ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

March 2016

Title I Program
Frisco Independent School District

Help your child map the way to a better understanding of the world

When you help your child learn geography, you open the door for her to a whole world of exciting learning. Geography is about much more than rivers, capitals and natural resources. To show your child how geography enriches her life, try these activities together:

- **Have your child draw a map** of the route from your house to school, to the grocery store or to a friend's house. Then, follow the map together.
- **Build her sense of direction.** Show your child which way is *north*, *south*, *east* and *west*, as well as *northeast*, *northwest*, *southeast* and *southwest*. Help her use these words to describe where things near you are located. "My school is *northeast* of my house."
- **Look for street name patterns.** Are street names in alphabetical order? Do streets run north and south, while avenues run east and west? Help your child see the patterns on a map or as you drive.
- **Encourage your child to start a collection** of objects from other countries. Stamps, postcards and coins are easy to collect and store.
- **Investigate each room in your house.** Look for labels to see where objects and clothing came from. Locate the places on a world map. Which item traveled the farthest?
- **Tell your child where family ancestors came from.** Find these places on the map and talk about the routes family members traveled when they came to this country.

Put an end to procrastination—now!

At one time or another, most kids put off doing homework or chores. If it becomes a habit, however, procrastination can hurt school performance. To help your child break the habit, have him try this five-step process:

1. **Prioritize.** If your child is too overwhelmed by multiple tasks to get started, help him select just one task to begin.
2. **Set a time limit.** Get a timer and set it for 30 minutes.
3. **Ignore everything else.** While the timer is ticking, your child should focus completely on the task at hand. Keep his study area free of outside distractions.
4. **Limit breaks.** Make sure your child gets a drink of water, a glass of milk or a light snack *before* he sets the timer.
5. **Reward hard work.** Let your child see the link between giving his best efforts and getting to do something he likes, such as playing computer games.

Source: R. Emmett, *The Procrastinating Child*, Walker & Company.

Feed your child's brain

Feeding your child a nutritious diet is a key way to support her learning ability. Iron and protein, for example, are necessary for brain function. Offer your child a variety of protein sources, such as meat, fish and nuts, and iron sources, such as dark green, leafy vegetables, eggs and raisins.

Source: M.D. Florence and others, "Diet Quality and Academic Performance," *Journal of School Health*, American School Health Association, niswc.com/food.

Biographies make for lively reading

March is Women's History Month. Help your child find a biography of a famous woman in a field that interests him:

- **Sports?** He might like to read about Olympic runner Wilma Rudolph.
- **Science?** Suggest a book about Marie Curie, who won Nobel Prizes in both physics and chemistry.
- **Adventure?** Look for a book on Harriet Tubman, who escaped from slavery and returned to lead others to freedom.

After your child reads the book, ask him to share some facts he learned with you.

Homework: Redo it or not?

Many parents wonder if they should make their children redo incorrect homework. Experts say that if just some of your child's work is wrong, you can point out the mistakes and let her decide whether to correct them or not.

This makes it clear to your child that homework is her responsibility. It reduces homework power struggles. And if she doesn't correct her work, the teacher will be able to see where your child needs help.

If all her answers are wrong, help her understand the assignment and try again, or have her ask the teacher for help.

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Q&A What do I say when my child is in trouble at school?

Q: The principal called to tell me that my fifth-grade son had tackled another child in the hallway. He wants to suspend my child for a day. My son says the other boy said mean things to him first. Should I go to the school to complain?

A: Sooner or later, most kids behave badly. What's important is the lesson they learn afterward. In this case, arguing with the principal can teach your son exactly the wrong lesson. Instead, teach him how to avoid repeating his mistake. Here's how:

- **Talk to your child** about the incident. Does he admit he tackled the other child? Tell him it is important to tell the truth about what he's done.
- **Explain that fighting** or hurting people is never acceptable—even if they call him names or otherwise provoke him.
- **Help your child think** of other ways he could have reacted. For example, he could have ignored the name-caller. He could have told the teacher. If he had, the *other* child might be the one in trouble.
- **Talk about why** schools need rules.
- **Let him experience** the consequence of his action. On the day he is out of school, have him spend the same amount of time studying or reading that he would have spent in school.

Parent Quiz Is reading a routine for your family?

No skill your child will learn in school is more important than reading. It is the basis for learning so many other subjects. But reading takes practice. Are you making reading a daily part of your child's life? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___1. **Does your family have** reading routines, such as bedtime stories and weekly trips to the library?

___2. **Do you take** things to read with you when you and your child run errands or go to medical appointments?

___3. **Are you building** a family library full of favorite books?

___4. **Does your child see** you reading something every day?

___5. **Do you ask** your child to read something aloud to you every day?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are making reading part of your child's routine. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"The habits we form from childhood make no small difference, but rather they make all the difference."
—Aristotle

Build Internet research skills

The Internet is a useful tool for researching all kinds of information. To help your child learn some Internet research skills, go online together at home or at the library and play these games:

- **Scavenger hunt.** Make a list of 10 questions, each with only one correct answer. What's the longest river in Asia? Who discovered Pluto? See how quickly you and your child can find the answers.
- **Pan for gold.** Select a historical figure. Each of you search the Internet for facts about that person. Share your facts, then vote for the "nugget" of information that turned out to be gold.

Notice deeds well done

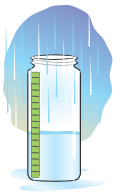
A frustrated student once said, "When I do something well, no one ever remembers. When I do something wrong, no one ever forgets."

Kids who succeed in school believe in themselves. They know their parents believe in them, too. Each day, find at least one thing your child has done well. Talk about it. And try to forget at least one mistake.

Take science outside

Spring brings changeable weather to many parts of the country. So it's a great time to do some weather-related science activities with your child. You can:

- **Keep a temperature graph.** Help your child record the temperature every day for a month on a graph. She can also graph the number of sunny, snowy, rainy and cloudy days.
- **Measure the rain.** Help your child use a ruler to mark off each quarter inch on the outside of a straight-sided jar. Put the jar outside. Keep track of the rainfall.



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