ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

January 2019

Trigg County Primary School
Lindsey Kinslow, Principal

Bring out the leader inside your elementary schooler



Children who are leaders at school develop important skills, such as problem-solving, communication and responsibility. These students are often self-confident, creative, helpful and friendly. That makes their classmates want to work with them.

All children have the ability to become leaders. To nurture your child's leadership skills:

- **Point out leaders of all kinds.** Talk about successful group efforts, from winning football seasons to community food drives. Remind your child that someone led those groups. Discuss what makes a good leader.
- **Teach her to look at things** from other people's points of view. Good leaders aren't bossy or mean. They make people want to work together.
- **Offer her leadership opportunities.** Athletic teams, clubs, Scouts and many other activities can provide chances for your child to lead. At home, let your child lead a family meeting or manage a family project.
- **Don't push.** Too much pressure can backfire. If your child seems stressed or unhappy, it's time to lighten up.
- **Set an example.** When you take a leadership role, talk to your child about what you are doing and why.

Source: "Leadership and children," Better Kid Care, PennState Extension, niswc.com/lead.

Be a reading role model for your child

The best way to show your child that reading matters to you is to let him see you reading every day. Be sure to:

- **Make it clear** that you *choose* to read. Pick up books, newspapers and magazines whenever you get the chance.
- **Explain the purpose.** Are you reading to find out information? To double-check something? To learn how to do something? Or just for pure enjoyment?
- **Look up words** you are unsure of in the dictionary. Ask your child if he knows the meanings.
- **Share.** When you come across something that would interest your child, read a small part of it aloud to him. He may be motivated to continue reading the rest to himself.
- **Join him when he reads.** Grab something you'd like to read and enjoy the time together. Look for ways to make it fun—turn off the lights and have everyone read by flashlight, for example.

Improve conversations with observations

Greeting your child in the afternoon with questions about school can shut down the conversation fast. Instead, take time to look at the schoolwork she brings home. Offer several observations about what you see—what you remember liking about the topic, what it reminds you of, etc. Only then, ask, "What did you learn about this today?"

To see symmetry, fold here

Fold a picture of a butterfly in half, and the two sides match up. That means the butterfly is *symmetrical*. The fold line is the *line of symmetry*. Lines of symmetry can be vertical, horizontal—even diagonal.



Go on a symmetry hunt with your child. When he finds an item he thinks is symmetrical, have him:

1. **Take** or draw a picture of it.
2. **Predict** where the line of symmetry will be. (There may be more than one!)
3. **Fold** his picture along the line. If the sides match, he's right!

Offer tips, not answers

Some kids arrive at a hard question in their homework and immediately look to parents for help. Instead of providing answers, help your child learn how to find them herself:

1. **Have her skip** the difficult question and answer all the others that she can. Then she should think again about the one she skipped. It may be clearer now.
2. **Ask,** "Where could you find out about that? Was there a class handout?" Show her how to use resources like the encyclopedia, too.



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Q&A Is it a good idea to offer money for good grades?

Q: My son gets average grades, but I know he could do better. Should I pay him for top grades?



A: It's natural to want your child to live up to his potential. While researchers have experimented with paying students for performance, the results don't show much long-term benefit. And there are some serious drawbacks to this kind of incentive.

Paying for grades:

- **Deprives your child** of the satisfaction of learning for its own sake. Mastering new skills and learning new things gives kids confidence in themselves and their abilities as students. When you pay your child for grades, you run the risk of decreasing his self-confidence.
- **Ignores effort.** If your child is giving his best effort, neither of you should worry if he earns a B instead of an A. And if he's trying hard and earns a low grade, you know that it's time to consult the teacher about how to help your child.
- **Reduces internal motivation.** A love of learning will always motivate your child. But paying him shifts his focus to the money. And he's more likely to put his hand out every time he's asked to do something.

Instead of offering cash, help your child build his study skills and focus on what he is learning. Encourage him to recognize and be proud of his new abilities. And praise him for working hard and doing his best.

Parent Quiz Are you encouraging resilience?

Failure is scary for kids—and parents. But learning how to bounce back from a failure is a valuable lesson. Are you teaching your child that failure isn't the end of the world? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

___**1. Do you allow** your child to solve problems on her own, even if she may fail?

___**2. Do you encourage** her to think about what she can do differently next time, when things don't go right?

___**3. Do you admit** your own failures, and talk about how to fix them?

___**4. Do you help** your child put setbacks into perspective? "You didn't ace your test, but you earned a higher grade than last time!"

___**5. Do you teach** her to win graciously and lose cheerfully?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are showing your child how to rebound from failure. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts."
—Eleanor Roosevelt

The new year is a new chance to achieve goals

If your child set some goals in September, but didn't really follow through, January is the perfect time to start again. To make this the year your child learns how to achieve his goals, encourage him to:

1. **State** his goal. Have your child write it down and post it where he will see it.
2. **Plan** how to meet the goal. What specific steps will he take?
3. **Talk** about the goal with others. This builds commitment. Have your child tell the teacher his goal.
4. **Carry out** his plan, one step at a time. If problems arise, your child can discuss possible solutions with you.

Review the rules together

Sometimes children get in trouble at school because they don't remember the rules. Review the school rules with your child. Talk about how they are needed to keep the school a safe, peaceful and orderly place where kids can learn. Let your child know that you expect her to follow the rules.

Stay flexible when your child solves problems



When you find yourself stuck in traffic, you can sometimes choose another route. Getting to your destination matters more than which road you take.

When your child has a problem to solve, instead of giving him a road map (first do this, then do that), remind him of his destination: "You need to find a way to finish your report even though your classmate has the book you need." He may not select the solution you would. But if he arrives at his destination honestly, let the solution stand.

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