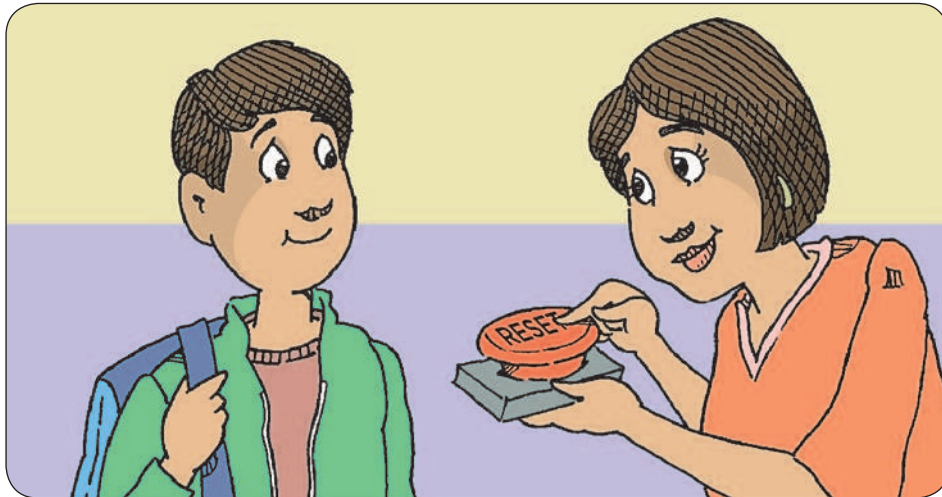


# Elementary School Parents<sup>®</sup> make the difference!

January 2011  
Vol. 22, No. 5

CESA #9

Yvonne VandenBerg, Director



## Help your child push the 'reset' button to correct problems

If you run into a problem with a computer program, you can often fix it by pushing the "reset" button. It gives you a chance for a fresh start and is an easy way to correct problems before they get out of hand.

It may be time to push the "reset" button on your child's school year as well. If his year is not going as well as you'd hoped, here are a few ways you can "reset" for the rest of the year:

- **Make change a family affair.** If you've decided that your child needs to spend more time doing homework, make it quiet time for the whole family. You can work on paperwork or read while your child studies.
- **Replace bad habits.** While it's hard to break a habit, it's much easier to put a different one in its place. If your child is in the habit

of watching TV as soon as he walks in the door, suggest that he read for 30 minutes instead. He'll still have a chance to relax—but he will also strengthen his reading skills.

- **Help your child get organized.** This month, there are lots of great-looking calendars available on sale. Look for one your child will enjoy using. Then help him get in the habit of writing down things like the day his book report is due. That can help avoid a last-minute panic.
- **Celebrate successes.** Help your child see the link between his new habits and his results. "You studied for that test and got nine out of 10 correct. That's great!"

Source: Ron Fry, *Get Organized*, ISBN: 1-56414-461-5, Career Press.

## It's important to stop, look & listen to kids



Your kids talk to you. But do you really listen to what they are saying? Or are

you busy checking your email, planning what you're going to fix for dinner or thinking about a situation at work?

How can you show your child you are paying attention? Follow the same advice you gave her when she was learning to cross the street:

- **Stop.** If your child has something important to say, it deserves your full attention. If you can't give it now, set a time. "I have to make a phone call in five minutes. If you wait until after that, I can give you my undivided attention."
- **Look.** You may learn as much by "listening" to your child's body language as you do to her words.
- **Listen.** You may want to repeat what you are hearing. "You were angry when Sara got to stay up late."

Source: Lawrence E. Shapiro, *How to Raise a Child with a High EQ: A Parents' Guide to Emotional Intelligence*, ISBN: 0-060-18733-6, HarperCollins.

## Too much screen time may lead to high blood pressure in kids



Several studies have shown that too much screen time hurts students' grades. Now new research shows that it hurts their health, too.

According to the study, kids who spent a lot of time watching TV, playing video games or using a computer, may also suffer from high blood pressure. That is true even if the child is not overweight. The disease can cause long-term heart damage. It can even lead to stroke or vision problems.

The researchers from Michigan State who conducted the study found that the more time children spent in front of a screen, the more likely they were to have high blood pressure. That was true for children between the ages of three and eight.

So what can parents do? You can:

- **Limit the time** your child spends in front of the TV or computer screen. Most experts recommend that kids be allowed no more than two hours per day of screen time.
- **Help your child avoid eating** unhealthy snacks while on the computer or watching TV.
- **Be sure your child stays active.** Sports, biking, active play and walking are all good exercise.

**Source:** David Martinez-Gomez, B.Sc. and others, "Associations Between Sedentary Behavior and Blood Pressure in Young Children," *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/163/8/724>.

**"Your children will become what you are; so be what you want them to be."**

—David Bly

## Boost writing skills & preserve memories with a family journal



When you think back on the last year, you can probably remember the big events. But what about those smaller

family moments?

A family journal is a good way to help preserve your family's memories. It's also a good way to help your child develop his writing skills.

Get a three-ring binder and fill it with paper. Have your child design a cover page.

Then put the date at the top of the next sheet of paper. Find a time when your whole family can be together. Talk about the week. What were the highlights? Was there anything that you'd like to forget?

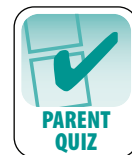
Once you've talked, give each person a chance to write a sentence or two about the week. Very young children can dictate and have someone write down what they say.

If one of your kids is feeling artistic, let him illustrate the week's entry. Then close the notebook until next week.

Over time, you'll have a great record of your life together. Take time to flip back and reread your entries. "Remember how mad Sparky was when we took him to the vet? I'm glad he doesn't have to go again for another year!"

**Source:** Peggy Kaye, *Games for Writing: Playful Ways to Help Your Child Learn to Write*, ISBN:0-3745-2427-0, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

## Do you handle school problems in positive ways?



No parent likes hearing that there is a problem at school. But the way you react can make the difference between helping solve the problem and standing in the way of a solution.

Are you helping address school problems positively? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you listen to the teacher** when she contacts you before you start explaining away your child's behavior? Getting defensive won't build cooperation.
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you wait to discuss** the issue with your child until you can do so calmly and without anger?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you involve your child** in developing a solution to the problem?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you let the teacher know** how you plan to handle the problem?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you stay in touch** with the teacher and the school to see if your solution is working?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you are trying to solve problems in positive ways.

For each *no* answer, try that idea.

**Elementary School**  
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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1275

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## Eight ways to keep your child's reading progress on track



You're proud of your child for learning to read! But now that she's accomplished this feat, how can you support her?

Remember that reading skills must be developed and maintained. The older your child gets, the more she'll depend on them for learning.

To support your child's education and keep reading progress on track:

1. **Relax.** Let your child read materials she likes. And when she's tired, let her stop.
2. **Be flexible.** Your child doesn't have to limit herself to books. She can read comics, magazines, video-game instructions and recipes.
3. **Make connections.** When you plan a trip, find books related to the location. Or read about historical events that happened near your home.

4. **Build excitement.** Make reading irresistible. Let your child stay up 15 minutes later to read. Or build a fort and read inside by flashlight.
5. **Role-play.** Turn favorite books into family plays or movies. Add props and costumes.
6. **Join (or start) a book club.** Get friends together for book-related discussions, activities and snacks.
7. **Set a timer.** If your child resists reading at homework time, a timer might help. ("Read to me for three minutes. When the timer beeps, you can stop.") Add a minute every few days.
8. **Read aloud.** Try reading your child more advanced books. When parents read, kids enjoy more challenging words and stories.

**Source:** L. Ward, "Get Your Child Hooked on Books," Parents, [www.parents.com/kids/education/reading/get-your-kids-excited-about-books-5-to-6-years/](http://www.parents.com/kids/education/reading/get-your-kids-excited-about-books-5-to-6-years/).

**Q:** My two children are both very bright. But my older child has serious learning disabilities. Homework is hard for him. My daughter, on the other hand, breezes through her homework. Naturally this creates some friction. How can I help both my children deal with a situation that seems unfair a lot of the time?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** It may help to give your two children a little perspective on how brains work. Harvard researcher Howard Gardner talks about "multiple intelligences." That is, there are many different ways to be smart. Some people have great verbal intelligence. Others are good with people. Still others have mechanical skills. Each of these people is smart, just in different ways.

So, too, with your children. As a parent, you need to help each child look for opportunities to find their own intelligence. For your son, who struggles with academics, look for things he does well. The confidence he gains in karate or sports can help carry him through the tough times in school.

Your daughter, on the other hand, needs to learn the joy that comes from struggling. Not everything comes easily. Eventually, she is likely to encounter at least one class that is really difficult for her. So challenge her to find something she has to work at.

A lot of things in life seem unfair. By helping your children see their strengths as well as their weaknesses, you're helping each of them deal with the next unfair thing that they encounter.

—Kris Amundson,  
The Parent Institute

## Practice working with fractions with your elementary schooler



Fractions can be one of the most challenging math ideas for children to learn. As a result, many students feel that

they never quite understand fractions. Here's an easy way to practice working with fractions:

- **Cut several long strips** of paper, each one a different color. The strips should be about three inches wide. Give your child a marker and some scissors.
- **Let your child choose** one colored strip to represent one whole. Have her label this strip  $\frac{1}{1}$ .
- **Then choose another color.** Fold it carefully and cut it in half. Label each piece  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Then talk about what that means: This is one piece

out of a total of two pieces. That's what those numbers represent.

- **Do the same** with a different color for fourths, thirds, eighths and sixths. Always label each of the pieces and talk about what the fraction represents. This is one piece of three, so we'll write  $\frac{1}{3}$ .
- **Let your child play** with the pieces to see what she discovers. How many fourths does it take to make one half? Which is larger— $\frac{1}{3}$  or  $\frac{1}{8}$ ?
- **Keep these pieces.** As your child is adding or subtracting fractions, she can check her work with the fraction kit.

**Source:** Dennis Adams and Mary Hamm, *Helping Students Who Struggle with Math and Science*, ISBN: 9781-5788-6758-5, Rowman & Littlefield Education.

# It Matters: Discipline

## Prepare yourself for the challenges of discipline



There's no way around it: Your child is going to misbehave—and it's going to be frustrating! You can't change that,

but you can control your expectations and responses. That's why the American Academy of Pediatrics encourages parents to:

- **Be realistic** about children's abilities. If you demand too much of your child, you'll both be disappointed. Make a few simple rules he can understand. Match them to his age and maturity. Then expect a reasonable amount of cooperation.
- **Mean what you say.** Think carefully before you state a rule, promise or consequence. Is it fair? Will you really follow through? Once you've made a good decision, stick to it! Kids make better choices when they can count on what parents say.
- **Consider your child's feelings.** Kids appreciate parents' understanding. It helps them behave. Say, "I know you're disappointed that you can't have a sleepover. Maybe another night."
- **Be forgiving.** No child—or parent—is perfect. If you do something you regret, such as yell at your child, discuss it when you're calm. Apologize and say what you'll do differently next time. Then keep your word! Teach your child that everyone can learn from mistakes.

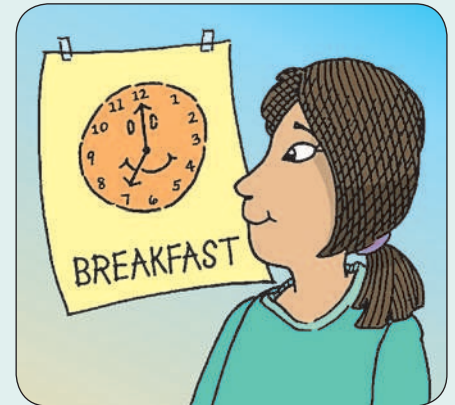
**Source:** "Disciplining Your Child," Healthy Children, American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/pages/Disciplining-Your-Child.aspx](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/pages/Disciplining-Your-Child.aspx).

## Use clock faces to teach your child how to be ready on time

Everyone in the family is ready to walk out the door. Everyone, that is, except McKenna. She's still looking for her library book.

Disciplined people don't make others wait for them. Here is a way to help your child learn what it means to be on time:

- **Talk about all the things** your child has to do to get ready in the morning. Write these down on a list. Then talk about how long it takes to do each one. Write these times next to the activity.
- **Make some clock faces.** Show the time that you need to leave in the morning. Then figure out when your child needs to start each of the other activities. When does she need to wake up? Start eating breakfast?



- **Draw clock faces** for each of these activities. Post them near the clocks in your house. Have your child check them as she starts each activity. These clocks will help her stay on time.

**Source:** D. Choat, "Teacher Made Activities for Teaching Responsibility," Scholastic, [www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=11536](http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=11536).

## Be timely, specific and focus on feelings when you criticize



Kids make plenty of mistakes. But in a culture that emphasizes compliments and rewards, you may wonder, "Is it okay to criticize my child?"

Keep in mind that praise is much more important than criticism. It improves behavior, and it should exceed criticism by far—perhaps 10 to one. Praise also builds a foundation of confidence and acceptance, which makes criticism more tolerable.

When you do need to give constructive criticism:

- **Do it soon.** If your child has left clothes all over his floor, it's more powerful to respond right away.
- **Be specific.** You might say, "I want you to pick up your clothes and put them away." General criticisms, such as "You're so messy," make problems worse.
- **Mention your feelings.** Emphasize the effect of the behavior. "When you leave your clothes on the floor, it makes me disappointed. I feel like you don't appreciate your belongings."

**Source:** R. Needlman, M.D., "Praise and Criticism," DrSpock.com, [http://drspock.com/article/0,1510,5869+AgeY6\\_9+cbx\\_behavior,00.html](http://drspock.com/article/0,1510,5869+AgeY6_9+cbx_behavior,00.html).