



Elementary **Parent** Guidebook

Grades 4 – 6



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Dear Parent,

The upper elementary grades are an exciting and interesting time for both parents and students. During these years, there are many things you can do to help your child not only succeed academically, but to also thrive and grow.

This booklet will give you the information you need to guide and advise your child. It will also show you how you can help your child have a great school year!

We know that many children are being raised by grandparents or guardians. For the sake of simplicity, the term “parent” refers to any primary caregiver.

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Table of Contents

The Transition to the Upper Elementary Grades	2
School Basics	3
Help Your Child Succeed	7
Work with Your School	14
Facts and Tips for Parents	17
Career Exploration	26
Tips for the Parents of Athletes	28
Looking Ahead to Middle School / Junior High	29

"It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings." Ann Landers



The Transition to the Upper Elementary Grades

The upper elementary grades present new opportunities and challenges for both students and parents.

Moving from the primary grades to the upper elementary grades may not be as big a transition as going to middle school, but it's still a transition. In the upper elementary grades, students have more homework, the coursework is more difficult, and students are expected to be more independent, more focused, and more responsible.

During these years, students' attitudes toward family, peers, and school are being established. Students are becoming more aware of their skills and abilities, and they are beginning to see themselves as learners in terms of their competence, confidence, and worth.

Moving into the upper elementary grades is not only a transition period for students, it's also a time of transition for parents. Your child is growing and changing, and you can see your child's focus shifting from family to friends.

During the next several years, it's very important for you to be involved in your child's life. Make sure that your child is doing well in school, making good choices and decisions, and involved in healthy activities. Keep the lines of communication open, and let your child know that you're there to help with any problems or concerns he/she may have.

Most importantly, provide your child with guidance, encouragement, love, and support.



"The upper elementary grades are a time of tremendous growth and discovery. Students this age are full of energy and life!"

Celina Morris, Principal



School Basics

The topics in this section are often discussed in school handbooks and on school websites. If your school has a handbook, read through it carefully and keep it for reference. For news and updates, regularly visit your school's website.

School Calendar

Every school has a calendar that shows when each grading period begins and ends, when report cards come out, and when their school will be closed for holidays and vacations. Many school calendars also include test dates, open houses, and conferences. Be sure to write all of these dates on your calendar at home.

Attendance Policies

Schools have attendance policies that encourage regular attendance, while allowing students to be absent if they're ill. If your child is going to be absent for more than a couple of days, and your child's teachers don't post assignments online, ask if there is a procedure for getting assignments. Whenever possible, try to get some work that can be done at home so that your child doesn't get too far behind.



If your child has an extended illness or chronic health problem, get documentation from your child's physician and give it to the principal.

Code of Conduct / School Rules

In order to provide students with a safe environment that encourages learning, schools need to have rules regarding student conduct and behavior. The consequences for not following the rules can range anywhere from staying in during recess to suspension.

Courses

In the upper elementary grades, students study a variety of subjects. In addition to the core subjects (math, reading, language arts, science, and social studies), students may take art, music, and physical education classes. Students may also have the opportunity to do some work in a computer lab or media center.

The topics and concepts presented in the upper elementary grades are designed to be developmentally appropriate for the students in that age group. Some students, however, may find that the coursework is too difficult. Others may find that it isn't challenging enough. And some students have learning problems that make it difficult for them to master certain subjects or skills.

Schools have ways to address the needs of all types of learners. Intervention specialists and resource rooms are generally available to help students with identified learning disabilities. These intervention specialists provide extra help to make sure that struggling students are successful. Gifted and Talented Programs may also be offered to provide accelerated or enrichment opportunities.

To ensure that students are making satisfactory academic progress, most elementary schools have academic standards that students must meet in order to advance to the next grade level. If you have questions or concerns regarding your child's academic progress, talk to your child's teacher, counselor, or principal.

Teachers

Students in the upper elementary grades often have more than one teacher. Students may, in fact, have a team of two, three, or four teachers.

Having different teachers means that students must learn how to adapt to different teaching styles and expectations. Having more than one teacher also helps prepare students for middle school, where they are likely to have a different teacher for each subject.



School Counselors

Some elementary schools have school counselors. Counselors provide academic assessment and support, make classroom presentations, and assist students who are having difficulties. School counselors also answer questions, listen, and help students figure out how to deal with difficult situations. Know who your child's school counselor is and how to contact him/her. Counselors are not only there to assist students, they are also a great resource for parents.

Standardized Tests

In order to measure student achievement, all upper elementary school students are required to take standardized tests. Although these tests vary from state to state and school to school, all standardized tests compare a student's achievement with state and national averages.

Schools use standardized test scores to help them improve their educational programs and to find out how much their students have learned. Student test results are given to parents; however, test scores are sometimes difficult to understand. If you ever have a question regarding test results, talk to your child's teacher or counselor.

To help your child perform well on any test:

- ▶ make sure your child is well rested
- ▶ give your child a good breakfast
- ▶ encourage your child to do his/her best
- ▶ avoid putting pressure on your child



Bullying

Bullying can be a problem in the upper elementary grades. Talk to your child about what to do if he/she ever witnesses or hears about a student being bullied or harassed at school. If your child complains about someone bothering him/her at school, find out exactly what has happened. Then talk to your child's teacher, counselor, or principal.

Sometimes students are afraid to tell their parents they're being bullied. If your child suddenly doesn't want to go to school, ask your child if someone is causing problems for him/her at school.

School Websites

Most school districts have websites with links to the schools in their district. School websites contain calendar information, school news, and classroom web pages. Many of these sites also provide teacher contact information.

Some classroom web pages provide links where you can check grades, confirm homework assignments, and obtain information on classroom projects. Visiting your school's website is a great way to keep up with what's going on at your school.

Activities

In the upper elementary grades, there may be clubs, organizations, and special groups that students can join. For example, students may have the opportunity to be in chorus, band or orchestra, play a sport, or be a member of the safety patrol or student council. There are also a number of after-school activities for children this age (e.g., sports, gymnastics, art classes, music lessons).



It's good for students to be involved in activities; however, some students have too many scheduled activities. These students are often stressed out and they're not enjoying school or their activities as much as they should. Quality is much more important than quantity.

Encourage individual activities

While group activities are important, it's also important for children to have activities they enjoy doing by themselves. During the next few years, encourage your child to develop some personal hobbies. Help your child learn how to cook, play an instrument, juggle, make jewelry, collect something (coins, baseball cards, etc.), take pictures, garden, knit, or make a web page.



Help Your Child Succeed

Students in the upper elementary grades need a lot of direction, guidance, and support from their parents.

Provide school supplies and a place to study

If your school has a list of recommended supplies, get everything on the list. If your school doesn't supply student planners, purchase a planner or an assignment notebook for your child.

Make sure your child has a place to study that's quiet, well-lit, and comfortable. This area should have a surface for writing and be equipped with paper, pencils, a ruler, markers, a calculator, and a dictionary.

Help set academic goals

At the beginning of each grading period, help your child set realistic academic goals for the term. At the end of the grading period, discuss what went well and what areas need to be worked on.

In addition to academic goals, set one or two goals regarding behavior, extra reading, attendance, and/or homework (e.g., have all homework done by 8:00). Setting goals helps your child know what your expectations are, and having goals gives your child something positive to work towards.

Insist on daily attendance

When students miss school, they miss class instruction, discussions, assignments, group projects, quizzes, and tests. Parents who allow their children to miss school when they aren't ill not only hurt their child's education, they also send a message that school isn't important. If your child doesn't want to go to school or if you're seeing a pattern of excuses to miss school, talk to your child or to your child's teacher or counselor.

Attendance is the number one school success factor!

Attend all parent programs

Most elementary schools have “open houses” for parents. These programs give parents an opportunity to see the school, to meet their child’s teachers, and to learn something about the subjects their child is studying. When you attend a parent program, you learn valuable information about your child’s school. You also show your child that you’re interested in his/her academic progress.

Participate in parent-teacher groups

Parent-teacher groups are an important part of every elementary school. These volunteer groups help bring parents, teachers, and school administrators together.



Through fundraising, parent groups can help cover the costs of field trips and enrichment programs (speakers, musical performances, science-on-wheels programs, etc.). Parent groups also help bring awareness to issues that affect the welfare of the school.

Your participation in a parent-teacher group helps build a sense of community, and it demonstrates the value you place on education.

Use rewards and consequences to encourage change

Rewards are most effective when you want to encourage a change in attendance, effort, or behavior. (As your child gets older, doing well will be its own reward.) A reward for improved effort or for a specific achievement can be very motivating for a child. Of course, for most students, a parent’s approval is still the best reward. Make it a point to recognize effort and to acknowledge each academic success, even if it’s just a good grade on a homework assignment.

Students need to know that there are consequences for poor school performance. Consequences are most effective when they are reasonable and logical. For example, a reasonable and logical consequence for not getting homework completed on time might be no TV, music, or phone calls after dinner until all homework is done.

Encourage a healthy lifestyle

Make sure that your child eats well, exercises, and gets plenty of sleep. Have nutritious food at home and send healthy lunches to school. Also, encourage your child to do something active every day, and insist on a reasonable bedtime.



Help improve organizational skills

With more homework and more activities, it's important for upper elementary students to develop good organizational skills. When students are organized, they get better grades, they're less frustrated, and they have more time for family and friends.

Elementary students often need help with organization. *This is one area in which you can really make a difference!* Use these tips and suggestions to help your child be more organized.

- ▶ Make sure that your child has a folder for each class. Remind your child to put all handouts, assignments, and returned tests in the appropriate folders. Loose papers should not be stuck inside books or stuffed into a backpack.
- ▶ Have your child use a student planner, assignment notebook, or agenda to keep track of assignments. Check it regularly to make sure that your child is using it correctly.
- ▶ Encourage your child to regularly clean out his/her backpack.
- ▶ Help your child learn how to organize and prioritize homework. Have your child explain to you what needs to be completed, and then help him/her develop a plan to get it all done.
- ▶ Large assignments often seem overwhelming. Show your child how to break large assignments and projects down into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- ▶ Have your child get everything ready for the next day before he/she goes to bed.

Monitor homework

How you approach the subject of homework says a lot about the value you place on education. *Make sure your child understands that you consider homework to be very important.*

The following tips can help ensure that your child's homework is always completed accurately and on time.

- ▶ To keep up with their schoolwork and after-school activities, students need to develop good time-management skills. Help your child identify time wasters, such as watching too much TV or spending too much time playing video games. By eliminating or reducing time wasters, your child will have more time for other activities.
- ▶ Some students want to get their homework done right after school. Others want to take a break and do their homework later. Help your child determine the best time to do homework and create a schedule that makes homework a part of your child's daily routine.

Sample Schedule

3:00 – 4:00 Snack/chores
4:00 – 5:00 Homework/studying
5:00 – 6:15 Dinner
6:30 – 7:30 Baseball practice
8:00 – 9:00 Free time before bed



- ▶ Your child may ask for help with homework from time to time. If your child needs help, go over the assignment and try to explain anything that seems confusing. Also be available to help organize work, listen to presentations, and help your child review for tests and quizzes.
- Never do homework for your child.**
- ▶ When your child is working on homework, try to remove as many distractions as possible. For example, turn off the TV and make homework time a quiet time in your household. While a call to a classmate with questions about an assignment is acceptable, social calls and other interruptions by friends should not be allowed.

- ▶ Students must learn to be responsible for keeping track of their own assignments, completing their assignments accurately, and turning their assignments in on time. *Parents need to make homework their child's responsibility.*
- ▶ If homework assignments seems excessive, or if your child consistently struggles with homework, contact your child's teacher and express your concerns. Work with the teacher to ensure that homework doesn't become a problem.
- ▶ If your child is not completing his/her homework, first make sure the homework isn't too difficult or that there isn't some problem with the class. Then come up with a plan in which the completion of homework becomes your child's responsibility, and if it's not completed, your child's problem.
- ▶ In the upper elementary grades, students are often required to do group projects. While these projects are usually fun, if some group members don't do their part, students sometimes get frustrated. If your child expresses frustration over a group project, explain how important it is to be able to work as part of a group. Give examples of how you must work as part of a group in your church, community, and family, or at your job.
- ▶ Encourage your child to use any "free time" during the school day to get started on homework. Students who use class time wisely have much less work to do at home.
- ▶ If your child has a tendency to rush through homework in order to get it done, insist that you look over all completed homework.



*Always be positive and encouraging
about school and homework!*

Encourage independent problem solving

Parents need to know what's going on at school, and they need to monitor their child's academic progress. It is, however, important for students to learn how to solve their own problems and take care of their own affairs.

Being able to get their questions answered and their problems resolved helps students gain confidence and become more independent. It also gives them a sense of empowerment. In the upper elementary grades, most problems can be resolved and most questions answered just by going to the right office or by talking to the right person. Whenever your child has a question or problem, try to help your child figure out how to take care of it on his/her own.

You want your child to become more independent; however, it's very important for your child to know that you are always available to help.

Promote active learning

Many of your child's early school experiences involved quiet learning activities such as reading, writing, and doing homework. Although quiet learning is still a large part of your child's day, in the upper elementary grades, your child will be encouraged to become a more active learner.



Active learning involves problem solving, exploring personal interests, and asking and answering questions. Participating in team sports and clubs, visiting museums, and playing a musical instrument are all activities that support active learning. Active learning pursuits will help your child grow and develop intellectually—they will also help your child be more successful in school.

There are many ways you can promote active learning at home. Spend time listening to and talking with your child. Discuss current events, movies, music, and TV shows. Involve your child in family discussions and ask for your child's input. Play games such as Scrabble, checkers, and chess. Turn daily activities such as meal preparation into learning experiences, and involve your child in family projects.



SUMMARY

Help Your Child Succeed

- ▶ Provide school supplies and a place to study
- ▶ Help set academic goals
- ▶ Insist on daily attendance
- ▶ Attend all parent programs
- ▶ Participate in parent-teacher groups
- ▶ Use rewards and consequences to encourage change
- ▶ Encourage a healthy lifestyle
- ▶ Help improve organizational skills
- ▶ Monitor homework
- ▶ Encourage independent problem solving
- ▶ Promote active learning

"Studies have shown that when families eat dinner together, children do better in school and are less likely to get in trouble. Turn the TV off, silence your phones, and talk about your day. It's a great time for families to reconnect." Bob Arnette, counselor



Work with Your School

Support and work with the principals, teachers, and counselors at your school. Like you, they want your child to enjoy school and be successful.

Support the school and the teachers

Children's attitudes about education and school are, to a great extent, determined by what their parents say and do. Your child needs to know that you support the teachers and administrators at your school. *Your child also needs to know that you consider education to be a top priority.*

You can best convey your interest in education and your support of your child's school by doing the following:

- ▶ Make sure your child is in school every day, on time.
- ▶ Expect your child to work up to his/her potential.
- ▶ Show an interest in what your child is learning.
- ▶ Talk about the importance of getting a good education.
- ▶ Expect your child to follow the school rules.
- ▶ Attend all parent programs and parent-teacher conferences.
- ▶ Show consistent interest in your child's academic progress.

Communicate with your school

It should be easy for parents to stay informed and to communicate with school personnel. Most schools have their own website, and parents can often communicate with teachers via email.

If there's ever a situation (e.g., health problem, death in the family, divorce) that might affect your child's attitude or performance, be sure to contact the school and explain the situation.

Work with your school to resolve problems

If your child complains about a class or teacher, listen closely and try to determine what's going on. While doing so, remember that part of your child's education is to learn how to succeed in subjects that he/she may not particularly enjoy. Also remember that it's important for students to learn how to adapt to different teachers and teaching styles.

If there's a minor problem with a class, teacher, or student, try to help your child figure out how to deal with the situation on his/her own. If you think the problem is serious or that you need to intervene, contact your child's teacher, counselor, or principal and share your concerns.



Make the most of parent-teacher conferences

Parent-teacher conferences offer parents an excellent opportunity to both give and receive information. Teachers can provide information on how a student is performing, and parents can share information that will help teachers better understand their child.

Parents usually meet with one teacher during parent-teacher conferences. In some cases, this teacher may represent the team or group of teachers who work with that child. If your child is receiving special services or is on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), your parent-teacher conference may involve a number of educators.

Before you go to a parent-teacher conference, make a list of the information you want to share, along with your questions and concerns. Also, ask your child if there's anything that you should discuss with the teacher. In some cases, it may be helpful to take your child with you to the conference so that you can meet with the teacher together. This gives your child an opportunity to be a part of the discussion.

On the next page, you'll find ten parent-teacher conference discussion topics, along with questions to ask. Focusing on these topics and questions will help ensure that your conferences are meaningful and productive.



Parent – Teacher Conference Discussion Topics and Questions

- ▶ **Homework** – Is my child’s homework completed thoroughly, accurately, and on time?
- ▶ **Class Participation** – Does my child ask questions, volunteer answers, and participate in discussions?
- ▶ **Organization** – Does my child seem organized? Does my child come to class prepared?
- ▶ **Academic Success** – How is my child doing? Is my child working up to his/her potential? Does my child have the ability to succeed in all his/her classes?
- ▶ **Classroom Time Management** – Does my child use class time wisely?
- ▶ **Attitude** – Does my child have a positive approach to learning? Does he/she appear to be confident? What type of attitude does my child display in class? Does my child ever seem uncertain or anxious?
- ▶ **Focus** – Does my child pay attention in class?
- ▶ **Social Adjustment** – Is my child respectful and courteous to teachers and classmates? Does my child get along well with the other students?
- ▶ **Strengths and Weaknesses** – What are my child’s strengths? Which skills need more work?
- ▶ **Additional Comments** – Do you have any advice or suggestions for me or my child? What is the best way for me to contact you if I have a question or concern?



Facts and Tips for Parents

These facts and tips will help you guide and support your child through the upper elementary grades.

Understand the changes

Students in the upper elementary grades can sometimes challenge and frustrate even the most patient and caring parents. However, when parents take a look at the changes their children are going through, it's much easier to understand why they act the way they do.

Physical Changes

Students in the upper elementary grades are on the edge of puberty. Because students mature at different rates, students between the ages of 9 and 12 come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Students who start to go through puberty before they leave elementary school often feel self-conscious or embarrassed by the changes in their bodies. They may find that different parts of their bodies are changing and growing at different times and at different rates. A young person's arms or legs, for example, may suddenly seem out of proportion. Students who are growing and maturing at a slower rate than their peers may experience similar insecurities. *Every child is an individual who will grow and develop at his/her own rate.*

Regardless of the rate of development, parents can expect that the physical changes and the emergence of hormones will sometimes leave their child feeling tired, achy, and just plain cranky.

Parents can help their children develop a positive self-image by teaching them about personal hygiene, helping them choose clothes that are stylish and flattering, and by reassuring them that all of the changes they're going through are normal. Most importantly, parents need to reassure their children that they look great.

Emotional Changes

Students in the upper elementary grades are sometimes moody. These mood changes are the normal result of the changes their bodies are going through, and of their need to figure out who they are and how they fit into this complicated world.

Students this age can be very sensitive to criticism, and many are easily embarrassed. Peer relationships can be especially difficult. Friendships and peer alliances change quite frequently as a result of varying maturity levels and changing interests. Shifting relationships or the end of a friendship can be hurtful, especially to the child who didn't initiate the shift or put an end to the friendship.

The best way to support your child during these years is to provide encouragement, love, and a stable home environment.

Social Changes

Children this age typically have one or two best friends. Family relationships are still important, but as students progress through the upper elementary grades, friends become more and more important. Students are also beginning to come to terms with their own sexuality—although relationships at this age often have an impersonal quality to them.



Students this age are beginning to explore and discover their own identities. They are becoming aware of who's popular, who's a good athlete, and who's smart. They are also beginning to wonder what other people think of them.

Most students don't want to be seen as different, and they try to blend in with their friends and classmates. Wanting to fit in, however, can make students more susceptible to peer pressure and more easily influenced by the messages they receive from the media (e.g., "girls must be thin," "boys should be tough").

Students who are self-confident are less influenced by media messages and peer pressure. It is, therefore, important for parents to help their children build their self-esteem and develop a strong sense of who they are.

Intellectual Changes

Students in the upper elementary grades are ready to explore the world and learn about life. They are beginning to think more abstractly, and they can handle more complex intellectual tasks. They also have a strong sense of what's fair.

Parents can help their children develop intellectually by discussing serious topics with them, by giving them opportunities to express their opinions, and by showing respect for their ideas.

Students this age are better able to process information and make decisions. This is therefore a good time to help children develop their decision-making skills. Parents can help their children learn how to make good choices and decisions by giving them increasing opportunities to make their own decisions (when to do homework, what clothes to wear, what sport to play, etc.). Parents should encourage their children to look at the pros and cons of each choice, and to also consider the consequences of their choices and decisions.

By allowing children to make small "safe" decisions, parents are helping their children develop the skills they will need to make the bigger, more important decisions later.



"There are two great things that you can give your children: one is roots, the other is wings." Hodding Carter, author

Be aware and be informed

Extracurricular and social activities generally increase for students in the upper elementary grades. A whole new world opens up as your child ventures out to attend school functions, sleepovers, and birthday parties. With more exposure to the outside world, it's important for you to be aware of what effect these outside influences may have on your child's development.

- ▶ Friends greatly influence your child's choices. It is, therefore, important that you know who your child is spending time with. Invite your child's friends into your home and get to know them. Also, be available to drive them to various activities. You'll learn a great deal just by listening to them talk.
- ▶ Before giving permission for your child to attend a sleepover, birthday party, or play date, talk with the host parent. Find out who will be there and what kinds of activities are planned.
- ▶ Know what kinds of music your child is listening to, what videos and TV shows your child is watching, and which video games he/she is playing. Also know where your child is going online. Students need a certain amount of freedom, however, they still need their parents to provide guidelines and limits.
- ▶ It is never too early to talk to your child about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, and smoking. *Make sure that your child knows where you stand on these issues.*



Communicate with your child

Students in the upper elementary grades are starting to think more independently. They are more involved in outside activities and their peer group is becoming more important. As a result of these changes, children who once shared every detail of their lives may start distancing themselves from adults. While this is normal, it can make communication more of a challenge. When parents ask *"How was school today?"* they are likely to hear *"fine," "boring,"* or *"okay."*

Although communicating with your child may now be more difficult, it is important that you make the extra effort.

- ▶ Show interest in what your child has to say. Remove distractions and take the time to really listen. When parents show that they're truly interested, children will usually open up.
- ▶ It's often easier to talk to your child when you are doing something you both enjoy. Make time for one-on-one activities such as cooking, watching a game, working on a car, taking a walk, or going out for ice cream. These are all great ways to spend quality time with your child. They are also excellent opportunities for conversation.
- ▶ Timing is important. Be available to listen when your child wants to talk. Also, look for times when your child is likely to be open to conversation (e.g. right after getting home from school, before going to bed). A particularly good time to talk is when you are driving in the car. You're not facing each other, it's quiet, it feels safe, and you are spending the time together anyway.
- ▶ Recognize the importance of nonverbal communication. Children are not always able to put into words what they want or need their parents to know. It is, therefore, important to pay attention to body language, moods, eating habits, sleeping patterns, and school performance. These can be good indicators of how things are going at school and with friends.



- ▶ Ask open-ended questions that require more than one-word answers. Instead of *"How was school?"* say *"Tell me about your day"* or *"What's that book about?"*
- ▶ For there to be genuine and effective communication, there must be an honest exchange of thoughts, opinions, and ideas. You may not always agree with the thoughts and ideas your child shares with you, but interrupting to scold or lecture may cause your child to shut down, or to only tell you what he/she thinks you want to hear.
- ▶ Tell your child what you want done, instead of what you don't want done. For example, instead of saying *"Don't leave your backpack on the couch"* say *"Please put your backpack in your room."*
- ▶ At this age, children often begin to challenge their parents' authority. Your child may at times respond to commands or requests in a tone of voice that's less than pleasant. Chalk this up to moodiness or rebellion. The important thing is that your child does what you say. Always expecting him/her to be happy about it may be too much to ask.
- ▶ Although children may act like they don't hear a thing their parents have to say, they do listen. They listen to the words, and also to their parents' tone of voice. Children need to hear that their parents have faith in them, and that their parents love them unconditionally.
- ▶ When children seem down or upset, often a hug or a few words of encouragement are all they need. If you sense that there is a serious problem that needs to be addressed, let your child know that you're concerned. If you need help, talk to your child's teacher, counselor, or physician.



Last, but certainly not least, keep your sense of humor.

Teach responsibility

As children get older, they need to understand that with increased independence comes increased responsibility. The tips below will help you teach your child how to act responsibly.

- ▶ Give your child responsibilities around the house. Children can help prepare meals, mow the lawn, take out the garbage, or be responsible for the care of a pet.
- ▶ Base the amount of freedom you give your child on how responsible he/she is.
- ▶ Establish reasonable rules and enforce them consistently.
- ▶ Talk to your child about the importance of making good choices and decisions, and help your child figure out what to do in specific situations. For example, discuss what your child would say and do if offered a cigarette.
- ▶ Tell your child that he/she can always use you as an excuse. For example, *"My parents always find out when I do something wrong, and they'd lock me away forever if..."*
- ▶ Make sure that your child knows basic social behaviors (have a firm handshake, write thank you notes, etc.).
- ▶ Teach financial responsibility by giving your child an allowance and by setting up a savings account.
- ▶ Pick your battles. Decide early on what issues are non-negotiable (e.g., grades, drugs, alcohol, smoking). If you see your child needing to rebel, consider allowing a little "safe rebellion." For example, you might allow your child to have a messy room or wear a hairstyle you don't like.
- ▶ Be a good role model. Children learn their behaviors and attitudes from their parents more than from anyone else.



Provide appropriate consequences

Children make mistakes, and sometimes they make bad choices. Realizing that there are consequences for bad choices and decisions, however, is part of growing up.


To help ensure that the consequences you provide are appropriate and effective, consider the guidelines below.

- ▶ Use logical consequences whenever possible.
"Since you were late getting home from T.J.'s house, you're not allowed to go to his house for the rest of the week."
- ▶ Never take away a positive activity (e.g., sports, music lessons, school activities) as a consequence.
- ▶ Never use physical punishment as a consequence.
- ▶ Consequences should be specific and for a definite period of time (e.g., no video games for one week).
- ▶ Don't feel that you must provide immediate consequences. Take time to think things over and to decide what the most appropriate consequence might be.



Teach internet safety

In the upper elementary grades, students often use the internet at school to do research or at home to connect with friends. *All children must be taught how to use the internet safely and responsibly.*

- ▶ Have your child show you his/her favorite websites and explain what he/she likes about them. Be careful when making comments about the sites your child likes. Remember, you want to keep the lines of communication open.
- 
- ▶ Keep your family computer in a common area of your home, such as the kitchen or family room. Children are much less likely to visit inappropriate sites if they know that others could be watching. *Children should not have internet access in their bedrooms or in other areas that may be difficult to supervise.*
 - ▶ Discuss what you believe are appropriate websites for your child to visit, and help your child find age appropriate sites that relate to his/her hobbies, personal interests, and school needs.
 - ▶ If your child plays games online, monitor your child's gameplay for explicit violence, mature language, and sexual content. If your child plays online, keep tabs on who he/she interacts with.
 - ▶ Monitor screen time. Set a timer to limit the amount of time your child spends online.
 - ▶ Use parental controls to block your child's access to sites that are potentially inappropriate. If you need assistance, contact your phone and/or internet provider, or search online for "parental controls."
 - ▶ Establish basic internet safety rules for your child to follow (e.g., *never give out any personal information – name, address, birthday, school; never make mean or cruel posts*).

For information on internet safety, go to www.commonsense.org, www.socialsafety.org, or www.wiredsafety.org.



Career Exploration

It's not too early for students to start thinking about which careers they might want to consider for the future. Take time to help your child explore his/her career and educational options.

Talk about careers

Many children like to imagine what life will be like as an adult. They enjoy envisioning themselves in glamorous or otherwise exciting careers, such as rock star, professional athlete, or movie star. It's important for parents to help their children understand that other careers can be just as rewarding and satisfying.

Talk to your child about different careers, and help your child connect school subjects to the world of work. You might, for example, discuss how a reporter uses writing skills to compose newspaper articles, or how a doctor uses math skills to calculate the amount of medicine a patient will need.

You can also relate your child's interests or talents to various careers. If your child is artistic, talk about how people in various careers take photos for magazines, design toys, or draw characters for video games. For the very social child, discuss how someone who likes to talk and interact with other people might enjoy working as a lawyer or teacher. Talking about career possibilities during the upper elementary grades can help give your child direction and focus.

Identify abilities and interests

You know your child better than anyone. You can, therefore, be an invaluable resource in helping your child identify his/her interests, talents, strengths, and values. Take the time to help your child see how a talent or personality trait might be a valuable asset in the right career.

Explore and investigate various careers

Making good career decisions begins with exploration and investigation. Through career exploration activities, children become aware of the many career opportunities available to them. By investigating specific careers, children find out what they need to do to reach their career goals.

There are a number of things you can do to help your child learn about careers. A good way to start is to read about various careers online at www.bls.gov/ooh. This website provides up-to-date information on hundreds of careers. Also, try to arrange for your child to talk to someone who works in a career field your child might find interesting.

Of course, the best way for students to learn about a career is to get some related firsthand experience. Try to find some after-school activities to support and expand your child's interests.



Discuss educational options

Most careers today require education or training beyond a general high school education. Some careers require four years of college. Others require just one year at a community college or career school.

Look for opportunities to talk about how different careers require different levels of education or training, and begin discussing your child's educational options: 1) high school career and technology programs; 2) four-year college; 3) two-year college; 4) career/trade school; 5) the military; 6) apprenticeship.

Many factors determine the kinds of opportunities a student will have in life, but the most significant determining factor is education. Make sure that your child understands the importance of getting a good education.



Tips for the Parents of Athletes

Playing a sport is an excellent way for students to stay fit and active. Whether your child is part of an after-school intramural team or an area-wide “select” team, the following tips will help ensure that your athlete has a great season.

Through athletics, students strengthen their bodies and develop their skills. They learn how to win, how to lose, and how to be part of a team. Athletes develop new and lasting friendships, and they also have fun.

Be involved

Many coaches have preseason meetings for the parents of their athletes. These meetings are usually very informative. They also give parents an opportunity to meet the coaching staff, and a chance to get to know each other.

Show good sportsmanship

Sporting events can be very exciting and it's easy for players and fans to get caught up in the action. As a parent, you need to be a role model and always set a good example. Support the coaches and players at all times—win or lose.

Support your athlete

The best way to help your athlete is to provide encouragement and to be positive, both at home and in the stands. If your child has a problem at any time during the season, encourage your child to talk to the coach. If the problem is not resolved or if it's of a serious nature, talk to the coach yourself.

*You are the most important people in your children's lives,
and they want you to be proud of them.
Support your children, and whenever possible, cheer loudly!*



Looking Ahead to Middle School / Junior High

The upper elementary grades prepare students for their first major school transition—the transition to middle school or junior high. The move to middle school involves both academic and social changes. *It's important for your child to be ready for the challenges and opportunities this move will present.*

The best way to prepare your child for middle school is to work with and support your child in the upper elementary grades. Help your child develop good study habits, and make sure that your child's academic skills are appropriate for his/her grade level. Also, provide a stable home environment, and let your child know that you are there to help in every way possible.

With your support and guidance, your child is sure to find success, not only in elementary school, but in middle school, high school, and beyond.



*"If you can give your son or daughter only one gift,
let it be enthusiasm." Bruce Barton, author*



Elementary Parent Guidebook

Grades 4–6

Help your child succeed in
school and have a great
elementary school experience.



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