

Elementary School Parents[®]

Danville School
Title One

make the difference!



Help your child learn from mistakes this school year

It's the beginning of a new school year and students have a fresh start. But it won't be long before they make a mistake on a homework assignment or test—and that's OK.

What matters is how children and parents respond to those mistakes. Instead of glossing over them, parents should help children learn from them. Research shows that when parents and teachers encourage students to learn from their errors, those children do better in school.

One reason may be that fixing mistakes shows kids they can improve—that “smarts” aren't something they either have or they don't. Intelligence can be increased. And when students understand their errors and don't repeat them, they become more optimistic about their own brainpower.

When reviewing your child's work this school year, first point out what

he did well. Then, to help him learn from his mistakes:

- **Point them out.** Rather than saying, “Don't worry—you'll do better on the next math test,” ask if he understands why his answers were wrong. If so, have him work the problems again. If he's not sure, offer suggestions or encourage him to ask his teacher for help.
- **Praise progress.** Did he miss only two problems on his latest math test? After reviewing his mistakes, remind him that he's improving. Show him how paying attention to past mistakes—and correcting them—made a difference. The more he sees this, the more he will believe in his ability to improve.

Source: H.S. Schroder and others, “Neural evidence for enhanced attention to mistakes among school-aged children with a growth mindset,” *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, Elsevier B.V.

Don't let your child miss out on learning!



This September, help your child get into the habit of going to school on time every day.

Studies show that missing school regularly—especially in the early grades—can hurt both the students who miss class *and* their classmates.

When students miss school, they miss out on learning. When they return, they have to work hard to catch up. And since most subject matter builds on previous lessons, it doesn't take long for these students to fall behind.

As a result, students who frequently miss school have lower levels of achievement throughout their school careers. Research shows that, by sixth grade, students who miss an average of just one day a week are more likely to drop out of high school.

Their classmates are negatively affected, too. When teachers have to repeat material or pay extra attention to students who have been absent, everyone suffers.

Source: K. Nauer and others, “Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families,” Center for New York City Affairs.

Talk to your child about showing respect for teachers, classmates



Respectful behavior is just as important at school as it is at home. When students have respect for teachers and classmates,

they help create the positive academic environment all children need to be successful.

Encourage your child to:

- **Address the teacher** by name. Simply saying “Good morning, Mrs. Jones” is an easy way to show respect.
- **Be courteous.** She should say *please* and *thank you* to her teacher and her classmates.
- **Raise her hand.** When she waits to be called on, she demonstrates self-control and respect for others.
- **Do what’s expected.** Everyone in school has a job to do. If the teacher

doesn’t plan any lessons, no one can learn anything. If students don’t do their jobs—completing homework, listening to the teacher—it makes it more difficult to learn.

- **Listen to the teacher’s comments.** Teachers want students to learn and to succeed. That means they have to point out mistakes. Your child will do much better in school if she can recognize and accept constructive feedback.

“Respect for ourselves guides our morals; respect for others guides our manners.”

—Laurence Sterne

Get your family back into the school groove with these tips



A new school year brings new routines, schedules and priorities. Here are some practical ideas to help you and your family

gear up for a year of learning:

- **Make a plan** for after-school activities. Schedule adequate time for homework, play, sports, clubs and family time.
- **Scale back screen time.** Set a weekly limit for time spent watching television, playing video games and surfing the internet. Maintain a firm rule that homework and chores come first.
- **Establish family reading time.**
- **Start a change jar** so you’ll have spare lunch money on hand.
- **Reestablish bedtimes** for school nights.
- **Keep a family calendar.** Mark each family member’s activities in a different color.
- **Collect important phone numbers,** such as those for the school office, after-school program and a neighbor. Update work, medical and other emergency contact numbers.
- **Make a backup plan.** Find another parent who will exchange school drop-off or pickup favors—in case you get sick or delayed by work or traffic.
- **Set up a file for school papers.** Place all school notices in it so you don’t misplace them.
- **Get ready the night before school.** Encourage your child to set out his clothes, pack a lunch and put his school bag by the door.

Are you helping your child have healthy habits?



Healthy habits make it easier for children to concentrate and learn both in school and at home. Answer *yes* or *no*

to the questions below to see if you are promoting wellness for your child:

- ___ **1. Do you enforce** a bedtime? Doctors say that elementary school kids need at least nine hours of sleep each night to function at their best.
- ___ **2. Do you make sure** your child eats breakfast every morning? Kids’ brains need fuel to learn.
- ___ **3. Do you stock** your kitchen with nutritious snacks for your child to eat after school?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your child to get moving every day? Studies show that exercise improves kids’ memory and focus.
- ___ **5. Do you remind** your child to wash his hands frequently? Hand washing kills germs and reduces absences due to illness.

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are helping your child stay on track for health right through the school year. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Focus on kindness and respect to promote academic success



According to a recent study, kids whose parents value kindness over achievement tend to do better in school than kids from families where academic success matters above all else.

In fact, putting pressure on your child to score high marks can have the opposite effect. It can cause his grades and self-esteem to suffer, and lead to depression and anxiety. But when parents promote kindness and respect, students tend to perform better in class. This may be because they feel more secure and know their parents' approval doesn't hinge on their getting good grades.

To show your child how much you value respect and kindness:

- **Demonstrate courtesy.** When talking to others—from neighbors to the

cashier at the grocery store—let your child see you being polite. Say *please* and *thank you*. Be respectful. These may seem like small things, but they make a big impression.

- **Praise positive behavior.** When you notice your child doing something nice or loving, let him know! There's no need to go overboard, though. A simple pat on the back will remind him how much you value kindness.
- **Promote healthy relationships.** Encourage your child to connect with his teachers and classmates. The more support he gets from those around him, the less he'll depend on things like grades and awards to help him feel good about himself.

Source: L. Ciciolla and others, "When Mothers and Fathers Are Seen as Disproportionately Valuing Achievements," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Springer US.

Communication is the key to a strong parent-teacher team



Research shows that parent involvement in education has a positive effect on student success at school. When teachers and parents work together, the results can be powerful. To foster effective two-way communication:

- **Set the tone.** It's natural to have questions when the school year begins. Ask questions respectfully. Show support for your child and the class, and encourage the teacher to keep you informed.
- **Be positive.** When you talk with the teacher, enjoy hearing about your child's strengths. But also prepare to hear about her weaknesses. Remember to remain calm. You and the teacher both want your child to

do well. Addressing struggles is the only way to find solutions.

- **Role-play.** Some parents are nervous about talking with the teacher. If this describes you, consider practicing with a friend. If you aren't comfortable speaking English, bring an interpreter with you. Still worried? Using email may put you at ease.
- **Choose words carefully.** It's more effective to make polite requests instead of demands. A helpful tip is to use the word *we* instead of *you*. ("How can we stay in touch to help Jordan?" is less aggressive than "You should tell me if Jordan is falling behind.") Remember: The teacher isn't your opponent; she's your teammate.

Q: My daughter is in fifth grade. This year, her three best friends have another teacher. She says she has no friends in her class and she hates school. Should I ask if she can be moved to the other class?

Questions & Answers

A: Kids learn lots of lessons in school. One lesson your daughter will learn this year is that she won't always get to choose the people she works with.

She may feel like it is the end of the world, but you can help ease her mind if you:

- **Talk about your own life.** Have you ever had to work with people you didn't know? Share that story with your daughter. Let her know that learning to make new friends is also a skill she'll need when she goes to middle school.
- **Encourage her to get to know the students in her class.** Together, practice conversation starters that will help her find kids who share her hobbies and interests. For example, "Hi, I'm Jane. I like your horse T-shirt. Do you like horses? I love them." Or there might be someone in the class who once played on a soccer team with her. When she meets someone she likes, help them make plans to get together outside of school.
- **Talk with the teacher** and let her know about your child's situation. Does she have suggestions for helping your daughter connect with some of the students in the class?

Finally, remind your daughter of the classic song: "Make new friends, but keep the old." She can always be friends with the girls in the other class. But this year, she has an opportunity to make some new friends, too.

It Matters: Responsibility

Overprotective parents hinder responsibility



When children are born, it's the job of parents to protect them in every way they can. Once they reach

elementary school, however, they become more capable and are able to do lots of things for themselves.

Unfortunately, many parents still try to protect their children from *everything*. And all of that well-intended "protection" can smother their children's budding independence.

Overprotective parenting makes it difficult for children to learn essential skills for success in school and life—such as communication, negotiation, perseverance, responsibility and decision making.

To avoid the many pitfalls of overprotective parenting:

- **Don't do everything** for your child. Let him do things for himself. Will he make mistakes? Probably. But he will learn from those mistakes.
- **Don't drop everything** to rescue your child when he forgets things. If he leaves his homework or gym shoes at home, don't rush them up to the school. Instead, let him face the consequences.
- **Don't try to negotiate** a better grade for your child. If you or your child are confused about a grade he receives, let your child talk to the teacher about it first.
- **Don't call the parent** of a child your child is complaining about in school. Give your child a chance to work it out. However, if it is a serious problem, contact the school immediately.

Create a homework routine at the beginning of the year

You want to help your child take responsibility for completing her homework—and creating a homework routine at the start of the school year can do just that.

To establish an effective routine, make sure your child has:

- **A well-lit study area.** This can be at a desk or tabletop. If it's at the kitchen table, make the kitchen off limits to others during study time. Turn off the television, too.
- **A set study time.** When does your child prefer to do homework? Right after school, leaving the evening for free time? Or does she prefer to blow off some steam right after school and begin homework after dinner? Experiment, then schedule the time that works best for her.
- **A homework survival kit.** Include all of the supplies she might need



to complete her homework—pencils, pens, paper, sharpener, erasers, crayons, markers, glue stick, scissors, ruler, etc.

- **Standby support.** Encourage her to get phone numbers of classmates she can call when she has homework questions.

A checklist of responsibilities promotes independence



Whether it's keeping track of textbooks or remembering to turn in homework, responsible behavior is a must for school success. And the best way to *teach* your child responsibility is to *give* her responsibilities.

The new school year is the perfect time to sit down with your child and decide on a few tasks she's ready to handle on her own. Then make a checklist of everything you expect her to do. Agree on small rewards for a job well done, and consequences for times your child shirks responsibility.

Here is a starter checklist of responsibilities you can adapt:

- Going to bed on time.
- Getting up on time.
- Fixing breakfast.
- Selecting an outfit.
- Packing lunch.
- Completing homework.
- Returning signed forms.
- Maintaining grades.
- Getting along with siblings.
- Keeping room clean.
- Completing assigned chores.
- Reading at least 15 minutes a day.
- Taking care of personal hygiene.
- Feeding/caring for pets.