



jump in!

Back to School 2014

Get your family
off to a great start



p. 11

Valuable coupons inside!



DEPARTMENTS

02 Welcome

04 Chalkboard

07 At School

6 Reasons To Volunteer
Adjusting to the New Year

28 At Home

School Stories
Fun and Games

31 Online Extras

32 Fast Forward

Signs of the Times

FEATURES

12 Setting Goals for Student Success

How to help your kids with assignments, and when to get out of their way.

16 6 Back-to-School Family Traditions

Simple and memorable ways to celebrate the new school year.


20 Make Family Meals Count

Eating as a family throughout the week can pay off in closer bonds—and happier kids.

26 Drawing the Line on Screen Time

Tips for setting limits and making sure children are using electronic devices appropriately.





How to help your kids with assignments, and when to get out of their way.

Setting Goals for Student Success

BY JOANNA NESBIT

AS KIDS RISE THROUGH THE GRADES, EVEN straight-A students can be tripped up by poor study habits. Maybe procrastination is the reason for your 3rd grader's disappointing report card, or your 6th grader gets easily overwhelmed by the bigger projects in middle school. How can you help your kids develop good habits and set goals for school success? We asked several experts for their ideas. Here's what they suggest.

CHOOSE ONE KEY GOAL

Although it's tempting to tackle five new habits you'd like your child to adopt, taking on

too much at once is unproductive, according to Ann Dolin, owner of Educational Connections tutoring company in the Washington, D.C., area and author of *Homework Made Simple: Tips, Tools, and Solutions for Stress-Free Homework*.

Kids need to be invested in order to set goals, and that starts with developing self-reliance. Dolin recommends that parents ask themselves what one thing they'd like their child to be able to do independently by the end of the year.

"Think about the long term instead of the daily grind," Dolin says. That will be different for every family, but it might include reducing

procrastination, limiting screen time, lowering morning stress, or getting more organized. Choose a family habit to change, or help kids decide on an individual goal for the year.

HAVE A ROUTINE CHECK-IN

Whether your child is entering 1st grade or 7th, communicating about the week ahead is key for success, Dolin says. Creating this routine when your kids are young will get them in the habit of thinking ahead about their homework, a crucial skill when they're older and have heavier loads. A parent herself, Dolin likes to meet with her children on Sunday evenings after dinner.

“Set an appointment with each of your kids, not just the child who is struggling,” she recommends. “Each child should come to the meeting with their assignment notebook to discuss the week ahead and note whether there are any

long-term assignments due that week or the following week.”

If a child isn't sure of his assignments, have him go online to the school's homework portal to look them up. Once you know the workload, your role as parent is to ask questions to help him map out his week rather than tell him how to handle it. For example, for a book report due Friday, ask your child what he needs to do first, and then what he'll do on Tuesday and Wednesday. Have him write daily tasks in his notebook that he can refer to each evening.

FOCUS ON THE PROCESS

We love it when kids bring home top grades because that means they're doing well, right? But when parents focus on the product of good grades rather than the process of learning, the learning may get lost to anxiety, especially if the



4 Tips for Self-Reliant Students

1 Avoid micromanaging. It sends the message that your child isn't competent. There will be bumps, procrastination, and forgetfulness, but that's part of maturing.	2 Help kids learn to study on their own. Show them how to use a note card with a study guide, covering up the answers as they ask themselves the questions.	3 If you provide any feedback, keep it short. Research shows that kids stop listening after 11 to 15 words.	4 You may need to explain expectations such as neatness to young students, but then leave the work to them. Leave concerns about quality to the teacher.
---	--	--	---

>> School Week at a Glance

Download our free weekly planner.

SCHOOLFAMILY.COM/WHATS-NEW

child is a high achiever who fears disappointing his parents. It's more important to support your child's process; good grades will naturally result.

How do we support process? Make sure kids have a set study time, Dolin says, as well as a distraction-free place to do homework. Eliminate easy access to electronics and make sure children know what the homework requires. For young kids, check to make sure they know how to do a task before walking away. If they don't know how to get started, they can feel overwhelmed and they'll avoid doing the work.

To help a procrastinator, it's important to empathize first. Then have your child show you what she's working on. Ask questions like "Did your teacher show you how to do this in class? Do you have notes you could look at? I wonder if your teacher posted something on the resources page? Could you ask a friend?" The goal is to help kids figure out where to go for help rather than do the problems with them—or for them.

GO FOR GOOD STUDY SKILLS

It's normal for kids to blast through homework, but the whole point is to practice topics taught in class and master concepts daily. Completion doesn't guarantee understanding. It starts by asking questions in the classroom, says Jackie Gross, owner of One-on-One Tutoring in St. Louis, Mo. "That's really hard for kids to do because it might be embarrassing," she says, "but I tell kids if they have a question, chances are someone else does, too."

If your child doesn't understand her homework, try a website like Khan Academy for help or check the teacher's homework portal on the school website. Kids also benefit from seeing a model of the assignment, such as a 6th grade lab report. If the teacher hasn't provided one, try an online search for a model.

Other strategies for being a good student include being neat, mastering concepts daily, and staying on top of the subject's details, like



It's much more important to help your child plan the work than to help her do the work.

learning math formulas. Bear in mind that study skills are developmental. Kids don't understand the importance when they're young but will begin to appreciate good study habits over time.

BREAK DOWN LONG-TERM PROJECTS

Learning how to manage long-term projects and not procrastinate is difficult for most kids. The most important thing is to break them down with your child and serve as a sounding board, Gross says. Using a paper planner or dry-erase calendar, start with a due date and then pencil in a personal due date a couple days ahead. From there, plot out each day going back and have kids write down tasks. The goal is to achieve a little every day once they start the project.

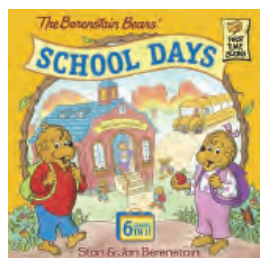
It can be tempting to make a diorama more attractive (parents often think teachers have an expectation of a project's final look, Gross says), but it's much more important to help your child with the planning than with the work. Help her sketch out ideas and get supplies, then bow out.

Meeting goals takes time. Dolin advises parents to keep the relationship with their child positive and to be their safety net when they hit bumps. "Know when to let the little things go," she says. Kids' confidence will grow as they experience school success on their own terms. 📅

School Stories

Children's books about the school years.

Ages 4-7



The Berenstain Bears' School Days

by Stan and Jan Berenstain

This new hardcover collection of six books offers reassurance, wisdom, and gentle humor to young children about first-day jitters, homework, report cards, bullies, and more.



The Day My Mom Came to Kindergarten

by Maureen Fergus

New and emerging readers will enjoy this story of a kindergartner who invites her mom to class and discovers there are some things kids are better at than parents.

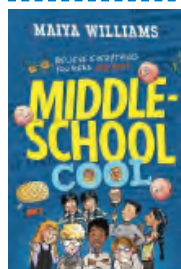


The New Bear at School

by Carrie Weston

It's hard enough being new at school, but for a big bear like Boris, it's even worse. Boris tries his best to be gentle, but his toothy smile scares away his classmates. In the end, the animals find they love having Boris on their side.

Ages 8-11



Middle-School Cool

by Maiya Williams

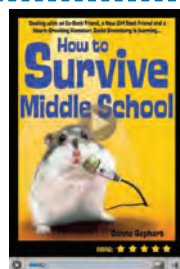
Kaboom Academy in Horsemouth, N.H., an alternative school for middle-grade kids, is known for innovative methods of instruction and discipline. Soon enough, the students of Journalism 1A discover who's really in charge of this groundbreaking school for boys and girls who have fallen out of love with learning.



About Average

by Andrew Clements

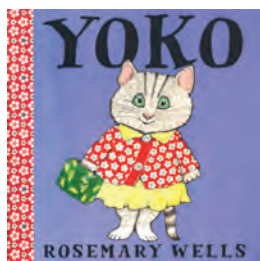
In this story about self-acceptance, Jordan Johnston thinks she is average in every way—for her school, for her town, for the whole wide world. So she makes a goal: By the end of the year, she will discover her great talent. By the end of the year, she will no longer be average.



How To Survive Middle School

by Donna Gephart

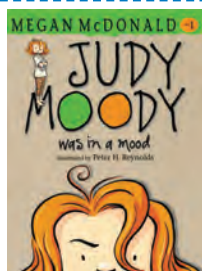
Eleven-year-old David dreams of being a TV star, but in real life, he's just another kid terrified of starting middle school. David spends his free time making videos, which a new friend sends out to everyone she knows. Before long, thousands of people are viewing his videos—including some of the last people he would have expected.



Yoko

by Rosemary Wells

When Yoko opens her lunch cooler of sushi on the first day of school, the other kids tease her and make her sad. Fortunately, Yoko's teacher concocts a plan that celebrates a variety of races and ethnicities.



Judy Moody Was in a Mood

by Megan McDonald

Judy Moody doesn't have high hopes for 3rd grade. But she does have a lot of individuality and attitude. When teacher Mr. Todd assigns the class a special Me Project, she gets a chance to express herself.

Ages 12 and up



A Field Guide to High School

by Marissa Walsh

Andie has just finished 8th grade and will be starting high school. The good news: Her super-popular valedictorian older sister, Claire, is graduating and won't be there to overshadow Andie. The bad news: Claire won't be there to help her, either. Andie reads every word of a guide book Claire has put together for her sister—but she wonders if it's possible that Claire didn't get everything right.



Looking for Alaska

by John Green

Sixteen-year-old Miles Halter's adolescence has been one long nonevent—no challenge, no girls, no mischief, and no real friends. He heads off to boarding school, and his life becomes the opposite of safe. Because down the hall is Alaska Young, instantly loved by Miles and every other male. She is literate, articulate, and beautiful—but she exhibits a combination of adventurous and reckless (and self-destructive) behavior.



Friends With Boys

by Faith Erin Hicks

Maggie McKay hardly knows what to do with herself. After spending her childhood being home-schooled by her mother and roughhousing with her older brothers, it's time for Maggie to face high school, all on her own.

>> Build Reading Skills at Home

Downloadable worksheets for big and little kids.

SCHOOLFAMILY.COM/WHATS-NEW