

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Longwood Central School District

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## ENCOURAGING WRITING

### Writing game shows verb choices

"He *dashed* for the exit." "He *galloped* around the bases." "He *jogged* up the path."

All three of those sentences mean more or less the same thing: Somebody ran. But the action words—*dashed*, *galloped* and *jogged*—are more interesting verb choices.

The "Name the Action" game is a fun way to help your child think about interesting verb choices. Here's how to play:



- **Gather** some small slips of paper.
- **Write** a verb that describes a precise action on each piece of paper. (For example: *skip*, *hop*, *stomp*, *tiptoe*, *limp*, *crawl*.) Everyone in the family can write down some verbs.
- **Have** one player draw a slip of paper and act out the word on it.
- **Have** the other players try to guess the word.

As kids get older, the words can get harder. How would you show that someone *strolled* into the room? How would they *burst* into the room?

The next time your child is revising a composition, have him circle all the verbs. Then have him think of a better word for each one. If the verb is *said*, he might use *whispered*, *sarled* or *shouted*. Choosing interesting verbs will help your child's writing come alive.

Source: Harvey S. Wiener, *Any Child Can Write*, ISBN: 0-195-15316-2 (Oxford University Press, www.oup.com).

## MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

### Self-confidence improves through tasks

Some children have the confidence to take on any challenge. Others seem defeated before they ever start. To build your child's "I can do it" attitude:

- **Give her challenging, age-appropriate tasks.** A six-year-old can set the table or help make the salad. An older child can measure ingredients. As you are doing work around the house, ask yourself if your child could do some part of the task.
- **Show your child how to do a job.** Then help her do it. Finally, let her do it all by herself. Avoid jumping in and "fixing" it. A child who isn't afraid to tackle new tasks at home is more likely to have an "I can do it" approach to learning at school, too.

Source: Jacquelynne S. Eccles, "Families, Schools, and Developing Achievement-Related Motivations and Engagement," in Joan E. Grusec and Paul Hastings, *Handbook of Socialization*, ISBN: 1-593-85332-7 (Guilford Press, www.guilford.com).

## IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

### Support regular attendance

She woke up late and there's no way she's getting the bus. Would it really matter if she missed one day of school?

The answer is YES! Attendance makes a big difference. Kids who attend school regularly achieve at higher rates than students who are chronically absent.

Source: "School Attendance, the Impact of Behavior on Grades, and School Failure," Bureau of Educational Research, [http://education.illinois.edu/ber/webpages/School\\_Attendance.html](http://education.illinois.edu/ber/webpages/School_Attendance.html).

## ENCOURAGING READING

### Promote letter recognition in the kitchen during meals

Most kids love to hang out in the kitchen while a meal is being prepared. Take advantage of this natural time together to sharpen your child's language skills.



As you work, ask your child to find five words that begin with A, F or M. He can look on cans, cereal boxes or even the cat food. If he's ready for more of a challenge, use letter combinations (like BR or CH).

## YOUR CHILD AND YOU

### Holiday ads boost creativity

During December, mailboxes are usually filled with advertisements for holiday items. Before you recycle them, have your child use illustrations and photos to:

- **Make** her own holiday cards.
- **Illustrate** a story she writes.
- **Make** alphabet cards.
- **Decorate** counting pages (*one* candy cane, *two* turkeys, *three* mittens, etc.).

