



PARENTING POSTS

A newsletter for parents of fourth-grade students

Supporting, Understanding and Solving Problems

Parents want to help their children become confident and creative, and prepared to reach their physical, social, emotional and intellectual potential. This newsletter will help you better understand your fourth grader.

Responsibility and independence are the major differences between primary and intermediate grades. Completing daily assignments and homework on time becomes the child's responsibility. Homework helps your child learn to work and think independently, which is a major development for children this age.

Settling into a structured school day may be difficult for children after a carefree summer. Help make this transition easier by making sure your fourth grader is getting plenty of sleep, a nutritious diet, physical exercise and a little extra nurturing.

Supporting Your Child

Parents play a crucial role in providing their children with the values and skills needed for success in school and life. To motivate children to do their best, parents might:

- **Relate personal experiences** and family stories that reinforce the message that effort, persistence and good character count.
- **Give children age appropriate responsibilities** at home to foster self-reliance, industriousness and resourcefulness.
- **Teach children to plan ahead** by helping them schedule schoolwork, household chores and play activities.
- **Recognize and encourage positive behavior, efforts and performance**, as well as correcting negative behaviors.
- **Encourage children to work to the best of their abilities in school.** Adults can provide time, space and materials to help students succeed.



In the primary grades, your child was learning to read. In the intermediate grades, your child is reading to learn.

Reading is a tool through which children will learn about all of their school subjects as well as the world beyond their view. Continue to encourage reading for enjoyment by reading to and with children at home.

Stress Less Activity



Stress is part of everyone's life. Even young children! Try this activity with your child to help reduce stress and enjoy time together.

Start with any chore that includes physical activity. If you still have energy, take a walk to a fun destination. It could be the ice cream store or a nearby pond. Just enjoy each other's company.

- **Establish family rules** by setting curfews and restricting activities during the school week. Provide youngsters with structure and a guide to their actions.
- **Review homework assignments.** Parents should question their children if homework appears to be excessive. Fourth grade is a time to introduce children to homework and help them adjust to being responsible for their own work. Students need to adjust gradually without being overwhelmed.
- **Make effective use of your time together at home.** Talk to children about their experiences to help them learn from those experiences. Also, limit the amount of time children spend with digital media. Monitor their choice of movies, websites, social media and video games.
- **Show support for the school and teachers.** Get children to school on time, regularly and with needed schoolwork and supplies. Know the school's discipline policy. Avoid criticizing the child's teacher, school or administration. Learn to use the school website. Work with the school to meet the child's needs. Get to know your child's teachers, attend school meetings and contact the school with concerns.
- **Learn about the school's expectations and practices** by talking directly with the principal and teachers, visiting the classroom and reading the handbook.
- **Join with other parents to improve the school.** A group of parents working together, such as through the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) is more effective than just one person trying to go it alone. Volunteer to spend time at school at least once during the year. Teachers appreciate the support, and your children will know you value their education. Families and schools working together provide the best possible environment for children to learn.



Go here for more information on this and other topics.

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Understanding Your Fourth Grader

Your fourth grader is a unique individual but has specific characteristics common to this age.

Nine-year-old Traits

- learning to take responsibility for his or her actions
- high energy, often playing to the point of fatigue
- showing signs of being more responsible, inner directed, an independent worker
- able to plan and organize
- inconsistent appetite and sleep patterns
- poor posture
- less interested in fantasy, more involved in the real world
- appreciates being trusted
- overly concerned with performances, wants to please
- peer conformity in dressing is important
- sets high standards and gets frustrated with self when standards are not reached
- is easily upset
- begins hero worship
- lots of physical habitual movements: fingers in hair, slouching, picking at nails
- is concerned about right and wrong, being fair

Helping Children Solve Their Problems

Together you can work toward solutions. Problem solving is a process that takes time and effort. Teach your child that no problem is so great that it cannot be handled by working together.

Problem-solving Steps

The adult's job is to help the child remain focused on the problem-solving process.

1. Gather Data

Collect information about events and feelings. Avoid blaming. Ask: "What happened?" "How did you feel?" "What happened next?"

2. State the Problem Clearly

Solving a problem is easier if your child has a clear understanding of it.

3. Generate Ideas

Go for quantity. List as many as possible. Encourage all ideas, silly and practical. Avoid criticizing ideas.

4. Evaluate Ideas

Consider all ideas. Help your child learn to determine consequences of each by asking, "What might happen if you _____?" or "How will Mary feel if you _____?"

5. Ask for a Decision and Help the Child Plan

Look at the list of alternatives and ask your child which solution they would like to try first. Plan a time to evaluate how the solution is working. Try another solution if the first one is not successful. Congratulate your child for his or her efforts. This type of coaching will prepare your students to problem solve on their own.