ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

December 2017

Grand Erie District School Board
Growing Excellence ... Inspiring Success

Promote honesty and help your child resist cheating



Whether they're playing a board game or coveting a cookie, kids are often tempted to cheat. When that temptation sneaks into schoolwork, it is a serious concern.

Sometimes students cheat because they don't want to admit that they are struggling with a lesson, or that they didn't do the required work. For many young children, the line between what is right and what is wrong is still blurry.

To prevent your child from cheating:

- **Talk about what it is and why it's wrong.** Tell your child that cheating is dishonest. It won't help her learn, and it's not fair to others.
- **Reward honesty.** Let your child know how much you appreciate hearing the truth, even when it's unpleasant.
- **Show an interest in what your child is learning.** Ask her questions and review homework to get a sense of how she is doing. If your child seems confused, let the teacher know.
- **Encourage your child to ask for help.** Admitting that she's having difficulty—or even that she didn't do the work—may seem scary. Let her know that you and the teacher are there to help her.

Source: S. Shellenbarger, "How Could a Sweet Third-Grader Just Cheat on That School Exam?" The Wall Street Journal, niswc.com/elem_cheat.

Help your child get more from reading

Reading comprehension is a skill that your child will use in nearly every class during his school career. When he reads, help your child:

- **Summarize.** Ask your child questions about the characters, setting and plot. Then ask questions that require some thought: What problems did the characters face? Why did things turn out the way they did?
- **Explore points of view.** Can your child imagine how a different character would tell the story? Would your child make the same choices if he were that character?
- **Make connections.** Has your child already read or learned something that relates to this book? If the book is about life on a farm, what does he know about farms that matches or doesn't match the story?
- **Get the message.** Was the author making a point? What was it? Does your child agree with it?

Source: Reading Comprehension and Higher Order Thinking Skills," K12 Reader, niswc.com/readthink.

Focus on attendance now for success in the future



Has your child missed some school days so far this year? It's not too late to get back on track so she can have a successful year—and school career. Studies show developing good attendance habits in the early grades positively affects achievement in later years.

Will + What + When = Success

Writing goals down helps motivate students. Children should also define the steps they'll take to meet their goals. Teach your child the *will + what + when* formula:

1. **Will.** This is your child's commitment to action. Have her write down the words *I will ...* .
2. **What.** Next, she should add what she will do to work toward her goal: *study my spelling words ...* .
3. **When.** Finally, she should write when she will take the action: *every Tuesday and Thursday*.

Source: T. Lickona, *Character Matters: How to Help Our Children Develop Good Judgment, Integrity, and Other Essential Virtues*, Touchstone.

Encourage your child to write many different ways

Give your child frequent opportunities to practice organizing and expressing his thoughts in writing. Ask him to:



- **Write instructions.** He could write steps for how to wrap a gift or make a sandwich.
- **Make lists.** What does he want to do over winter break? What does he need to remember to take to Grandma's?
- **Keep a journal.** He can write how he feels about things that happen to him.

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Q&A How can I get my child to stop clowning around?

Q: My son is the class clown. His teacher says his behavior is disruptive. He also uses laughs to get out of doing tasks at home. But how can you get angry at a kid when you are laughing your head off? What should I do?



A: Sounds like a bright kid. Other kids openly rebel against adults and get into trouble. Your son does the same thing, but he does it in such a way that adults react to his appealing clownishness rather than the rebellion. You don't have to get angry. Instead, change your response to his clowning:

- **Don't label him "the clown"** or talk about this trait to others—it will only reinforce his silliness.
- **Ignore him when his humor is inappropriate.** Leave the room if you can't avoid laughing in his presence. Clowns need an audience in order to continue their performance.
- **Apply discipline consistently.** If he is clowning to avoid a responsibility, he'll have to face the consequence. If he's trying to manipulate you into a *yes* when a *no* is appropriate, stick to your *no*.

Your effective handling of this behavior at home will likely decrease his clowning at school, as well.

Parent Quiz Are you making history come to life?

One of the best ways to help kids get excited about history is to make them feel connected to it. Sharing family stories and traditions can do just that. Are you helping your child learn family history? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___**1. Do you look** at old family photos with your child and talk about the people and events in them?

___**2. Do you talk** about places your child's ancestors came from and the routes they traveled? Help your child find them on a map.

___**3. Do you encourage** your child to ask older relatives questions about their lives?

___**4. Do you involve** your child in preserving family history by making scrapbooks and recording family stories?

___**5. Do you ask** your child to help you cook family recipes?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are making family history personal for your child. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman."
—Willa Cather

Gifts of time are priceless

Many families will be shopping for holiday gifts this month. Teach your child that it is giving, not buying, that matters. Encourage him to give gifts of his time and effort. Your child could:

- **Create a 2018 calendar** and decorate each month with his artwork as a gift for a teacher, coach or family member.
- **Write a story** about a favorite time spent together as a gift for a loved one.
- **Record himself** singing children's songs as a gift for a younger sibling.

Learning is the main goal

It's wonderful when kids want to get good grades. But it is important that they focus on the learning process, too. Sure, it feels great to see an A on a report card, but it also feels great to go into a test with confidence, knowing they've studied hard. Even better, it feels great to learn and get smarter! Talk with your child about what makes her school accomplishments worthwhile.

Chores foster pride of accomplishment

Doing chores is a great way for children to learn lessons that benefit them at home and in school. Chores help your child:

- **See the results of his labor.** After he does his laundry, that stack of folded, clean shirts is a visible reminder of his successful effort.
- **Take responsibility.** Your child will be less likely to walk on the rug in muddy cleats if he's the one who vacuums it. And he'll learn that he can contribute to improving life for the whole family.



Source: R. Rende, Ph.D. and J. Prosek, *Raising Can-Do Kids*, TarcherPerigee.

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