

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Savannah Lakes Elementary
School Counselor - Bonnie George

Guiding Students for School Success

Increase motivation for homework

Why do kids complain about homework? Because they don't like it, of course! But the reasons they don't like it vary. So ask your child, "What is it about homework that bothers you?" Then listen to what he has to say and respond helpfully.

Common homework complaints include:

- **"It's not important."** Homework may not seem useful—especially if your child has already mastered a skill. But finishing it every day improves responsibility and study habits.
- **"It takes too long."** Teach your child time management skills. If this doesn't fix the problem, talk with the teacher about other possible causes.
- **"I can't find it."** Your child may need advice about how to get organized. Develop a system that makes sense to your child.
- **"I need help."** It's tough, but critical, for your child to admit it when he's confused. Encourage your child to ask you or the teacher for help when he needs it.
- **"We always argue about it."** It's not unusual for parents and kids to disagree about homework. In addition to brainstorming and solving problems together, try giving your child some control, such as picking between two reasonable study times.



Source: S. Kruger, "Homework: What To Do When Students DON'T Do It," ParentInvolvementMatters.org, www.parentinvolvementmatters.org/articles/homework.html.

Don't just praise your child when she does the right thing. Tell her *specifically* how her actions made a difference. "You did a terrific job washing the dishes for me! Now I have extra time to play catch with you!"



Pointing out how her actions have led to something positive—in this case, extra playtime with you—may inspire your child to pitch in next time, too.

Source: R. Burke and others, *Common Sense Parenting: Using Your Head as Well as Your Heart to Raise School-Aged Children*, Boys Town Press.

Does attitude trump ability?

Intelligence matters, but maybe not as much as you think.



According to a long-term study of 1,500 gifted students, it was not always the "smartest" students who performed best. It was the students who showed the most perseverance.

So teach your child to stick with it when the going gets tough. Cultivating a "never give up" attitude can make a big difference for him in the long run.

Source: M. Borba, Ed.D., *No More Misbehavior: 38 Difficult Behaviors and How to Stop Them*, Jossey-Bass.

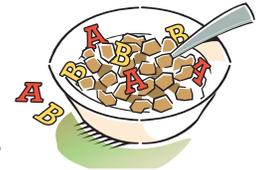
One change can make every school day better

Here's a simple routine that can boost school performance every day: Have your child start the day with a nutritious breakfast.

Research shows that eating breakfast:

- **Increases** children's energy.
- **Improves** attention.
- **Raises** grades on tests.

If your child resists eating in the morning, tempt her with creative options, such as dinner for breakfast. Sometimes waking up early helps, too, so hunger has time to build before breakfast.



Source: H. Bennett, "Ever wonder ... why eating breakfast is so important?" *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2011, The Washington Post Company.

It's okay to be imperfect

You work really hard to be a perfect parent. But raising kids is an inexact science. There's no such thing as doing it perfectly.



Instead, be honest about your strengths and weaknesses. If you're especially patient, for instance, give yourself a pat on the back.

But what if you have trouble being consistent with discipline or modeling proper behavior? Admit it to yourself—and commit to doing better.

Source: P. Foxman, Ph.D., *The Worried Child: Recognizing Anxiety in Children and Helping Them Heal*, Hunter House Publishers.

Practice asking for help and support

Children need parents' help to succeed in school. No matter how much support you give, however, your child still needs to know how to speak up when she feels overwhelmed. For example, "I don't understand division. Can you explain it?" Or "Brian called me stupid at school. I didn't know what to say." To make this easier:



- **Tell your child it's admirable to ask for help.** It takes a strong person to say, "I can't do this alone." Asking for help is a sign of wanting to succeed!
- **Role-play ways to ask for help.** Practice them together. Read stories about people who needed, requested and received help. Be willing to ask for help yourself.

Source: M. H. Raskind and R. J. Goldberg, "Life Success For Students With Learning Disabilities: A Parent's Guide," LD OnLine, www.ldonline.org/article/12836.

Questions & Answers

Q: Anytime my child assumes she'll do poorly in class, that's exactly what happens! How can I turn her negative attitude around?

A: You can do it by showing her that you assume she'll do well! In other words, set high expectations for her. You'll be demonstrating that you believe in her—and that getting a good grade doesn't happen by chance. It's evidence of what she has known all along!

To set high expectations for your child:

- **Be clear.** Saying, "I expect you to do better in class" is too vague. So give specifics. "I expect you to make school a priority. That means your homework needs to be finished *before* you watch TV, not after." This way, you're not punishing her by taking away something she enjoys; you're merely insisting that schoolwork comes first.
- **Be realistic.** If she struggles in language arts, don't suddenly announce, "I expect you to get every word right on this week's spelling test." Instead, give her a more reasonable challenge. "I expect you to spend five extra minutes each night studying your spelling words." Not only is this a reachable goal, but it's one that may directly impact her grades.
- **Be supportive.** When she fails to meet a goal—and she will sometimes—let your child know you still believe in her. "I know you're disappointed about your science quiz, honey, but you'll do better next time. Let's go over the questions you missed and figure out what went wrong."



Source: W. Parker, "Setting Appropriately High Expectations for Children," About.com, <http://tinyurl.com/43t872p>.

Stay calm and carry on

If you tend to lose your cool the moment your child loses his, it's time to regroup. The calmer you remain during meltdowns, the less frequent those meltdowns may become.

To keep your composure:

- **Don't take** your child's behavior personally.
 - **Don't blurt out** cruel remarks.
- If you must, walk away for five minutes. And if you end up saying something in anger that you now regret? Apologize.

Source: "Parents Find Staying Calm Is Key to Curbing Kid's Poor Behavior," Parenting.org, <http://tinyurl.com/68orwaj>.

It's Thanksgiving for a reason!

Many countries hold festivals to give thanks for a bountiful harvest.



Here's how you can emphasize the *thanks* in your Thanksgiving celebration and encourage an "attitude of gratitude" in your child:

- **Talk about it.** What does it mean to be grateful? Chat about it on Thanksgiving.
- **Write it down.** Have your child list some things he's grateful for. Make your own list, too.
- **Show appreciation.** Did someone do a kind deed for your family? Help your child create—and then send—a thank-you card.

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