideas or scientific discoveries with your child. Discuss things you read or hear.
- **Show an interest** in what your child is learning. Ask questions to learn and share—not to check up on your child.
- **Stay positive.** If your child has problems in school, talk about how problems can be solved. Meet with the teacher to figure out ways your child can improve. Then discuss ways you can work together to help your child succeed.
- **Show faith** in your child’s ability to learn. Offer praise when your child shows effort.

Teach your child these healthy stress-management techniques



In one recent national survey conducted by Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 70% of youth rated their ability to cope with challenges as medium to very low. And 71% said that when something important goes wrong in their life, they can't stop worrying about it.

As student stress and anxiety continue to rise, it's important to share coping strategies with your child. Offer ideas such as:

- **Deep breathing.** When anxiety strikes, have your child breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth several times.
- **Physical activity.** Ride bikes, shoot baskets and visit the playground as a family. Encourage your child to take up a sport or another active hobby. Suggest your child play outside with friends. They might

play catch, kick a ball around or enjoy a game of hopscotch or tag.

- **Nature.** Spend time outdoors appreciating the sights, sounds and scents of nature. Go for hikes, explore parks or camp out in the backyard.
- **Creative pursuits.** Drawing, writing, painting, singing or playing a musical instrument can all reduce stress.

Source: *The State of Youth Mental Health*, Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.”

—William James

Three simple strategies can boost reading comprehension



As students get older, they will be expected to read and understand more complex text.

They will need to transition from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*.

To support this transition, share these three reading comprehension strategies with your child:

1. **See the big picture.** Before starting to read an assignment, have your child think about the material. What is the title of the chapter or assignment? Does it offer any clues about the content? Suggest your child look for other clues, such as subheadings, words in boldface or italics, pictures or graphs.

2. **Take notes.** Taking notes while reading will make it easier for your child to comprehend and remember information. It will also make reading active and engaging. Your child should write down the most important ideas in the reading assignment. Your child should also write down any unfamiliar words and look them up later.

3. **Make connections.** The best way to remember new information is to relate it to something already learned. When your child finishes reading, ask questions such as: *How is this topic similar to something else you know? What key ideas did you already know? What new information did you learn?*

Are you helping your child prepare for year-end tests?



The end of the year often means lots of tests for students. Are you preparing your child to succeed on them?

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___1. **Do you write down** test dates on your family calendar and avoid planning big activities on the day before a test?

___2. **Do you encourage** your child to study a little each day instead of cramming the night before a test? Research shows this is the best way to learn and remember facts.

___3. **Do you make sure** your child regularly gets enough sleep and eats a healthy breakfast before a big test?

___4. **Do you encourage** your child to wear comfortable clothing and dress in layers on test days?

___5. **Do you say** that you have confidence in your child's ability and effort?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're giving your child the support to succeed on tests. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Parents
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to Help Their Children.

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Take advantage of these fun May learning opportunities



There's more to May than Mother's Day, Memorial Day and Victoria Day.

Here are some other occasions that offer fun

learning opportunities for you and your child:

- **May 1**—Mother Goose Day. Read favorite Mother Goose rhymes together.
- **May 4**—National Weather Observers Day. Go outside and observe the clouds together. Or make a collage of weather-related pictures cut from magazines.
- **May 5**—Cinco de Mayo. Learn more about this celebration that honors the rich culture of Mexico and Mexican-Americans, and enjoy some Mexican food!
- **May 18**—International Museum Day. Talk with your child about the importance of museums. Visit one online or in person.
- **May 20**—National Armed Forces Day. Have your child write a letter to thank someone for their military service. Check out Operation Gratitude at www.operationgratitude.com/volunteer/anywhere/letters to get started.
- **May 21**—On this day in 1881, Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross. Head to the library or go online to learn more about this compassionate leader of humanitarian causes.
- **May 30**—Water a Flower Day. Celebrate by planting flowers outside or in containers.

Regular review helps your child strengthen math skills



Success in math is built on mastery of basic skills.

Help your child establish math review habits that reinforce these skills.

Here's how:

- **Regularly quiz your child** on basic math facts: 2×9 , $12 - 4$, $6 + 6$, etc. Together, make a set of flash cards with math facts your child needs to know. Review them together often—at the breakfast table, in the car or while waiting at the doctor's office. Your child has mastered a math fact when it takes less than three seconds to give the correct answer.
- **Resist providing the answers.** Your child will learn better if you demonstrate *how* to find them instead. For instance, if your child doesn't know what 3×5 is, draw three parallel horizontal lines. Cross them with five vertical lines. Then have your child count the intersections to get the answer.
- **Have your child practice** writing numbers neatly. Many of the math errors students make are due to messy number writing. Your child could use graph paper to make sure numbers are neatly lined up. A sharp pencil and a clean eraser can help, too.
- **Encourage your child** to work more problems than the teacher assigns. Strong math skills come with lots of practice.
- **Issue mental math challenges.** See if your child can figure out a problem without using pencil and paper or a calculator. Ask questions that encourage estimating, too.

Q: My child is starting middle school next year and won't be attending the same school as friends. What can I do over the next few months to ease my child's anxiety about this transition?

Questions & Answers

A: Middle school is a really big adjustment for all students. Instead of having one teacher, students will have several. Instead of staying in one classroom, they will have to move from room to room. Instead of being in the highest grade level in the school, they will now be in the lowest. And the move often causes upheaval in student social lives.

To reduce anxiety and boost your child's confidence:

- **Sign up for a tour** while classes are in session, if possible. Just walking around the building and seeing students will give your child a better idea of what to expect (and even what to wear) on the first day.
- **Remind your child** that their will be many other students new to the school. Everyone in your student's grade will be starting fresh. Then remind your child that there will still be opportunities to see old friends, even if they're at a different school.
- **Connect your child** with a current middle schooler who would be happy to explain things and answer questions.
- **Check out school activities.** Getting started on a team or in the band over the summer will allow your child to make some new friends before the school year starts.

If your child still seems worried, reach out to the school counselor for support.

It Matters: Summer Learning

Treat reading as an enjoyable summer activity



To keep your child reading over the summer, treat it like any other fun summer activity.

Demonstrate that reading can be an enjoyable activity that can be done in lots of different ways. Try not to make summer reading feel like an assignment.

If you help your child make the connection between reading and the simple pleasures of childhood, the desire to read may last a lifetime.

To take a summer approach to reading:

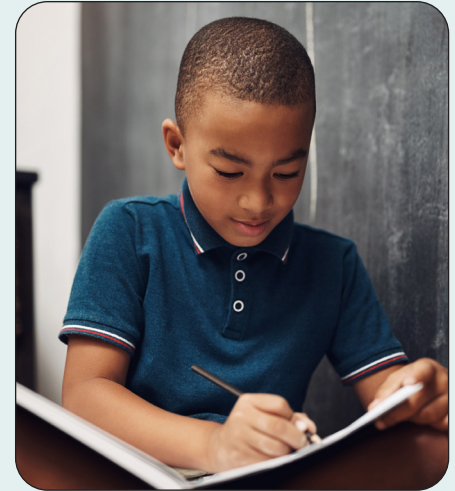
- **Suggest that your child** reread a favorite book. Then find another book by the same author. Or find one on the same topic.
- **Connect books** with summer activities—sports books for a summer league player, for instance, or camping books for a camper.
- **Let your child** stay up past bedtime when a book is just too good to put down.
- **Start your child** on a series of mystery or thriller books. These page-turners hook kids into a reading habit.
- **Encourage a change** of venue. Read books at the beach or pool, in a tent or at the park.
- **Watch movies**, videos and plays based on children's books. Then read the books together and compare the versions.
- **Share your favorite books** and magazines with your child.
- **Encourage your child** to retell or act out stories from books.

Inspire journal writing this summer with creative ideas

The summer is a great time to begin writing in a journal. All your child needs is an empty notebook and a few fun ideas to get started.

Suggest that your child keep:

- **A research log.** Have your child pick a subject, such as penguins, and then research and write about it. *What do penguins eat? Who are penguins' predators? How do penguins communicate? How do penguins move from one place to another?*
- **A travel log.** Each time you go somewhere special—whether it's far away or close to home—your child can keep a record by taking pictures, drawing or writing notes. *What did your child see? Who did your child meet? What did your child think about the place?*



- **An observation log.** Suggest that your child observe something over a period of time, such as a summer vegetable as it grows. Or, pick something to describe in great detail, such as a bug or an animal.

Prioritize unplugged activities over recreational screen time



The lazy days of summer can lead to lazy hours staring at digital devices. But experts say it's vital to provide plenty of healthy screen-free time during the summer.

Encourage your child to:

- **Be the entertainment.** Instead of watching a show, encourage your child to star in one. Have your child choose an exciting story line and act it out with friends or stuffed animals.
- **Play classic games.** Fill a bucket with traditional summer toys, such as sidewalk chalk, balls, bubbles

and water sprayers. When the weather is right, have your child take it outside for hours of fun.

- **Be a mad scientist.** Go online to find simple science experiments to conduct together.
- **Plan a treasure hunt.** Hide several clues, with each one leading to the next. The last clue should lead to a treasure, such as a yummy snack or a fun activity.
- **Create a masterpiece.** Gather supplies such as glue, construction paper, fabric, yarn, washable markers and paint. Ask your child to create something.