

September 2009

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents encourage school friendships?

Q: My son's best friend moved this summer, and he's having trouble making new friends. He says school is "no fun" without his buddy. What should I do?

A: Your son's reaction is common. School just isn't the same without good friends.

Start by talking with his teacher. What does she see in class? Does your son have friends in school? (Kids have been known to exaggerate.)

Does he eat lunch by himself or with other classmates? If students get to choose partners, is he always the last one to be picked?

Then ask the teacher about why your son might be having problems. Are there things he does that seem to annoy other students? Perhaps there are social skills you can practice with him. You may want to meet with the school psychologist or guidance counselor as well.

Meanwhile, have your son invite a classmate over after school. (The teacher might be able to suggest someone.) Plan an activity they're sure to love, such as watching a movie or playing in the backyard.

Finally, let your child pursue his hobbies. He might want to play on a soccer team or take an art class. This will help him meet kids with similar interests. Having pals *outside* of school can give him confidence to socialize at school.



PARENT QUIZ

Is your child building responsibility?

The more your child acts in a responsible way, the more likely she is to do so again—and the lessons you teach at home will show up at school. Answer these questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child be responsible:

- ___ 1. **Is your child** responsible for getting herself up and ready for school?
- ___ 2. **Do you have** a regular homework time in your house?
- ___ 3. **Does your child** know that choices have consequences?
- ___ 4. **Is your child** responsible for getting her homework back to school?
- ___ 5. **Do you refuse** to rush an item to school if your child forgets it?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you are helping your child be responsible. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

“Nothing strengthens the judgment ... like responsibility.”
—Elizabeth Cady Stanton

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Goals make the year great

Goals can keep kids motivated all year long. Talk with your child about setting some this year. Does she want to improve math skills? Should she contribute more in class?

Have your child put her goals on a chart. Check them off as they are completed. Celebrate progress! Compliment your child and put stars on the chart to highlight her success. Setting goals is a perfect way for children to recognize how much they can achieve at school.

DISCIPLINE

Back up words with actions

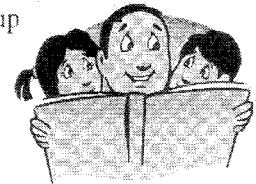
Here's a key to good discipline: Before you name a consequence, be sure you can follow through with it. Don't say, "If you don't quiet down, we'll never go to the movies again." Kids will know you're not serious, so they may not obey. Try saying something like "If you don't quiet down, we're not going to the movies tonight."

ENCOURAGING READING

Read mysteries as a family

Children of all ages enjoy reading aloud with their parents. If you stopped this habit after your child left preschool, start it up again. Reading mysteries is a fun way to begin.

Take turns reading chapters aloud. Who can guess what might happen next? How do you think the story might end? Have your child write down ideas and check them later. This is a skill that will help your child no matter what he's reading—a mystery book or a history book!



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