

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



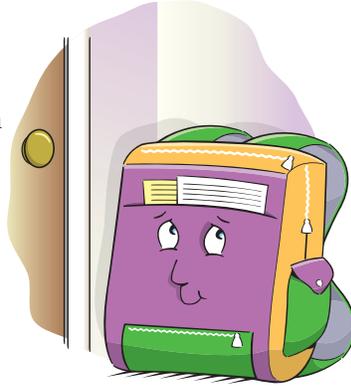
September 2014

North Tippah School District

Nick Hopper, Federal Programs Director

Good habits at home start preschool learning off right

A new school year is an exciting time for children. And whether this is your child's first experience of it or not, preschool is an important world for him—a place away from home filled with new responsibilities and freedoms! To encourage your child to spread his wings—and gain the habits he'll need for success throughout his school years—teach him how to:



- **Keep track of his backpack.**

Designate a spot for your child's school belongings, such as by the front door.

Every day after preschool, return his backpack to the spot and sort through it together—keeping an eye out for important notes to parents.

- **Read together.** When your child gets to kindergarten, he will probably be required to read with you each day, so get into the habit now! When you read to your child, show that reading is fun. Talk about the books afterwards to build comprehension.

- **Take care of books.** When your child brings home books from the library, keep them in a safe, handy spot, such as a basket on a low shelf. Remind your child when it's time to return them.

- **Put away supplies.** When your child gets home, he can hang up his coat and put his lunch box in the kitchen. A reminder chart with pictures can help him get used to new routines. Reward responsibility with plenty of praise and pats on the back!



Teaching letter sounds—as easy as A-B-C

Understanding the link between letters and sounds, or *phonemic awareness*, is a key step toward reading. To help your child make this connection:

- **Have her say a few words** (*dog, lamb, snake*) while looking in the mirror. Point out that she uses her mouth, tongue and teeth in different ways for each sound.
- **Teach your child the sounds** letters make. Say, “*moon* starts with M. It says *mmmm*.”
- **Be silly with music.** One idea: Sing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” Next, change the first letter in *boat*. Now it’s “row your *coat*.”

- **Read nursery rhymes often.**

Point out words with similar sounds, such as *cat* and *rat*.

As your child gets more familiar with letter sounds, you can do more challenging activities. One idea: Give your child three words, such as *man*, *mat* and *car*. See if she can tell you which word is the “oddball.”

Source: J. Fitzpatrick, *Phonemic Awareness: Playing with Sounds to Strengthen Beginning Reading Skills*, Creative Teaching Press.

Priority one: Attendance

Research shows attendance affects future school achievement. Getting your child to preschool on time each day will be easier for both of you if you:

- **Prepare the night before.**
- **Follow a morning routine.**
- **Plan around the school calendar.**



Source: “Debunking the Myths About School Attendance,” Attendance Works, niswc.com/debunk.

Have some fun with ‘back-to-school’ math

Back-to-school excitement isn't just for big kids. Preschoolers like getting ready to learn, too! To add math to your new routine:

- **Find shapes.** Examine school supplies for shapes. “The end of the eraser on your pencil is a circle!”
- **Count items** that matter to your child, such as kids in her class or swings on the playground.
- **Sequence.** Draw pictures of tasks in your child's schedule: getting ready, fun with classmates, lunch, sleep. Mix them up and put them back in order together!



Model a positive attitude

Your child notices everything around him—including similarities and differences among people. Studies say kids are aware of these differences by age three. But what happens after that?

If you have a positive attitude about cultural and ethnic differences, your child probably will too. Tell him that we all have important things in common, such as the love of parents for their children.

Source: “Appreciating Cultural Differences,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, niswc.com/differences.



What can I do to relieve my child's separation anxiety?

Q: How can I make it easier for my daughter to say goodbye when I leave her at preschool each morning? It's as if she's afraid I won't be back.

A: That's exactly what she's afraid of. Many young children don't understand that these separations from their parents are only temporary. They fear that "goodbye" means "goodbye forever."

To help your daughter get over the morning separation blues, try to:

- **Get to school early** for a few days. That way, you can spend more time in her classroom with her before you have to leave. This will help her settle in.
- **Talk to your child's teacher** every morning. This short conversation is good for two reasons. Telling the teacher about your daughter's night can prepare her for your daughter's day. And when your child sees the two of you talking, she will know that you trust the teacher.
- **Establish a routine** for saying goodbye. Children love routines because they feel that what is familiar is also safe.

You might also want to try taking a small item such as a handkerchief from your purse and helping her put it in her own pocket to "keep it safe." When you arrive to pick her up, get it back. The handkerchief will remind her that you will always come back to get her.



Show your child how to show respect

Your child will interact with many adults—teachers, bus drivers, custodians—in school. Talk to him about respecting adults. Even better, show him what respect looks like:

- **Speak politely** to others, including your child.
- **Label disrespect.** "That girl yelled at the teacher. That's not respectful."
- **Expect respect.** As you respect your child, make it clear he must respect you. Establish a consequence for disrespect.

Source: H.R. Myers, "How to Teach Children to Respect Authority," Livestrong.com, niswc.com/respectadults.

Talk, listen and stay close

For most families, the school year is even busier than the summer. Yet your child still needs you, and your time, all year round.

Spend some time alone with your child each day. It isn't always easy, but she deserves some of your undivided attention. Taking her along when you do errands is a good way to do it. The important thing is to be together, to talk and to listen.

It's time to get moving!

You've gathered school supplies, chosen fall outfits and even brushed up on academic skills. But is your child ready to hit the classroom? Not without regular exercise! Try to:

- **Have some fun.** At this age, exercise should be play—not work.
- **Limit screen time.** Try nature walks and trips to the park instead.
- **Appreciate your child's energy.** As you're chasing him around, remember it's good for him—and probably you too!



Source: K. Carollo, "Physical Activity May Help Kids' Grades, Too," ABC News, niswc.com/move.



Are you building preschool social skills?

Learning with classmates is easier when kids practice their social skills at home. Are you preparing your child to interact well with other students and teachers? Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions:

1. **Do you practice** greetings with your child, such as, "Hi! I'm Jamie. Would you like to play?"
2. **Do you give** your child the kind of instructions he hears from teachers, such as "Please go upstairs, get your book and bring it to me"?
3. **Do you role-play** classroom behaviors, such as raising his hand and using polite words?
4. **Do you enforce** a few key rules and make them easy to understand?
5. **Do you share** and take turns with your child, and encourage him to do the same?

How are you doing?

Each yes answer means you're promoting good social habits. For each no, try that idea.

"Parents are often so busy with the physical rearing of children that they miss the glory of parenthood, just as the grandeur of the tree is lost when raking leaves."

—Marcelene Cox

Helping Children Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Phillip Wherry.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2014, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1005