



Volume 12, Issue 4  
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# PARENT POWER

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A Letter From Our Principals, Mary Bekeris & Rene Thompson

December 2019

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

Thanksgiving has already come and gone, and we're counting down to our winter break!

As we enter this holiday season, however, we want to take time to thank each and every one of you for your continuous support, cooperation, time and valuable ideas as we engage in the partnership of educating your children. Your commitment to and participation in our learning community are essential to the success of our school and our children.

The three weeks between Thanksgiving and our winter holiday break are chockablock with activities at Belle Chasse Academy. Please check your school calendar and class websites frequently, and continue to join in whenever you've time.

Thanks for all your contributions, both great and small.

Have a wonderful and safe holiday season.

With warm regards,

Mary Swazey, Principal 5-8  
Rene Thompson, Principal K-4

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- Important Upcoming Dates & Topics in This Issue
- Dec. 16 & 17—ASA Lottery Registration
  - Dec. 16-20—2nd-8th grade Benchmark Testing
  - Dec. 17—Coffee with the Principals 5:30 pm
  - Dec. 20—Report Cards mailed & Early Dismissal
  - Dec. 23-Jan. 3—Winter Break
  - Establish Effective Limits
  - Attendance Issues
  - Wonderful Wordplay

# Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



December 2019

Belle Chasse Academy

## Empower your child to move forward after disappointments

What does your middle schooler do when he faces a setback? Some students recover quickly. They examine what went wrong and resolve to do things differently next time. Others are still stuck in their disappointment weeks later.

Learning how to move on after setbacks can enhance your child's achievement in school and his overall happiness—and it's a skill that can be taught. Here's how:



- **Remind your child** that a setback doesn't mean that he can't succeed. Everyone faces setbacks.
- **Allow him to solve** his own problems. Let him develop his own plan for responding to a low grade, for example. You can help him practice what he will say to the teacher, but expect *him* to say it.
- **Encourage him to set** realistic goals for improvement. Then help him design plans to achieve them.
- **Teach your child** that life has its ups and downs. Kids who spend time on social media often think that everyone else has a perfect life. Tell your child, "Don't compare the reality of your daily life with their highlights."
- **Set an example.** Your child is always watching you. If you handle disappointments with grace, he'll learn healthy coping skills.

Source: "How Self-Regulation Can Help Young People Overcome Setbacks," ScienceDaily, niswc.com/mid\_bounceback.



## Why foreign language study matters

Research shows the benefits of learning a foreign language go far beyond knowledge of the language itself. Language learning can develop your child's:

- **Memory.** The more students learn and recall new vocabulary the stronger their memory gets.
- **Understanding** of her first language. Seeing how the two languages are alike and how they differ helps improve reading, writing, and even testing skills.
- **Problem-solving skills.** Studies show that students who speak two languages also tend to do better in math and science.
- **Awareness** of other cultures and global changes.
- **Ability to get a job.** The majority of U.S. employers report an increasing need for workers with foreign language skills.
- **Sense of achievement.** Mastering a language shows students they can take on challenges.

Source: "What Does Research Show About the Benefits of Language Learning?" American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, niswc.com/mid\_language.

## Discuss tough situations before they happen

Doing the right thing takes judgment. To help your child make wise choices, discuss possible thorny situations with him in advance. What would he do if a friend asked to copy his homework? Role-playing things he could say in response prepares him to use good judgment when it really counts.



## Have conversations that encourage thinking

Thinking critically about a topic deepens students' understanding of it. To give your child chances to practice critical thinking:

- **Discuss current events.** Encourage your child to ask questions about things she sees online or hears at school.
- **Read a news article** aloud. Ask what she thinks about specific topics in it.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** "What have you learned that has changed your opinion about something?"

## Establish effective limits

It's normal for middle schoolers to test limits and press for more freedom. But they haven't outgrown a need for clear boundaries. When setting limits for your child:



- **Be specific.** "No gaming until your homework is done."
- **Explain your reasoning.** "School is your top priority."
- **Get your child's input.** You may not follow his suggestions, but hear him out.
- **Set reasonable consequences,** then avoid nagging about rules. If he doesn't obey them, enforce the consequences.



## How can I help my child have more self-confidence?

**Q:** I'm worried that my eighth grader lacks self-confidence. She hunches her shoulders and seems uncomfortable when talking to other kids and adults. Sometimes she says she can't do something before she tries. What should I do?



**A:** Middle schoolers are a self-conscious bunch. They often feel as if the whole world is watching them. They avoid talking and doing things for fear they'll say or do something that will embarrass them. But a poor self-image and lack of confidence can affect grades and friendships and make kids vulnerable to negative peer pressure.

To boost your child's belief in herself:

- **Provide unconditional love.** Let your child know you will always love her—no matter what she does or doesn't do.
- **Notice things she does right** more than things she does wrong. Give specific praise: "That's a good point. You've really thought this through."
- **Share your experiences.** Your child may be relieved to learn that you have also had to overcome self-doubt.
- **Give your child opportunities** to make decisions for herself.
- **Support her strengths.** Encourage your child to pursue things she loves and is good at.



## Are you helping your child volunteer?

Participating in community service teaches kids about the needs of others. At the same time, they learn that they can make a difference in the world. Are you encouraging your middle schooler to volunteer? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you discuss** with your child the responsibility to help others who are less fortunate?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you suggest** that your child volunteer for causes that are meaningful to him?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you help** your child find ways to get involved?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you support** your child's service in ways you can, such as by giving him a ride or arranging a carpool?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you join** your child in volunteering when you can?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your child learn and grow by helping others. For each no, try that idea.*

*"What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."*

*—Jane Goodall*

## Apply math skills to life

Show your child that math is more than abstract concepts—it's an essential everyday skill! To help her put math into practice:

- **Give your child** a grocery receipt. Ask her to add up how much your family spent on snack foods.
- **Have your child** handle measurements around the house, such as room area and furniture sizes when you want to rearrange your space.
- **Encourage your child** to read and interpret graphs. Look for them in the newspaper, in print or online.

Source: "Math Matters in Everyday Life," Northern Illinois University, [niswc.com/mathforlife](http://niswc.com/mathforlife).

## Look into attendance issues

By mid year, some students' attendance has begun to slip. If you find out that your child has been arriving late to a particular class—or skipping it altogether—make an appointment to speak to his teacher. There could be something going on that's causing your child to stay away. The sooner you figure out what the problem is, the more quickly you can begin to address it.

## Don't let your child take a vacation from reading

Maintain your middle schooler's momentum over winter break by setting aside 20 minutes every day for reading. To motivate her:

- **Give her a reason** to read. If she enjoys cooking, she could read cookbooks to find a recipe to try.
- **Give books, magazines** or bookstore gift cards to your child as holiday gifts.
- **Let your child choose** a movie to watch that is based on a book. But encourage her to read the book first!



### Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

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# Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas parents can use to help students  
do well in school*

Belle Chasse Academy



THE  
**PARENT**  
INSTITUTE

## December 2019

## Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Start a healthy habit with your child, such as drinking plenty of water.
- 2. Does your child study well with others? If so, let her start a study group.
- 3. Talk about ways your family can do something for others this month.
- 4. Limit interruptions during your child's homework time.
- 5. Let your child "overhear" you talking positively about him.
- 6. Look online for a list of festive events. Plan to attend one as a family.
- 7. Help your child collect gently-used clothing she no longer wears to donate to charity.
- 8. Write your child's name in a vertical column. Have him use each letter to begin a line of a poem.
- 9. Test observation skills. Can your child describe someone that just passed by on the street? Challenge each other.
- 10. Talk with your child about a choice you have made. Then talk about the consequences.
- 11. Suggest that you and your child exchange surprise good deeds. Do unexpected favors for each other.
- 12. Limit drinks with caffeine at night. They can deprive your child of needed sleep.
- 13. React calmly if your child brings home a bad grade. Ask what she thinks she can do to improve it.
- 14. Tell a story with your child. Take turns adding sentences.
- 15. Bake cookies together. Have your child calculate what you would need to double the recipe.
- 16. Teach your child to read the utility meters and determine the amount of water and electricity your family uses each month.
- 17. Show your child stress-relieving techniques, such as deep breathing.
- 18. Encourage your child to ask *who, what, when, where, why* and *how* when doing research.
- 19. Ask your child to record "A day in the life of our family." He can take or draw pictures, or write down what he observes.
- 20. Challenge your child to plan and schedule a fun family evening.
- 21. Ask your child what three autographs she would like to collect if she could. Why would she choose those?
- 22. Have your child talk to older relatives about their childhood days.
- 23. Respect your child's privacy. It fosters self-esteem and independence.
- 24. Ask family members to write down two positive things about each member of the family.
- 25. Write your child a letter about his most admirable qualities.
- 26. Share stories that convey your family's values and history.
- 27. Talk with your child about her priorities.
- 28. Look for a skill you and your child can learn together. It's a fun way to get to know your child on a new level.
- 29. Help your child organize his room.
- 30. Ask your child for advice about a problem or decision you are facing.
- 31. Help your child set—and write down—goals for the coming year. Set some for yourself as well.

**Helping Students Learn**  
MIDDLE SCHOOL  
Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

# January 2020

## Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Give your child a calendar (in print or in an app). Have her use it to keep track of school assignments and events.
- 2. Encourage your child to start a diary or journal.
- 3. Ask your child to name two ways he could be a better friend.
- 4. With your child, make a list of the best times you had together during the past year. Schedule time to do them again this year, if possible.
- 5. Talk with your child about an abstract concept, such as *justice*.
- 6. Discuss your expectations for your child's long-range education goals.
- 7. Have your child write down an estimate of how long an assignment will take. Then have her time how long it really takes.
- 8. Ask your child, "If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?"
- 9. Review your rules about drug and alcohol use with your child.
- 10. Let your child invite friends to stay for a family dinner. It's a great way to learn more about his peer group.
- 11. Make sure your child eats a nutritious breakfast every day.
- 12. Have your child write a letter to an author, lawmaker or celebrity.
- 13. Ask your child what cartoon character she would be if she could pick any one.
- 14. Try to have a rhyming conversation with your child. It may be tough at first, but you'll get better!
- 15. Fill a basket with newspaper clippings and other conversation starters. Choose one at dinner.
- 16. Ask your child about his most challenging school subject. Together, brainstorm about ways to make it easier.

- 17. While your child does homework, do some quiet work yourself.
- 18. Visit the library. Look for a book your child and you might both enjoy.
- 19. Share a poem with your child. How does she interpret it?
- 20. Don't use problems with homework as an excuse to criticize your child or argue about other issues.
- 21. Keep credit card offers you receive. Ask your child to figure out the monthly interest on a \$100 purchase for each card.
- 22. Comment on one specific task your child did well today.
- 23. Ask your child to teach you something he's learning in school.
- 24. Show your child photos of herself as a baby. Talk about how special she was—and still is.
- 25. Let your child choose a recipe to follow from a cookbook.
- 26. Learn a new word at breakfast. Challenge family members to use it three times during the day.
- 27. Get a deck of cards. Each player turns over one card. The player who correctly multiplies the cards fastest wins them.
- 28. Compliment your child on something about his appearance today.
- 29. A *palindrome* is a word or phrase that reads the same forward and backward, like *mom* and *top spot*. Together, think of others.
- 30. List your priorities, including family. Does your schedule reflect them?
- 31. Point out an example of prejudice to your child. Talk about ways to deal with intolerance.



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# February 2020

## Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. With your child, brainstorm ways to reduce screen time.
- 2. Let your child daydream sometimes. It can strengthen creativity and coping skills.
- 3. Talk about your family's ethnic background with your child.
- 4. Encourage your child to brainstorm ways to solve problems at school—before asking for your help.
- 5. Watch a TV commercial with your child. Notice and discuss the techniques it uses to influence people.
- 6. Ask your child to add two four-digit numbers. Can she figure it out on paper before you can with a calculator?
- 7. Suggest a few activities that your child can do alone, such as drawing and putting together a jigsaw puzzle.
- 8. Have your child time how long a bus or car trip takes. How many miles did you travel? What was your average speed?
- 9. Patiently explain the reason for a rule your child doesn't like.
- 10. Help your child think of tough situations he might face. How would he handle them?
- 11. With your child, look for ways to add peaceful moments to your lives.
- 12. Encourage your child to be a humble winner and a gracious loser.
- 13. Have each family member prepare one part of a meal, then enjoy it together.
- 14. Cut out small paper hearts. Write a reason you love your child on each one. Tape them together to make a chain of hearts.
- 15. Practice active listening with your child. Listen carefully while she talks. Repeat what you hear in your own words.
- 16. Spend 20 minutes on DEAR time today (Drop Everything And Read).

- 17. Make raisins dance. Have your child add a few to a glass of clear soda. They rise as bubbles collect, and fall after bubbles pop at the surface.
- 18. Be positive about your child's ability to learn, even if he is discouraged.
- 19. Write your child a note of thanks for a time she helped you.
- 20. Look for an educational TV show or video to watch with your child tonight.
- 21. Make up trivia questions about your family. Quiz one another at the dinner table.
- 22. Take a walk with your child and use all five senses to observe the world around you.
- 23. Give your child a cereal box. Ask him to calculate how many calories he will take in if he eats one serving a day for 25 days.
- 24. Faced with a difficult parenting situation? Teachers and other parents at school can be helpful sources of advice.
- 25. Is your child overwhelmed by a task? Have her commit five minutes to working on it. She may realize it's not so bad.
- 26. Read a newspaper editorial with your child. Tell him if you agree with the opinions stated. Ask what he thinks.
- 27. Think about your expectations of your child. Ask if there's a new responsibility she thinks she could handle.
- 28. For more time with your child, create a new weekly ritual together.
- 29. Ask your child to recommend a book for you to read.



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# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

Belle Chasse Academy  
Jane Dye, School Leader

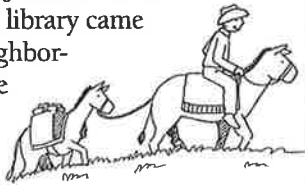
## Book Picks



### Read-aloud favorites

#### ■ *Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia* (Jeanette Winter)

What if the library came to your neighborhood on the back of a donkey?



This is the true story of a Colombian school-teacher's traveling library that brought books to children in remote villages. (Also available in Spanish.)

#### ■ *Dragons Love Tacos* (Adam Rubin)

When a little boy discovers that dragons like to eat tacos, he decides to host a taco party for them. But if a fire-breathing dragon accidentally gets a bite of spicy salsa, look out! A silly story about a dragon party that turns into a disaster.



#### ■ *Just a Second* (Steve Jenkins)

In just a single second, a bumblebee flaps its wings 100 times and the earth travels 18½ miles. This nonfiction book will help your child think about time in fascinating ways. She'll also discover different methods of measuring time.

#### ■ *Bedtime Is Canceled* (Cece Meng)

Maggie and her brother write their parents an official-looking note: "Bedtime is canceled." Somehow, the note blows out the window, lands in a newspaper office, and ends up in a headline. Soon, bedtime really is canceled, and exhausted children quickly discover the importance of sleep.

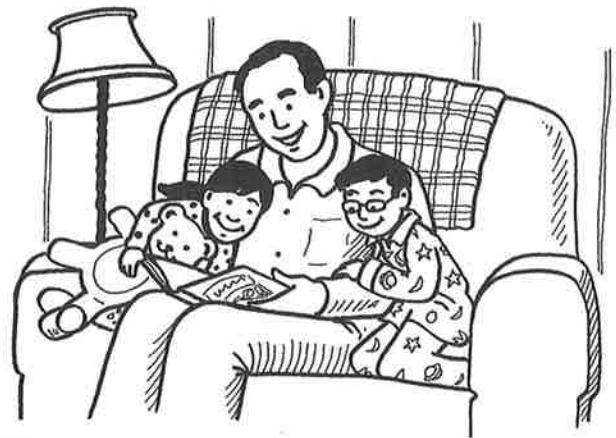


## Time for a story

Want to spend time with your youngster, build her reading skills, and help her learn to love books? You can do all three when you read aloud. Here are suggestions.

### Read regularly

Try to read to your child every day. You might aim for 10–15 minutes of bedtime reading for a peaceful end to the day. Bring along a book, and read to her during a sibling's sports practice. Or curl up together with a book when you get home from work.



### Take turns choosing books

Your youngster may want to hear old favorites again and again. That's fine! When it's your turn to pick, add new titles and variety, such as nonfiction or poetry.

### Let her participate

Ask your child to turn the pages while you read. Also, she can finish sentences that rhyme or fill in words she knows. Go slowly so she has time to understand

the story and look at the illustrations. She'll enjoy read-aloud time more if she plays an active role.

### Be playful

You can use different voices for different characters (a high, squeaky voice for a mouse or a deep, booming voice for a horse). Or substitute your youngster's name for the main character's name, and use family members' names for others.

*Note:* You don't have to be an expert reader—your child will love it when you read aloud because it's *you*.♥

## Writing that makes sense

As your child first learns to write, his stories may not always make sense to others. Help his writing flow logically with these two ideas.

**1.** Even if your youngster isn't writing sentences yet, he can tell you stories. As he describes the new class pet or something funny that happened at lunch, you can jot down his tale. He'll practice relating events in a logical order, and that can help when he writes.

**2.** Let your child read his stories to you. Ask questions to encourage him to add information ("What did you do with your friends at recess?") or to clear up a confusing part ("Who said, 'Let's go home'—you or your brother?").♥



# Spot the details

What is an archaeologist? What do bears eat? Nonfiction books have the answers—and if your child reads carefully, he will find them. The following suggestions can help him read for details and boost his comprehension.

**Read around the text.** The pages of many nonfiction books are covered with “extras” that stories don’t have (headings, photo captions, an index, a glossary). Point out these features. Then, ask your youngster what questions he has about the topic that the book might answer. Say he’s reading *Archaeologists Dig for Clues* by Kate Duke. He might



think, “What tools do archaeologists use?” or “What are fossils?” Help him read the book, and see how many answers he can find.

**Pair fiction with nonfiction.**

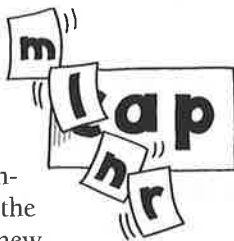
Together, read a story like *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (James Marshall) followed by a nonfiction book such as *Bears* (Deborah Hodge). As you read the second book, encourage your child to look for ways that real bears are different from the fictional ones. For example, he might say that real bears eat things like grass, berries, fish, and insects, while the three bears eat porridge.♥

**Fun with Words**

## Wonderful wordplay

Use these activities to build your child’s phonemic awareness—her ability to hear sounds in words:

- Choose a three-letter word, such as *cap*. Have your youngster substitute different beginning sounds from the alphabet to make new words (*lap*, *map*, *nap*, *rap*, *sap*, *tap*, *zap*). How many can she think of?



- Pick a long word, and tell her to clap once as she says each syllable. For *mozzarella*, she would clap four times: *moz-za-rel-la*.

- Ask your child to say a word without the first sound. *Example*: “Can you say *sit* without the *s*?” (*Answer*: *It*)

- Think of a word, and give your youngster a “sound” clue to figure it out. For instance, “I’m thinking of a word for something that you chew but don’t swallow. The word has an *uh* sound in the middle.” (*Answer*: *Gum*)♥

**OUR PURPOSE**

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children’s reading, writing, and language skills.

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## Vocabulary boosters

A large vocabulary can turn your child into a better reader and writer. Try these everyday ways to help her learn new words.

**Keep your ears open**

When you and your youngster go places, point out words that people use. Maybe a waiter describes an *entree* or the dentist talks about *molars*. Encourage your child to figure out what the words mean by the way they’re used.



**Go beyond nouns**

Help your youngster add adjectives and verbs to her vocabulary. Sports and games offer opportunities to use action words. Let your child hear you comment on the softball that *soars* or the runner who *sprints*. When she sends thank you notes or greeting cards, suggest descriptive words (a *polka-dotted* shirt, a *fantastic* birthday).♥

**Parent to Parent**

## A journal-writing tradition

My grandson Keith saw me writing in my journal and asked what I was doing. I explained that my grandfather got me started writing in a journal when I was a little boy. Keith said he wanted to start a journal, too, so I gave him a notebook.

He asked me what he should write about. I told him that I use my journal mostly to store

memories, but he can do whatever he wants—even draw pictures. He decided to sketch the two of us writing together in our journals, and he had me help him write a sentence about his picture.

Keith has stuck with his journal for a couple of weeks already. Now when he comes to my house, he can’t wait to share what he has written and drawn.♥



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### **How do I shop at AmazonSmile?**

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### **How do I select a charitable organization to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?**

On your first visit to AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)), select Belle Chasse Academy to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. We will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) will result in a donation.