

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School
Paulding County Schools



April 2022

Provide practice to help your child master math fundamentals

As students progress through the grades, the math they learn builds on the math that came before. That's why mastering basic math skills in elementary school is so important.

Regular practice is essential. It reinforces your child's knowledge and establishes positive math habits that will help her learn more.

To help your child build a solid math foundation:



- **Review math facts often.** Help your child make a set of flash cards with the facts she needs to know (6×7 , $12 - 5$ etc.). Pull them out frequently for short practice sessions. She has mastered a fact when she can give the correct answer in less than three seconds.
- **Show her how to find answers,** rather than just giving them to her. For example, if she doesn't know what 3×5 equals, she can draw three parallel horizontal lines, and cross them with five vertical lines. Then she can count the intersections to get the answer.
- **Emphasize neatness.** Messy writing is the cause of many math errors. Using graph paper can help your child line numbers up neatly.
- **Encourage her to do a little extra.** If the teacher assigns ten problems, tackling 12 will give her more practice.
- **Have fun with "mental math."** See if your child can figure out a problem without writing anything down. Practice mental estimating, too.



Boost your child's motivation to learn

Motivation to learn is like the engine in a car. Without it, your child won't get very far. To fuel your elementary schooler's motivation:

- **Let him see** that you always want to learn. Look up answers to questions. Try new things. Show curiosity.
- **Discuss interesting things** you learn with him. Talk about exciting new ideas or scientific discoveries.
- **Show interest** in his school-work. Ask questions to learn and share—not just to quiz him.
- **Demonstrate a positive** attitude about challenges. Help your child see that problems can be solved. If he is struggling in school, ask the teacher what you and your child can do at home to improve things.
- **Tell him that you know** he has the ability to learn. Your confidence in him can help him have more confidence in himself.

Stop food-allergy bullying

In a recent survey of children with food allergies, 31 percent reported being teased or bullied about their allergies by peers. But only 12 percent of their parents said they knew about the bullying. If your child has a food allergy, ask about her experiences. Alert the school to bullying so it can be stopped.

Source: F. Cooke and others, "Food Allergy-Related Bullying Among Children and Adolescents," *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, Society of Pediatric Psychology.

Build research skills with an online scavenger hunt

For fun improving research skills, give your child a list of questions that have only one correct answer. For example:

How many people have walked on the moon?

What is the current temperature in the capital of Iowa? See how quickly he can find the answers online (without asking Siri or Alexa).

Show him how he can use multiple key words to make his searches more effective.



Foster wise decision-making

Giving your child opportunities to make decisions and helping her think them through is the best way to ensure that she will make wise choices when it counts. When offering choices:

- **Set boundaries.** All of the options you offer should be acceptable.
- **Discuss possible outcomes.** Talk about what could happen as a result of each of your child's options.
- **Help your child think** about what she's learned from past decisions.
- **Gradually increase** the number of decisions you let your child make.





How can I make the move up to middle school easier?

Q: My fifth grader is getting anxious about going to middle school next year. Most of his friends will be going to another school. What can I do in the coming months to help?

A: The move to middle school involves lots of change—from one teacher to many, from being in the highest grade in the school to the lowest, and sometimes, from having an established group of friends to not knowing many people. It's not surprising your child is nervous!



To build his confidence in his ability to navigate the changes:

- **Make your child feel competent.** Discuss the things that make him a good friend. Help him practice his organizational skills. If the middle school has lockers, get him a combination lock and let him practice unlocking and locking it.
- **Ask if you and your child can tour** the school this spring while classes are in session. Just walking around will give him a better idea of what to expect. Pick up a map of the hallways if one is available.
- **Point out that everyone** in his grade will be starting fresh and looking for new friends. And he'll still have chances to see old friends, too.
- **Find out about school activities** that start in the summer, such as orientation days or sports or band practice. If your child participates, he can make some new friends before the school year starts.



Are you helping your child read fluently?

Students who read aloud with *fluency* are more likely to have a strong understanding of the text. Fluent reading is smooth, accurate and expressive. Are you helping your child develop reading fluency? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you make** time for your child to read to you, on top of the time you read to her?
2. **Do you allow** your child to choose what to read aloud, even if she's read it before?
3. **Do you wait** until your child has finished reading to correct misread words, rather than interrupting?
4. **Do you tell** your child how to pronounce a word if she asks, then encourage her to keep reading?

5. **Do you talk** with your child about the book when she has finished reading?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are fostering fluency. For each no, try that idea.

"Fluency is a wonderful bridge to comprehension and to a life-long love of reading."

—Maryanne Wolf

Offer encouragement that supports self-reliance

You want your child to recognize and feel good about his strengths and accomplishments, without needing praise from someone else. To offer positive encouragement:

- **Focus on** your child's effort and progress. "You have really gotten the hang of subtraction. It must be really satisfying to see your effort pay off."
- **Describe** rather than giving your opinions. "Look at how *organized* and *detailed* your science report is!" not "This is great!"
- **Don't wait** for your child to do well. "That didn't work out the way you planned, did it? I know you'll try again. What could you do differently next time?"

Be an attentive listener

To help your child feel comfortable talking to you about challenges or situations she may be facing at school, show her that you are a caring listener. Make it a point to:

- **Tell your child** that you want to hear what she has to say.
- **Set a time** when your child can have your full attention if you can't listen in the moment.
- **Listen without interrupting** and restate what your child says to confirm your understanding.

Promote problem-solving and writing with a letter

Does your child have a regular task that never gets done—at least, not without a lot of nagging? Ask him to write you a letter explaining why ... and what he thinks would solve the problem. This will force him to think logically about what he's doing—and give him a chance to write persuasively.



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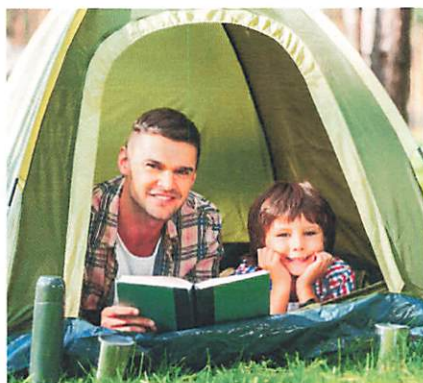
Try a summer approach to ensure that your child keeps reading

School takes a break for the summer, but learning shouldn't! Reading daily over the summer is an important way for students to maintain the gains they make during the school year.

Summer reading shouldn't feel like homework. Let your child choose books he likes. Then promote reading enjoyment by helping him connect reading to simple summer pleasures.

To keep your elementary schooler reading all summer long:

- **Match books** to your child's summer activities. Look for sports books for a summer league player, for example, or camping books for a camper.
- **Encourage your child** to reread a favorite book. Then look for another by the same author, or one on the same topic.
- **Relax bedtime.** Occasionally, let your child stay up later when a book is too good to put down.
- **Start your child** on a series of mystery or thriller books. These page-turners draw kids into the reading habit.
- **Join a library challenge.** Many libraries have summer programs that award prizes to kids for reading.
- **Take books to new places.** Read in a hammock or tent, at the beach or pool, or under a shady tree in the park.



Point in a positive direction

Guidance and encouragement from parents supports and inspires students. Your child benefits when you:

- **Act as a resource.** Suggest places where your child can find information.
- **Talk about** what your child is learning, and emphasize that learning involves effort and persistence.
- **Offer encouragement** in every class, but don't expect your child to perform the same in every subject.



Promote timeliness with actions, not words

Schedules and punctuality matter, in school and in life. If your child is stuck in slow motion when you need to move fast, avoid the urge to shout "Hurry up!" This can provoke anxiety, and probably won't make your child move faster. Instead, look for concrete actions that will move things along. Put your child's hairbrush in her hand. Help her put on her backpack. And be sure to set an example of the value of getting ready early.

Enjoy learning days in May

Help your child explore natural wonders—in outer space and your own yard—this month:

- **May 6—National Space Day.** View amazing images of space taken by the Hubble Telescope at www.nasa.gov/hubble.
- **May 20—National Endangered Species Day.** Find out about animals that need our help. A list of species and more information is available from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at tinyurl.com/8y88f2ru.
- **May 24—National Scavenger Hunt Day.** Make a list of items from nature (a narrow leaf, a white pebble, etc.). Go outside and see how many your child can find.



Encourage journaling with a theme

Keeping a journal is a low-pressure way for students to practice writing—no one else has to see what they write. To make journaling part of your child's summer routine, suggest a few interesting themes to get started.

Your student could keep:

- **A research log.** Have your child pick a topic of interest—such as skateboarding—to research and write entries about. When were the first skateboards created? Who are some notable skateboarders? What tricks are they known for? How do they do them? How many skateboard parks are in the United States?
- **An observation log.** Your child could observe something over a period of time—such as a vegetable plant as it grows—and describe the changes.
- **A travel log.** Each trip away from home—whether far away or down the block—can be a journal entry. What did your traveler see or do? Who was there? What did it make your child think of?



How can I help my chatty child learn to listen?

Q: Lately, the teacher says my first grader talks all the time—even when she is supposed to be listening or working. She's doing well in school otherwise. What should I do?

A: Humans are social creatures, and young children's social outlets have been limited in recent years. It's perfectly natural for your child to want to chat. But in school, it's an instinct she's going to have to learn to control.

The best way to help is to teach your child that there are times and places when people can do some things, and other times and places when those same things are not appropriate. Explain that you're going to play a game called My Time, Your Time. When it's My Time, you get to talk. Your child has to look at you and listen to what you're saying. When it's Your Time, your daughter gets to do the talking and you must listen.

Start by setting the timer for a very short amount of My Time—say 30 seconds. Give lots of praise for success. Then switch roles. Gradually, stretch out the times. Tell your child's teacher what you're doing at home. The teacher could say, "Olivia, it's my time now," when it's time to listen in class.

If you make My Time, Your Time a family tradition, when your child is a teen it will also be a great way to stay connected.



Finish the school year strong

Some students slide into vacation mode weeks before the school year is over. They stop doing their best and start avoiding things that seem challenging. To keep your child focused on learning until the last day:

- **Review past worksheets,** quizzes and tests. Use them to talk about how much your child has learned this year.
- **Connect learning** to your child's interests. If he is choosing a report topic, for example, help him consider what he'd like to learn more about.
- **Set early deadlines.** If a long-term project is due on Wednesday, your child should plan to finish it by Monday. Then he'll have a cushion if a problem arises.

Hunt for lines of symmetry

When things that are *symmetrical* are divided in half, they are the same on both sides. The dividing line is called the *line of symmetry*.

To help your child discover symmetry, look at letters. Remember that lines of symmetry can be vertical (as in the letter A) or horizontal (as in the letter B). They can even be diagonal.



Sometimes, a figure may have more than one line of symmetry. Write letters on paper and fold them where your child thinks the line of symmetry will be. Do the two sides match?



Are you supporting test-readiness?

Preparation is important for the best results on tests, and there are many ways families can help students prepare to do their best. Are you helping your child get ready for test success? Answer yes or no to the questions below:

1. **Do you write** test dates on a family calendar and help your child schedule time to prepare?
2. **Do you have** your child spread study sessions out over several days?
3. **Do you enforce** a regular bedtime that allows your child to be well-rested every school day, not just on test days?
4. **Do you make** sure your child eats a healthy breakfast and dresses comfortably on test days?

5. **Do you proclaim** your confidence in your child's ability to do well?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are supporting your child's best effort on tests. For each no, try that idea.

"Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardour and attended to with diligence."
—Abigail Adams

Recap the year together

The end of the school year is near. Schedule time with your child to discuss the highlights and look ahead to next year. Ask your child:

- What was your favorite project this year?
- What goals did you accomplish?
- What would you like to learn over the summer break?
- What excites you about next year? Is there a subject you'd like to improve in?

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