

Elementary School Parents[®] make the difference!

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Timberlane Regional School District



Help your child reflect on the year and celebrate success

As the school year winds down, it's a great time to help your child look back, look forward, give thanks and celebrate. Here's how:

- **Talk to your child's teacher.** Ask about your child's strengths and weaknesses. How has she improved? Where does she need more work? Ask what you can do to help your child over the summer.
- **Talk to your child** about the school year. Ask what she thinks went well. Talk about what challenged her most. Help her figure out what changes she should make for the upcoming school year.
- **Review your child's successes.** Look over schoolwork you've saved during the year. Point out how much your child has learned—how many

new words, for example. Or how she can add and divide. Or how her writing has improved.

- **Help your child set learning goals** for the summer. Should she spend more time reading? Should she practice math concepts? Guide her, based on the suggestions from her teacher.
- **Encourage your child to thank** those who have made the year a good one—the teacher, bus driver, librarian, food service worker, etc. This will help her appreciate how many people have helped her.
- **Celebrate with a special activity.** It doesn't have to be elaborate or cost anything. Just make plans to enjoy some one-on-one time with your child.

Three reasons attendance is *still* important!



Summer vacation is on the horizon—but it's not here yet. Here are three reasons to make

sure your child comes to school on time every day:

1. **Learning hasn't stopped.** Teachers are still planning lessons and teaching new content. If your child isn't in school, he won't learn this information. Studies show that students who miss just 10% of the school year in the early grades are still behind their peers when they reach high school.
2. **Teachers often plan group projects** for the end of the year. These projects help your child learn collaboration, problem solving and responsibility. These are skills he'll need throughout his school career and in the workplace.
3. **Regular attendance** teaches kids to be dependable—which is an important quality for everyone to develop.

Source: E. García and E. Weiss, "Student absenteeism: Who misses school and how missing school matters for performance," Economic Policy Institute, nswc.com/elem_absenteeism.

Remember the 85-15 rule when it comes to discipline



Too often, discipline gets a bad rap. Many parents think it means punishing their children when they misbehave, which isn't very enjoyable for children or parents.

However, the word *discipline* actually comes from the Latin word *disciplina*, which means "teaching." So try thinking about discipline in a different way. Think of discipline as a way to teach your child the skills she needs to succeed in life.

Most of your discipline—roughly 85 percent—should focus on encouraging the behavior you *want* to see in your child. You can do this by being a good role model. For example, if you want your child to be kind, be kind to others. If you want her to be responsible, keep your own commitments.

You can also point out others who display the behaviors you'd like to encourage. And when you see your child doing the right thing, notice and compliment her.

That leaves just 15 percent of the time to focus on correcting her negative behavior. While you will still have to set rules and enforce consequences, you'll get to spend most of your time focusing on the positive.

"Every word, facial expression, gesture, or action on the part of a parent gives the child some message about self-worth."

—Virginia Satir

When parents talk less, their children actually listen more!



When your child was younger, he needed to hear you talk a lot. It's how he learned the language that describes the world around him.

Now that your child is older, he needs a lot less repetitive narration. Yet many parents of elementary schoolers find themselves talking on and on—even while their children are listening less and less.

Of course you still want to talk with your child about his day. You want to have conversations about what he did in school and what he's thinking about. But if you're like most parents, you'd like to spend less time talking about whether it's time to feed the pets or why his clothes are still scattered all over his bedroom floor.

Experts have identified three strategies to help parents effectively communicate with children:

- 1. Make infrequent requests.** As much as possible, help your child develop a routine for things like homework and daily chores. Routines can reduce the need for nagging.
- 2. Keep the volume down.** Your child doesn't hear you any more clearly if you yell. As a matter of fact, he will probably just tune you out.
- 3. Keep it short.** When you do have to give your child directions, limit the number of words you use. So instead of saying, "Jack, I need you to get to the car. Don't forget your backpack. Do you have your homework?" try saying, "Homework and backpack in the car, please."

Are you helping your child beat test anxiety?



Some kids get butterflies in their stomachs before tests. But others go into full-blown panic. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions

below to see if you are helping your child overcome test anxiety:

- 1. Do you help** your child create a study plan to prepare for the test?
- 2. Have you talked** with your child about *your* expectations? Remind him that your love for him does not depend on a test score.
- 3. Have you shared** calming techniques with your child? Deep breathing, counting backwards from 100—find things that work for him.
- 4. Do you encourage** your child to talk to his teacher? If he is especially nervous, his teacher may be able to reassure him that he is, indeed, well-prepared.
- 5. Do you encourage** positive self-talk? When your child gets stuck during a test, he can say, "I know this. The answer will come to me."

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are reducing sources of test anxiety. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Schedule some educational field trips for your family



“I’m bored!” Do you dread hearing this phrase over the summer? Then start planning now! In addition to collecting

supplies, such as books, recipes and games, schedule a few field trips. Local educational destinations are often free and fun to visit!

Consider going to:

- **Museums.** Call or go online to check upcoming exhibits. Which would your child like to see most? Add them to your summer calendar.
- **An arboretum.** Kids love walking through gardens, admiring flowers and learning about habitats. Bring a camera or sketchbook so your child can capture the plants and animals.

- **The zoo.** This trip is almost always a hit with children. Before leaving, you and your child can read about the animals you’ll see. Talk about their natural habitat and what they like to eat.
- **A fire station.** Call ahead to see if a summer open house is planned. If not, see if you could schedule a visit.
- **An airport.** Simply driving by the airport is interesting. Can your child spot the control tower? What about the planes taking off and landing?
- **Parks.** Find a guide to local parks and keep it handy. Consider visiting hiking trails, historic battlefields and more. Add a nature guide and maybe even some binoculars, and you’re ready for an adventure!

Summer volunteer work can build character and leadership



The world’s problems can seem overwhelming. It’s important for kids to learn that every person can make a difference,

and that when people work together, the results are amazing!

Summer volunteering is a great way to teach this lesson to your child—all while building his confidence, compassion and leadership skills.

To get started, talk with your child about:

- **Interests.** What subjects interest him most? How do they relate to community needs? If he loves animals, he could help an animal rescue group. If he’s interested in business, perhaps he could help with a fundraiser. Your child’s enthusiasm is a great motivator.
- **Skills.** Your child’s abilities and strengths can be gifts to others. He might hold a bake sale or read to younger children. Sometimes it’s fun to learn new skills, too, such as how to help with landscaping or home repairs.
- **Needs.** Perhaps your child has noticed a park that needs sprucing up. Or maybe a homeless shelter needs food. Go online with your child and search for upcoming community service events in your area. You could even ask your child’s teacher if the school needs help over the summer.
- **Schedules.** Volunteering takes time, and families are busy! Set realistic goals that leave room for other priorities. Depending on your family’s commitments, you and your child might volunteer just a few hours here and there—or decide to take on one large, exciting project!

Q: My daughter is usually very well behaved. But lately, she has been acting out at home and at school. She’s heading to middle school next year and I know she’s anxious about that. Could this be why she’s causing so much trouble? I’m at a loss about what to do.

Questions & Answers

A: When children are anxious, they tend to act out with the people they feel the closest to—usually parents and teachers. Transitions can be difficult and the move to middle school can seem scary.

Your daughter may have a lot of concerns: Will she still see her friends? Will she be able to handle the schoolwork?

As you suspect, these fears may be causing her misbehavior. Letting her get them out in the open will be a first step in dealing with them.

Here’s how to help:

- **Talk with your daughter.** See if you can get her to express her fears out loud. A low-key approach usually works best. To open up a conversation, you might say, “I bet you’re wondering about who will be in your classes next year.”
- **Address her concerns.** Once your child begins to talk about her worries, work with her teacher to address them. Perhaps the teacher can lead a few class discussions about life in middle school. Or, if your daughter knows someone who is already at the school, suggest that she ask the person about what it’s really like.
- **Remind your child** that she still needs to follow the rules at home and at school.

It Matters: Summer Learning

Summer health leads to school readiness



How your child spends her summer will affect her health—and how she does in school next year. That's why it's important

to emphasize healthy habits during the summer months.

As a family, make an effort to:

- **Be active.** Most children should exercise for at least one hour a day. Instead, many watch TV and play video games for hours on end. Make a list of fun physical activities you can do together, such as taking a walk, gardening, visiting a local park and kicking a soccer ball around. Ask your child, "Which would you like to do?"
- **Eat well.** Involve your child in making healthy meals. You might borrow a cookbook from the library or search for recipes online. Try some new dishes with fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. Avoid potentially harmful or unnecessary ingredients, including excess sugar.
- **Stay hydrated.** This is especially important during activities in hot climates. Remember that every drink doesn't need to be sweetened or flavored. Water is refreshing—and free! If you serve juice, consider diluting it with water. The earlier you start doing this, the less your child will notice. It's also important to take your child for regular medical checkups. Talk to the pediatrician about vaccines, summer safety, vision, hearing, allergies and other critical topics. Also, remember to keep your child's medical records up to date.

Four ways to motivate your child to read over the summer

Studies show that when kids don't keep up with reading over the summer, they can lose up to three months of learning—and feel the effects for a long time! Fortunately, this doesn't have to happen.

To encourage summer reading:

1. **Join a reading program.** Ask the librarian at your local library for a list of programs your child can attend.
2. **Be creative.** Remember that all kinds of reading materials can help your child build and maintain skills—craft magazines, comic books and even cookbooks.
3. **Focus on your child's interests.** Ask him if there is something he would like to learn more about during the school break? Maybe he wants to identify stars and constellations at night or learn how to camp. Help him find books about subjects he loves.



4. **Plan a book swap.** Have your child invite friends to participate in a book exchange event. If a child donates two books he has read, he can exchange them for two books he hasn't read.

Replace recreational screen time with these fun activities



The relaxed days of summer can often lead to lazy hours in front of electronic devices.

But experts say it's important to limit recreational screen time—even in the summer. For most families, that's easier said than done!

Try replacing screen time with:

- **Acting.** Instead of watching a show, encourage your child to create one! She can choose a story line and act it out with friends or stuffed animals.
- **Classic games.** Fill a box with traditional summer toys, such as sidewalk chalk, balls, bubble solution and water sprayers. When the weather is nice, your child can take the box outside for hours of fun.
- **Scavenger hunts.** Give educational instructions, such as, "Let's find an oak tree leaf." "Pick three daisies." Or, "Find three things that are round." Remember, you can have a scavenger hunt anywhere, even in a store or a vacation spot.