

# Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

March 2006

## DISCIPLINE

### React calmly when your child's school calls home

At some point during your child's school career, you may get a phone call about misbehavior. If that happens, how will you respond?

**Barbara Gaulke**, a National Distinguished Principal from Wisconsin, says parents can make things better ... or worse. She suggests that they:

- **Keep an open mind.** Remember that you probably don't know all the facts.
- **Offer to come to school.** A face-to-face meeting with school staff provides a good opportunity for problem solving. A team approach can make a big difference.
- **Respect the school's rules.** Explain that some things might be okay at home, but not at school.
- **Avoid making excuses.** Children need to see that their actions lead to consequences—consequences that may be uncomfortable. They learn from this experience.
- **Don't overreact.** The trouble may be a one-time event. Take it seriously, but remind your child how much you love him.



## BUILDING MATH SKILLS

### Teach multiplication in several ways

Even in these days of computers and calculators, students still need to know how to multiply seven times eight.

When reviewing multiplication tables, remember to help your child:

- **Practice.** Times tables are something every child needs to know automatically.
- **Start small.** Your child may be overwhelmed by trying to learn everything from  $1 \times 1$  to  $12 \times 12$ .
- **Start with a few facts and then build from there.**
- **Begin with familiar ideas.** Start by reviewing equations your child knows. This will improve her confidence and long-term memory.
- **Play "beat the clock."** Give your child 10 problems to solve. Time her to see how quickly she can get them right. Then see if she can beat her record.

Source: Susan Jones, "Learning the Times Tables: Guidelines and Ideas for Practice," [www.resourceroom.net/math/jones\\_tables2.asp](http://www.resourceroom.net/math/jones_tables2.asp).

## AFTER SCHOOL

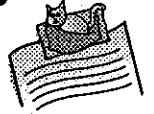
### Highlight success with homemade magnets

You love to hang your child's schoolwork on the fridge.

Here's a way to remind her:

Ask her to make a refrigerator magnet. Find magnetic tape at a craft store and let her attach a small picture or other creation. Use it to display her papers with pride.

Source: Jean Nayar, "Fridge Fashions," Child.com, [www.child.com/kids/toys\\_projects/fridge.jsp?page=1](http://www.child.com/kids/toys_projects/fridge.jsp?page=1).



## MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

### Low grades don't always equal low motivation

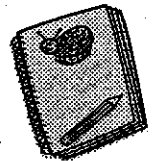
Have your child's grades dropped? Don't assume it's his "fault." There are countless reasons for low grades. Social concerns. Learning difficulties. Not understanding a basic concept. Work with the school and your child to identify and resolve problems.

## REINFORCING LEARNING

### Use a 'bug hunt' to teach your child science skills

Bug hunting builds scientific skills (such as inquiry and observation) and creative skills (such as writing and drawing). You and your child can:

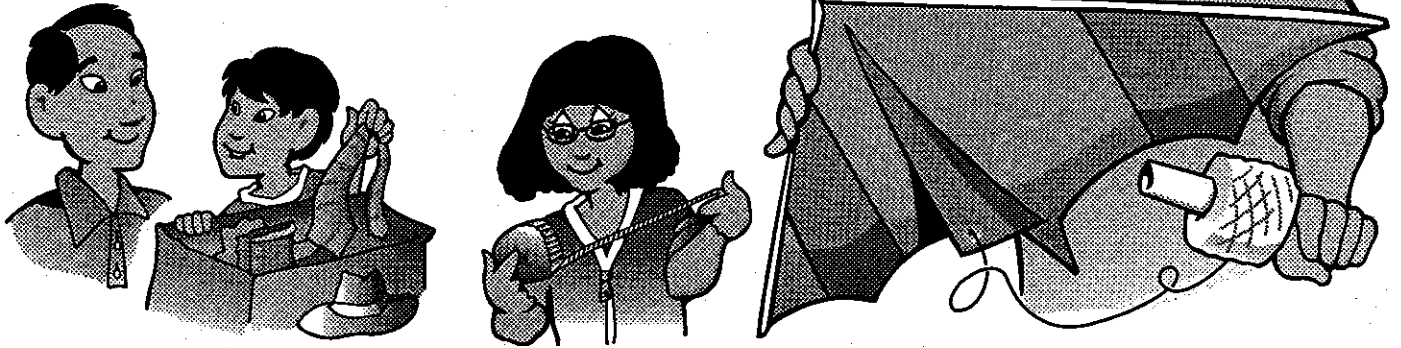
- **Look for bugs.** Check different locations at various times of day.
- **Inspect the bug.** Use a magnifying glass to get an up-close look. What does your child notice?
- **Keep a "Bug Journal."** Write down when and where the bug was found. What was it doing? Make a sketch.
- **Do research.** Answer questions at the library or online.



Source: "Bug Hunting for Kids," [http://allsands.com/Kids/Education/bugshuntingkid\\_adc\\_gn.htm](http://allsands.com/Kids/Education/bugshuntingkid_adc_gn.htm).

# Day *by* Day

*Ideas parents can use to help children do better in school.*



THE  
**PARENT**  
INSTITUTE

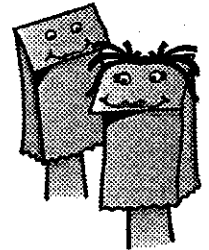
MARCH • APRIL • MAY • 2006

## March 2006

- 1. If your child had a magic wand, what would he change about the world?
- 2. Have everyone write down two positive things about each member of the family. Read your lists aloud at dinner.
- 3. Let your child cut off the top of a carrot and put it in a shallow saucer of water. Watch the top sprout.
- 4. At bedtime, ask your child to name the hardest and best parts of her day.
- 5. Pay your child a compliment today.
- 6. Review spelling words with your child tonight.
- 7. Ask your child to put on a talent show with his friends.
- 8. Dedicate a day to helping the environment.
- 9. Start a family library. Let your child choose her own shelf for books.
- 10. Ask your child to put dry beans between damp paper towels. Keep moist. In a few days, check to see if they've sprouted.
- 11. Start a change collection in a jar. Brainstorm together about how to use the money when the jar is full.
- 12. Ask your child to figure out how many miles your car goes on one gallon of gas.
- 13. Write a nice note and tuck it into your child's backpack.
- 14. Make up a short question. Ask your child to answer with a sentence that rhymes.
- 15. Ask your child to write down the items you need before you go to the grocery store.
- 16. Take your child to the library today.
- 17. Watch a TV show with your child. Keep track of how much time the commercials take up.
- 18. Ask your child to draw a picture about his day.
- 19. Go on a walk with your child.
- 20. Take your child to your local fire station for a tour.

## Day-by-Day: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 21. Talk about the Golden Rule with your child.
- 22. Use math to give your child instructions. For example, ask your child to pick up  $3 + 2 + 1$  toys.
- 23. Have each member of your family make a "me" paper bag puppet. Let the puppets discuss good things about family members.
- 24. Have your child teach you something she's learning.
- 25. Have your child write directions for making his favorite sandwich. Then follow them together.
- 26. Let your child read you the directions for a recipe.
- 27. Count the days until a special event. Link that number of paper strips to make a chain. Remove one link each day to count down to the event.
- 28. Practice counting to 10 in another language with your child.
- 29. Talk about tricky pairs of letters. Help your child distinguish between *w* and *m*, *n* and *u*, *b* and *d*, *i* and *l*.
- 30. Tie a string between two chairs. Use a balloon and play indoor volleyball with your child.
- 31. Show your child which way is north, south, east and west.



**Helping Children Learn**<sup>®</sup>  
Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Elementary Edition