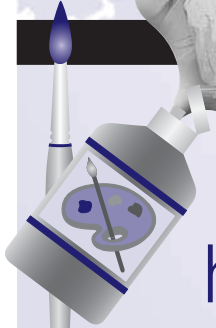


ELEMENTARY edition

A PUBLICATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS



New skills for today's kids School attendance helps cement 21st Century skills

"Education that prepares students for this complex digital society will be more meaningful to students and, ultimately, more effective in preparing them for the future...every day a student misses is a learning opportunity that can't be recaptured."

"The world and economy are moving so fast that if children aren't in school and learning all they need to know now, they'll be at a disadvantage later on."

— From **Learning for the 21st Century**, a report by the Partnership for 21st Century skills, a collaboration of today's large and small businesses and educational institutions.

Elementary school learning has taken on a 21st Century twist as teachers incorporate technology into every-day classroom activities. Lessons on such basics as reading, writing, mathematics, history, science and the arts—which today's employers say are more important to job success than ever—are opportunities to become skilled with techy tools such as computers used to write, research on-line, and create artwork, interactive reports and presentations.

Today's elementary school is a busy—and complex—place. Students are being asked to work hard and to show, both with paper and pencil and with high-tech tools, that they are learning the lessons they'll need to move ahead in school and out into the world of work. And although today's kids seem born with the ability to quickly master technology, they still need direct instruction and lots and lots of practice so they can proficiently read, write and compute in a wide-range of academic areas. That's why all students need to be at school, every day, on time and ready to learn.

School attendance sets kids on path to school success

Elementary school teachers and administrators consistently

cite two things that are key to school success: timeliness and regular school attendance.

"The world and our economy, and what we need kids to know to get along, are changing so fast that if they don't get to school, they are already behind the eight ball," said one local principal. And unless children are at school, he says, there's little teachers can do to help them learn.

Parents can set a positive tone at home and make family choices that will help children arrive at school each day, ready to take on learning that will put them in good stead for tomorrow. Here are some ideas:

★ **Become a cheerleader for learning.** When children are young, your enthusiasm can be contagious. Reading up on what they'll be learning this school year, attending open house and learning how best to stay in touch with their teachers will give you information you can talk up (e.g., "Your teacher says you're

growing monarch butterflies in class. How are they doing? Did you see that one fly by our window? Why don't we get some books from the library so we can learn more about them?") When you're interested in what's going on at school, your children are more likely to approach school with interest, too.

★ **Set consistent waking and bedtimes.** After the freedom of summer vacation, it can be a challenge to get children into bed at night and then wake them in time to get to school the next morning. Children ages 5-12 need between 9 1/2 to 11 hours of sleep each night to be healthy and to learn well. Create routines around bedtimes (e.g., washing up, reading together, lights out by the same time each night) that you'll stick with all year. Waking at the same time each

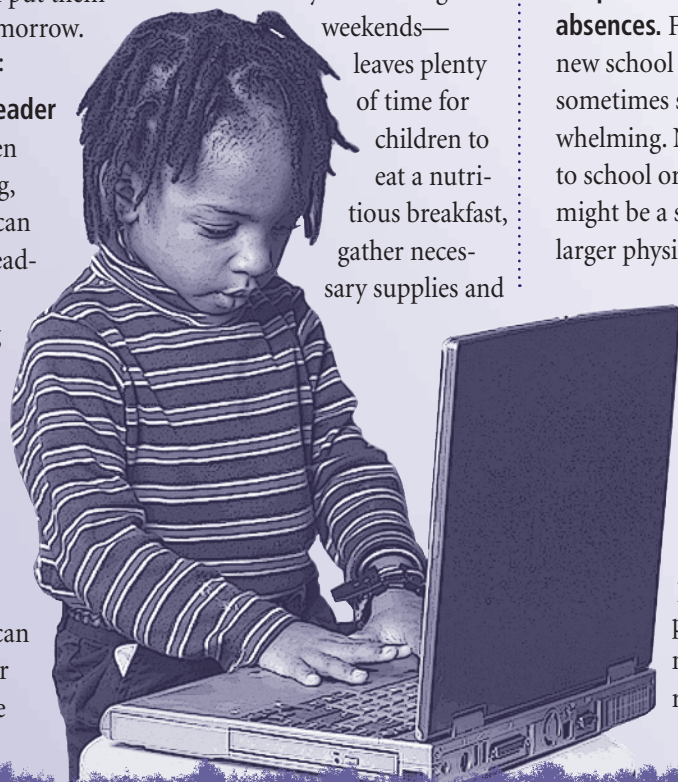
day—including the weekends—leaves plenty of time for children to eat a nutritious breakfast, gather necessary supplies and

get out the door and to school before the bell.

★ **Help them get organized.** Making a space in your home for kids to store backpacks, coats, sneakers, and other necessary supplies can help them get to school on time and ready to learn. Create a "to-do" list with "night before" tasks (e.g., put homework, permission slips and letters to teacher in backpacks, pack lunch money, etc.) and "school morning" responsibilities (such as make bed, wash and brush, dress in gym- and weather-ready clothes, etc.). Post this list in a place where children can easily refer to it, such as their bedroom doors or the refrigerator. Getting organized can help create a calmer home atmosphere that helps kids move out the door in a school-ready mood.

★ **Make medical and other appointments during non-school hours if possible.** Schedule family vacations during school holidays so that kids aren't missing important school learning.

★ **Keep track of your children's absences.** For young children, new school experiences can sometimes seem scary or overwhelming. Not wanting to go to school or excessive absences might be a sign of this or of a larger physical or emotional problem. If absences become common, talking with your child's doctor, teachers, school social worker and/or nurse can help provide a clearer picture of what might be at the root of them.



Back to School tips

CHECKLIST FOR THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL

- Have you filled out all the health forms or emergency contact forms that have been sent home?
- Have any new health problems developed in your child over the summer that will affect her school day? Does the school nurse know about this condition, or is an appointment set up to discuss it?
- If your child needs to take medication at school, have arrangements been made for this?
- Does your youngster know where she is going after school (e.g., home, babysitter)? Does she know how she will get there? If you will not be there when she arrives, does she know who will be responsible for her, what the rules are, and how to get help in an emergency?

MAKING THE FIRST DAYS EASIER

- Remind your child that he is not the only student who is uneasy about the first day of school. Teachers know that students are anxious and will make an extra effort to make sure everyone feels as comfortable as possible.
- Point out the positive aspects of starting school: It will be fun. She'll see old friends and meet new ones. Refresh her memory about previous years, when she may have returned home after the first day with high spirits because she had a good time.
- Find another child in the neighborhood with whom your

youngster can walk to school or ride with on the bus.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Review the basic bus safety rules with your youngster:

- Wait for the bus to stop before approaching it from the curb.
- Do not move around on the bus.
- Check to see that no other traffic is coming before crossing.
- Always remain in clear view of the bus driver.

DEVELOPING GOOD HOMEWORK AND STUDY HABITS

- Create an environment that is conducive to doing homework. Youngsters need a permanent work space in their bedroom or another part of the home that offers privacy.
- Set aside ample time for homework.
- Establish a household rule that the TV set stays off during homework time.
- Be available to answer questions and offer assistance. But never do a child's homework for him.
- To help alleviate eye, neck and brain fatigue while studying, it's recommended that youngsters take a 10 minute break every hour and go do something else.
- If your child is struggling with a particular subject, a tutor can be a good solution. Talk it over with your child's teacher first.

TV TIPS

- Set limits on the amount of TV your child watches. Be firm. Limit children's TV viewing to an hour or two daily.
- Hide the remote. Eliminate channel surfing, which encourages passive viewing.
- Keep TV's out of your youngster's bedroom. Children should watch their favorite shows in a central area of the home.

- Videotape programs and watch them later. Fast forwarding through commercials will shave ten minutes off of every hour of TV viewing.
- Discourage repeated viewings of the same video. The graphic language, violence and sexual content of movies rated PG-13 and R can have a cumulative ef-

fect on a child if they're watched over and over again.

- Harness the positive power of television. TV can be a valuable learning tool for expanding one's awareness of the world.
- Make use of ratings systems to know whether or not a program or movie is appropriate for your child.

Help for parents of younger elementary school children

(THESE TIPS ARE OFFERED BY KIDSOURCE.COM)

Back to school time often means changes for children and families: the first day of kindergarten or first grade; new preschools or child care settings; new classrooms and new teachers. Making smooth transitions between home, programs and schools can help children feel good about themselves and teach them to trust other adults and children. Helping children adapt to new situations can ease parents' minds and give them a chance to become involved in their children's education.

Transitions are exciting opportunities for children to learn and grow. Parents and early childhood professionals share a role in making children feel safe and secure as they move to new educational settings. Of course, such milestones in children's lives can cause anxiety, too. Strengthening the ties between programs and families will help create smooth transitions for adults and children both.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP:

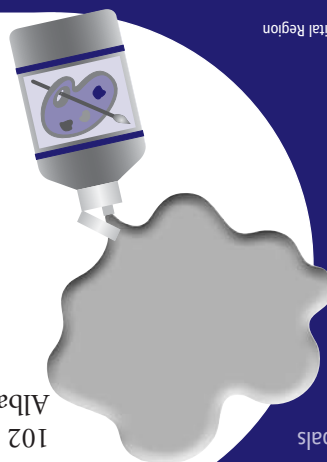
- * Be enthusiastic about the upcoming change. If you are excited and confident, your child will be, too.
- * Prepare yourself. Take note of how your child reacts to separation. If possible, visit the new setting with your child. Introduce your child to the new teacher in advance.
- * Arrange a play date with another child from the class, preferably one-on-one, so that your child will see a familiar face when she walks in.
- * Start daily routines that will add to continuity. Let your child become involved with packing lunch or laying out clothes. Also, begin an earlier bedtime several weeks before.
- * Put aside extra time, particularly on the first days, for chatting and commuting together. But remember not to prolong the good-bye. If the child whines or clings, staying will only make it harder.
- * Always say good-bye to your child. Be firm, but friendly about separating. Never ridicule a child for crying. Instead, make supportive statements like, "it's hard to say good-bye."
- * At the end of the work day, put aside your concerns and focus on being a parent.

September 2006 • Elementary Edition • "School Attendance"

Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region
BOCES Communications Service.

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Albany, NY
Permit No. 135

South Colonie CENTRAL SCHOOLS
102 Loralee Drive
Albany, New York 12205



Superintendent
Michael Marcelle
Elementary School Principals
Patrick Gunner
Forest Park Elementary
Elizabeth Wood
Shaker Road Elementary
Kathleen Gottschalk
Veeder Elementary
Ernest Castle
Saddlewood Elementary
Suzanne Moore
Roosterville Elementary