

ELEMENTARY PARENT NEWSLETTER

TIPS, IDEAS, AND ADVICE FOR ELEMENTARY PARENTS

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Here are some questions to ask your child this month.

- ▶ What are you looking forward to this year?
- ▶ What's your favorite thing about winter?
- ▶ What do you want to get better at this year?
- ▶ What kinds of things would you like us to do together more?



MONITORING YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS

As your child begins a new semester in school, continue to monitor your child's academic progress, and show interest in his/her schoolwork.

- ▶ Make sure to check all progress reports and report cards, and if your child's grades are online, check them regularly. If you don't see a report card, check in with the school. Don't assume that someone will contact you if there is a problem.
- ▶ If your child appears to be struggling in a particular subject, contact his/her teacher.
- ▶ Never hesitate to contact the school for information or help. If there's ever a situation (e.g., health problem, divorce, death in the family) that might adversely affect your child's attitude or school performance, contact your child's teacher, principal, or school counselor.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Regularly check in with your child to see how things are going in school. Ask your child specific questions about his/her classes and friends. *"What are you learning about in science now?"* *"Who did you play with at recess?"* Make sure your child knows that he/she can talk to you about anything—good or bad.

SETTING GOALS

Setting goals will help your child understand your expectations, and give your child something positive to work toward.

Encourage your child to set goals that are specific, measurable, and realistic.

- ▶ **Not Specific:** I will do better in math.
- ▶ **Specific:** I will get a B in math this semester.
- ▶ **Not Measurable:** I won't be so shy in class.
- ▶ **Measurable:** I will raise my hand 3 times today.
- ▶ **Not Realistic:** I usually get all Cs on my report card, but this semester I will get straight As.
- ▶ **Realistic:** I usually get all Cs on my report card, but this semester I'm going to get two Bs.

Help your child set one academic goal and one personal goal for this term. For example, the academic goal could be about getting a certain grade in a class, or always having all homework done by 7:00.

EVERYDAY ACTIVE LEARNING

Active learning is learning that engages a child in the learning process (e.g., exploring personal interests, problem solving, asking and answering questions).

This month's active learning tip is to involve your child in preparing meals. Cooking gives your child the opportunity to practice the kinds of math he/she has been learning throughout elementary school. It's also a great bonding opportunity.

- ▶ Let your child measure ingredients, set timers, and help you figure out how to double or half a recipe.
- ▶ If your child is older, consider letting him/her take the lead on a few simple recipes.

SHORT AND LONG TERM GOALS

Encourage your child to make both short-term goals (goals that can be achieved in a few hours or days) and long-term goals (goals that will take weeks or months to achieve). Talk about how short-term goals can help you achieve your long-term goals.

BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Whether your child is new to writing or has been working on his/her writing skills for several years, you play a big role in helping your child build his/her skills.

- ▶ Encourage your child to reread his/her writing out loud. This is a great way to catch mistakes.
- ▶ Encourage writing of all kinds. Suggest that your child write a letter to a favorite relative, send a get well card to a sick friend, and make birthday and holiday greeting cards for family members and friends.



ANXIETY IN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Experts say that anxiety is on the rise in children, even in elementary school.

Is your child anxious? Look for these warning signs:

- ▶ Frequent physical ailments, such as stomachaches or headaches, especially if no medical cause is found
- ▶ Clinginess and/or not wanting to be away from you
- ▶ Refusing to speak

What can you do? If you suspect your child might be suffering from anxiety, here's what you can do:

- ▶ Talk about it and provide support. If your child is reluctant to talk about what's bothering him/her, share things that make you stressed out or anxious.
- ▶ Teach calming techniques, such as deep breathing. Encourage your child to breathe in, count to four, exhale, and repeat.
- ▶ Get help. Talk to your child's teacher or school counselor.

Source: Yaffe, D. (2018, May). Outwitting Anxiety. *District Administration*.



BUILDING DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

Children are used to having many of their decisions made for them, but allowing children to begin making more of their own decisions encourages independence and confidence.

Give your child the opportunity to make choices. Let your child choose the bedtime book, which clothes to wear (with your help for younger children), or what game to play.

Talk through options. When your child is making a decision, go through the options together, and discuss the pros and cons of each choice.

For example, if your child wants to wear his/her favorite t-shirt on a cold day, talk about the pros (*"I get to wear favorite shirt"*) and cons (*"I might get cold"*). Then come up with a decision together, such as wearing the t-shirt with a sweatshirt over it. To help your child get in the habit of thinking through decisions, encourage your child to think about the "why" behind his/her decisions.

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Teach responsibility

Involve your child in household chores. Whether it's helping set the table, carrying in the groceries, or watering the plants, helping with household responsibilities (no matter how small) can empower children to be more confident and responsible.

"There are two great things that you can give your children: one is roots, the other is wings."

Hodding Carter

CAREER CORNER

Have your child talk to a friend or family member about his/her career. Help your child come up with a couple of questions ahead of time. *What do you do? What do you like about your career? What don't you like about it?*

BONDING WITH YOUR CHILD: FUN THINGS TO SHARE AND DO

A strong parental bond is key to student success!

Fun facts to share with your child

- ▶ Did you know that there are 206 bones in the human body?
- ▶ Did you know that no word rhymes with month, orange or purple?

Stories to share with your child

- ▶ Talk to your child about your hopes and goals for the new year, and about what you need to do to achieve your goals.

CHARACTER MATTERS: RESPONSIBILITY

Help your child understand that responsibility is doing what you say you're going to do—even when it's difficult. Ask your child if he/she knows why it's important to be responsible.

Give your child opportunities to act responsibly. Give him/her age-appropriate chores to do, rules to follow, and tasks to complete. Discuss the importance of being responsible and whenever possible, let your child know how much you appreciate being able to count on him/her.

Q&A: SAFETY DRILLS

Q: My daughter has mentioned having lockdowns at school. I've tried asking her about them, but she doesn't really like talking about it. What exactly are lockdowns, and how should I talk to my daughter about them?

A: Lockdown drills help students practice what to do in case there is a dangerous situation at school. Whenever your school has a safety drill, ask your child to tell you about the procedures, and to describe what happened. This will give you an opportunity to help him/her put the drill in perspective.

Safety drills are designed to help keep students safe, but unfortunately, they can cause anxiety in some students. Ask your child if she finds safety drills upsetting in any way. If these drills seem to be affecting your daughter, reassure her that they are completely precautionary.

If your child seems to be overly anxious or concerned about his/her safety, listen, be supportive, and talk to your child's teacher, counselor, principal, or physician.

