

Parents Make the Difference!



Spend time with your child when there's no time to spare!

There's no question that time with children is vitally important. It's been said that children spell love T-I-M-E.

Still, the truth is that many parents would agree that on some days, they hardly have time to brush their teeth. So where can a harried parent find the time to spend with a child?

Here are some ideas:

- Plan some one-on-one time. Your child should know that there will be some time during the week when she gets your undivided attention. Seeing "Mom and Sydney" on the calendar for Saturday will help your child make it through a particularly tough week at school.
- Do things together. Invite your child to help you while you are cooking dinner. You'll get time together--and helping in the kitchen could become your child's favorite chore.
- Make the most of short fun breaks. Time together doesn't always have to be planned, and it can come in small chunks. You're working on a report for work. Your child is doing math homework. Say, "Let's work until 7:00 and then take a 10-minute break together."
- Let your child know she's on your mind. If you can't be there, send your child an "I love you" email. Or write a note and tuck it in her lunch.

Reading for information is an important school skill

There are plenty of fiction books for children to enjoy. But you should also encourage your child to read for information.

Think about what you usually read during a day. You get your news from a newspaper or a website. You read a report at work. You read a recipe or a magazine article. That's the kind of reading children need to learn to do.

Reading for information is also important in school. As your child moves through the grades, he will have to read more challenging material. The more practice he gets, the more comfortable he will be.

Look for interesting stories you think your child will enjoy. Cut out the newspaper article about his favorite athlete. Check online for an article on a subject he's studying in school.

Look for nonfiction books when you're in the library. Include them in your read-aloud time. You and your child will learn new things and build a bigger vocabulary.

Help your elementary schooler succeed on standardized tests

The results of standardized tests have big implications, such as determining school funding. The results show how schools and students are doing.

Remember, though, that one test doesn't represent a child's total abilities. A student may get high grades, for example, but be too anxious on test day to think clearly.

To prevent problems and help your child succeed:

- Make school a priority. Children who do well on tests tend to be the ones who study and finish homework on time. They also miss less school than other kids. These are habits you can encourage.
- Develop healthy routines. Your child needs plenty of sleep and a nutritious breakfast every day before school.
- Communicate with teachers. In addition to knowing how your child is doing throughout the year, pay attention to test details. "Which skills do the tests measure?" "How should my child prepare?"
- Promote reading. Many tests require reading, so make sure your child reads often. Then ask questions that stimulate thinking. "Why do you think the main character did that?"
- Reduce anxiety. Some kids like to take timed practice tests at home. But as test day approaches, focus on relaxation. Stay positive and calm. If your child is worried, she can take deep breaths and think confident thoughts, knowing she has your support no matter what.