

Helping Children Learn[®]

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



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

April 2026

Give your elementary schooler the facts about how students learn

Studies show that some common ideas about learning and how to do it effectively aren't supported by evidence—and they may even get in the way of your child's way.

Here are some myths to be aware of, along with research-based facts to discuss with your child:

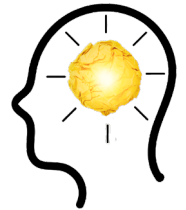
- **Myth:** Everyone has one “style” of learning that works best for them. *The fact is* children learn in all kinds of ways, and they often learn material better by using multiple strategies—reading, listening, looking at pictures, drawing diagrams, making models, etc.
- **Myth:** Talent matters more than effort. *The fact is* learning and achieving in school requires persistence, practice and self-control. Students who work hard often do better than “gifted” peers who goof off.
- **Myth:** Reading and rereading material in one long session the night before a test is the best way to study. *The fact is* it's more effective to practice recalling the material in several short study sessions spread out over time.
- **Myth:** Left-brained people are better at math and right-brained people are better at art. *The fact is* there is no proof that one side of the brain dominates during learning—or at all.

Source: D. Leonard, “7 Myths Your Students Probably Believe,” Edutopia.



Recharge concentration

Everybody gets distracted from time to time. But when students regularly “zone out” when studying or doing schoolwork, it affects their ability to learn. To boost your child's focus:



- **Minimize distractions.** Turn off TVs and loud music. Avoid interruptions that can wait.
- **Help your child divide** large tasks into smaller, less overwhelming pieces.
- **Encourage “brain breaks.”** Suggest that your child take a five-minute break after every 20 minutes of studying.

Model aspects of respect

Respectful behavior takes many forms. Help your child learn how to show them by experiencing them. Show your child:

- **Consideration.** Avoid embarrassing or making fun of your child.
- **Fairness.** Don't pass judgment on your child before learning all the facts.
- **Dependability.** If you tell your child you'll do something, do it.



Family meetings foster cooperation

Holding regular family meetings provides your child with opportunities to develop cooperation skills—such as communication and negotiation—and you all get a chance to reconnect. To make meetings benefit your family:

- **Choose a regular time—**once every week or two. Family members should also be able to request a meeting if they have something important to discuss.
- **Create an agenda.** Before each meeting, ask family members what topics they want to discuss.
- **Appoint a leader.** The leader should follow the agenda and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. Initially the leader should be an adult. Let children take a turn leading once meetings become familiar.
- **Problem-solve.** Have family members take turns explaining how they feel about an issue. Brainstorm solutions together, with adults having the final say. Write down decisions to revisit and evaluate at future meetings.

Set goals for a strong finish

Your elementary schooler has come a long way since September. But there is still plenty of time left in the year to set and achieve learning goals. Review these steps together:

1. **Identify the goal.** Make it specific.
2. **Define specific steps to take** for meeting the goal.
3. **Post the goal** prominently and discuss it with others to build accountability.
4. **Carry out** the plan.
5. **Celebrate** when the goal is met!



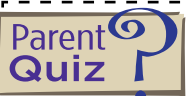


Deployment has unsettled my child. How can I help?

Q: My spouse is deployed overseas and won't be home for several more months. This is challenging for our third grader, whose schoolwork is starting to suffer. What can I do to help my child cope and get back on track over the next few months?

A: Having a loved one be away for months at a time is hard for anyone. Here are some ways to help your child:

- **Acknowledge feelings.** Say something like, "We love Daddy very much. Of course we miss him. Whenever you feel sad, you can tell me."
- **Alert your child's teacher** to what's happening so the school can respond appropriately. Ask for suggestions for helping at home.
- **Stick to daily routines at home.** Consistent routines give children a sense of stability and predictability.
- **Encourage your child to stay in touch** with your spouse with phone calls, video messages and email.
- **Reach out to friends,** family and other military families who have had similar experiences. They can offer ideas for coping.
- **Look for ways your child can help others.** This helps kids put their own problems into perspective.



Are you supporting school success?

Decades of research show that when families and schools work as a team, students are the real winners. Are you playing your part in making your child's education a success? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you make sure** your child attends school every day on time and prepared to learn?
2. **Do you ask** your child about school every day and review all communications the school sends home?
3. **Do you review** your child's schoolwork? If your child is struggling with a subject, do you ask the teacher how you can help?
4. **Do you share** information about your child with teachers?
5. **Do you reinforce** school rules and the need to follow them?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are a valuable player on your child's family-school team. For each no, try that idea.

"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."

—Phil Jackson

Transform text into poems

April is National Poetry Month. Writing blackout poems is a creative and fun way to celebrate with your child. You'll each need a page of text from a magazine or newspaper and a black marker. To create a poem:



1. **Scan the words** in the text to get an idea for your poem.
2. **Underline the words** and phrases that will make up your poem. The words should appear in your poem in the same order they do in the text.
3. **Black out** the remaining text with the marker to see your poem pop!

Source: J. Stock, "Bringing Poetry Outside," Edutopia.

Discuss discipline's purpose

Maintaining discipline is easier when you involve your child from the start. Talk with your elementary schooler about discipline. Why is it helpful? How does it work? Take your child's ideas into consideration when establishing rules and consequences. Then, reinforce the behaviors you want to see by noticing and offering praise when your child displays them.

Instill a can-do attitude

When students encounter difficulty learning, some say "I'm just not good at this" and quit trying. But other kids say "This is a challenge, and I love a challenge!"

The can-do attitude of the children in the second group makes them more likely to stick with problems—and solve them. Encourage this attitude by offering praise for effort and persistence. "That was challenging, but you kept trying different things until you got it!"

Source: J. Stillman, "New Stanford Study: A Positive Attitude Literally Makes Your Brain Work Better," Inc.

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