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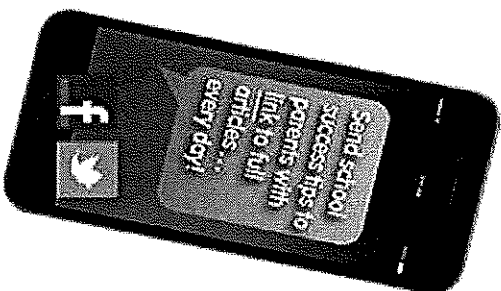
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# Elementary School Parents<sup>®</sup> make the difference!

October 2020  
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Shamokin Area Elementary School



## A positive mindset can help your child succeed in math

**T**hink your child's state of mind has nothing to do with his performance in math class? Think again. According to research, the brain's "emotion" and "intellect" centers are connected. In fact, they are permanently entwined.

What this means for your child is that his mindset can affect his ability to solve math problems. Think about it: If he's nervous about an assignment in front of him, he may struggle to answer the questions. But if he's calm and confident, he'll likely do much better.

To encourage a positive mindset when it comes to math:

- **Remind your child** that effort leads to achievement. Does your child claim he can't do math because he's "just not smart"? That implies people are either born intelligent or not. But that isn't true. Buckling down can lead to smarts.
- **Send the right message.** Don't say, "That problem looks hard." If your child worries about something being too difficult, he may decide he can't do it. Instead, say, "That problem looks challenging." Let your child know that figuring out challenging math problems is rewarding and fun.
- **Teach your child to relax.** Suggest that he picture something happy or fun. Remind him that he knows more than he thinks he does. If you can help your child calm his nerves before he picks up his pencil, he'll have a better chance for success!

Source: E. Digitale, "Positive attitude toward math predicts math achievement in kids," Stanford Medicine, [nlswc.com/elem\\_mathpositive](https://nlswc.com/elem_mathpositive).

## Reinforce the concept of time with your child



Time management is essential for school success. However, there's a lot for young students to learn

when it comes to the concept of time: How long is a *second*, *minute*, *hour* and *day*? What about a *week*, *month* and *year*? How do *past*, *present* and *future* relate?

The more your child understands time and how it's measured, the more responsible she can be. She can "be ready in 10 minutes" or estimate how long it will take to do her homework.

While a real mastery of time doesn't come until later in the elementary years, this four-step process can help your child have a better sense of time:

1. **Ask your child** to select a task. She could jump up and down 50 times, draw a picture or complete two math problems.
2. **Have her estimate** how many minutes it will take her to complete the task.
3. **Help her use a timer** to track the time it takes to complete the task.
4. **Have your child check** how close her estimate was to the actual time it took.

## Frequent hand washing keeps students healthy and safe



Scientists estimate that up to 80% of infections, including COVID-19, are spread through poor hand hygiene. That means hand washing is an important way to stay healthy. Regular hand washing not only removes germs, it prevents the spread of germs to others.

Teach your child to:

- **Wash properly.** He should wet his hands, lather with soap and scrub for 20 seconds. It takes about this long to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
- **Include all parts of his hands**—front, back, fingernails, between fingers, etc.
- **Rinse and dry thoroughly.** After washing, he should hold his hands under running water to rinse. Then,

he should shake his hands a few times and dry them with a clean towel.

- **Wash his hands often.** Soap and water work best. If they aren’t available, he can use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Remind your child to avoid touching his face unless he washes his hands first.

Source: “Clean Hands Save Lives,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [niscw.com/elem\\_handwash](http://niscw.com/elem_handwash).

**“Coronaviruses are not particularly tough. Soap and water, used properly, will dislodge the virus from your hands and can destroy their outer surface area.”**

—Daniel M. Parker, Ph.D.

## Are you helping your child tackle that big project?



It’s a fact of school life: The older the child, the bigger the project. Do you know how to support your child as she tackles a big school project? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out: \_\_\_1. **Do you guide** your child if she needs to select a topic? Help her narrow down a broad topic to specifics she can manage.

\_\_\_2. **Do you help** your child break down the project into lots of small steps? She can schedule time for each step on a calendar. As she finishes each step, she can cross it off.

\_\_\_3. **Do you help** your child make a list of all the supplies she will need to avoid last-minute crises?

\_\_\_4. **Do you help** your child locate reliable books, websites and other resources that can help?

\_\_\_5. **Do you review** your child’s work, but avoid doing it for her?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you are taking positive steps to help your child succeed on the big school project. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

## How to get the most out of parent-teacher conferences



Some parents say that the parent-teacher conference is one of the most valuable things they participate in all year. Whether in person or online, these one-on-one meetings are great for learning more about your child’s strengths and weaknesses, and will give both you and the teacher a better idea about the year ahead.

To get the most from your meeting:

- **Talk to your child.** Ask him to tell you what he thinks are his easiest and most difficult subjects—and why. Does he have any questions he’d like you to ask the teacher?
- **Make a list** of things to tell the teacher. You know your child better than anyone else. For example, has there been a change in your family situation? Sharing some personal information will make it easier for the teacher to meet your child’s needs.
- **Write down your questions.** Ask things such as:
  - » *Is my child in different groups for different subjects?*
  - » *Are my child’s reading and math skills on target?*
  - » *Does my child participate in class discussions?*
  - » *Is my child working up to his ability?*
- **Be on time.** Teachers usually schedule conferences back to back. Promptness will allow you to take full advantage of the time the teacher has available.
- **Create an action plan.** Ask the teacher what you can do to reinforce what your child is learning. Try to get at least one or two specific suggestions.

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# Help your child understand and appreciate diversity



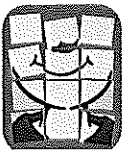
Now more than ever, it's important to teach children to respect and celebrate people from different cultures and

backgrounds. To promote diversity:

- **Learn about the challenges** and contributions of people of different races in this country. Read books together, such as *Resist: 35 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up Against Tyranny and Injustice* by Veronica Chambers.
- **Talk to friends, neighbors** and coworkers who are from different backgrounds. Ask them to share some of their experiences and traditions with you and your child.
- **Find an international pen pal.** Check out free pen pal sites, such as [www.studentsoftheworld.info](http://www.studentsoftheworld.info).

- **Learn about holiday customs** of people around the world. Go online and check out books to discover how other people celebrate their special days.
- **Watch television programs** about people from other cultures.
- **Learn simple words** in different languages. Teach your child to count to 10 in another language. Learn how to say *hello* and *thank you*.
- **Cook authentic recipes.** Pick a culture and search online for a recipe to try. Prepare the dish with your child and enjoy it together.
- **Learn about crafts** from around the world. Search online for examples and make a few with your child. You could make a mask, drums, a hand fan, worry beads, tissue paper flowers and more.

# Your child's vision plays a vital role in academic success



Students with vision problems may struggle more than their classmates. If your child can't see what's on the screen—

or what's on a worksheet—she's likely to fall behind. And that means her grades can suffer.

Unfortunately, kids don't always know that they can't see well. They simply rub their eyes, squint and try their best to see. It's important to get your child's eyes examined yearly.

To protect her eyesight overall:

- **Provide good light.** Be sure her reading lamp is bright enough. If it's too dim, she'll strain to see the page.
- **Build in breaks.** If your child spends long stretches in front of a screen, have her take frequent 10-minute breaks. Experts believe too much

screen time leads to blurry vision and problems with focusing.

- **Provide sunglasses.** Bright sunlight can damage children's eyes. Your child may not think to wear sunglasses when she's outside, so remind her to put them on.
- **Commit to safety.** Does your child play sports? Make sure she wears the proper protective eye wear, such as safety glasses or swim goggles.
- **Serve healthy foods.** Good vision starts with good nutrition, so feed your child a variety of healthy foods. From leafy greens to fortified milk, nutritious foods are proven to support strong minds, bodies and eyes.

**Source:** S.L.J. White and others, "Vision screening outcomes of Grade 3 children in Australia: Differences in academic achievement," *International Journal of Educational Research*, [nswc.com/elem\\_vision](http://nswc.com/elem_vision).

**Q:** My child studies before test time—but he can't always recall the facts! How can I help him improve his memory?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** There are many memorization tricks that may help your child remember facts. Here are a few:

- **Acronyms.** Your child can make a word out of the first letter of terms to be memorized, such as HOMES for the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior).
- **Sentences.** Help your child use the first letter of each word to make a silly sentence, such as "My very educated mother just served us noodles" for the planets in order of their distance from the sun: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune.
- **Grouping.** Have your child group things into manageable chunks. Instead of memorizing the capitals of every state, he should divide them into geographic regions and memorize each region.
- **Recitation.** Have your child repeat facts out loud and focus on the meaning of what he is saying.
- **Rhymes.** Have your child think of rhymes about facts, such as "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue."
- **Images.** Your child can draw or imagine a picture of what he's studying. Then he can recall that image during the test.
- **Personalization.** Have your child relate the information to his own life. An important date in history might also be a relative's birthday.
- **Singing.** Your child can replace words in a familiar song with facts he needs to remember.

# It Matters: Responsibility

## Overprotective parents hinder responsibility



When children are born, it's the job of their parents to protect them in every way they can. Once kids reach

elementary school, however, they become more capable and are able to do lots of things for themselves.

Unfortunately, many parents still try to protect their children from *everything*. And all of that well-intended "protection" can smother their children's budding independence.

Overprotective parenting makes it difficult for children to learn essential skills—such as communication, negotiation, perseverance, responsibility and decision making.

To avoid the many pitfalls of overprotective parenting:

- **Don't do everything** for your child. Let him do things for himself. Will he make mistakes? Probably. But he will learn from those mistakes.
- **Don't rescue your child** when he forgets things. If he forgets to complete an assignment, don't contact the teacher to ask for an extension. Instead, help your child learn from the consequences.
- **Don't try to negotiate** a better grade for your child. If you or your child are confused about a grade he receives, encourage your child to talk to the teacher about it first.
- **Don't call the parent** of a child your child is complaining about. Give your child a chance to work it out. However, if it is a serious problem, such as cyberbullying, contact the school immediately.

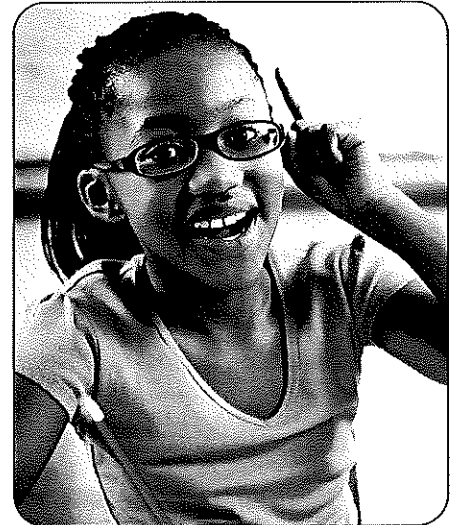
## Promote independence with a checklist of responsibilities

**W**hether it's keeping track of assignments or taking care of school property, responsible behavior is a must for school success. And the best way to *teach* your child responsibility is to *give* her responsibilities.

Sit down with your child and make a list of tasks she's ready to handle on her own. Then make a checklist of everything you expect her to do. Agree on small rewards for a job well done, and consequences for times your child shirks responsibility.

Here is a starter checklist of responsibilities you can adapt:

- **Going** to bed on time.
- **Getting up** on time.
- **Fixing** breakfast.
- **Completing** homework.
- **Maintaining** grades.
- **Getting along** with siblings.
- **Keeping** room clean.
- **Completing** assigned chores.
- **Reading** at least 15 minutes a day.
- **Taking care** of personal hygiene.
- **Feeding/caring** for pets.
- **Limiting** recreational screen time.



## Help your elementary schooler establish a homework routine



You want to help your child take responsibility for learning and for completing homework.

Creating and following a daily homework routine can do just that.

To establish an effective routine, make sure your child has:

- **A quiet study area.** If possible, occupy younger siblings in another room, and have everyone else read or work quietly.
- **A set study time.** When does your child prefer to do homework? Right away, leaving the evening

for free time? Or does she prefer to blow off some steam first and begin homework after dinner? Experiment, then have her schedule the time that works best for her.

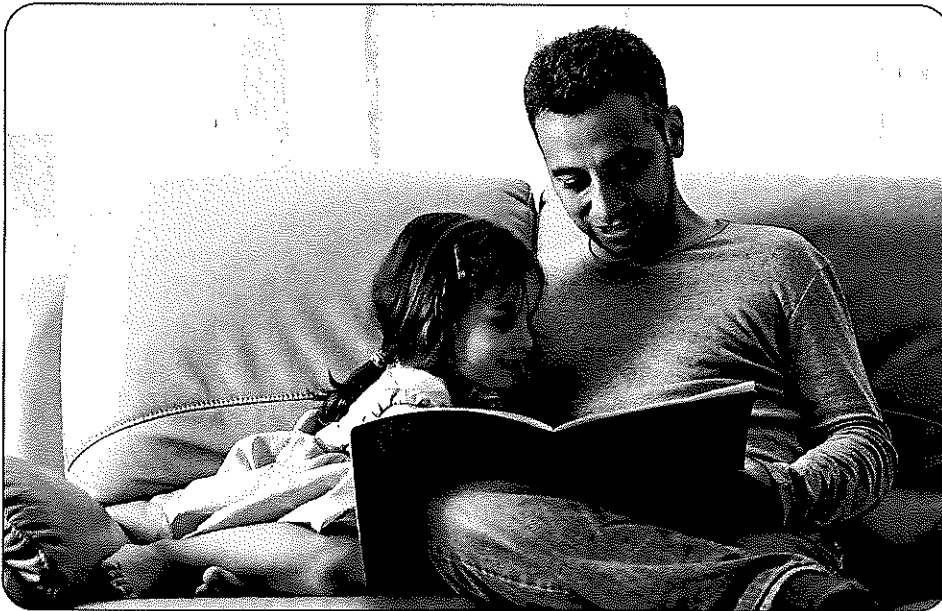
- **A homework survival kit.** Include all of the supplies she might need to complete her homework—pencils, pens, paper, sharpener, erasers, crayons, markers, glue stick, scissors, ruler, etc.
- **Standby support.** Encourage her to get phone numbers of classmates she can call when she has homework questions.

# Early Childhood Parents®

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Shamokin Area Elementary School

***make the difference!***



## Five reasons you should read aloud to your child every day

**R**eading aloud to young children is one of the most effective things parents can do to help prepare their children to succeed in school. But according to the Reach Out and Read National Center, a nonprofit group focused on reading research, fewer than half of children under five are read to daily.

Here are five reasons why reading to children is so important:

1. **Children** who regularly see books and other reading material and who listen to reading aloud have a better chance of learning to read in the primary grades than children who do not.
2. **Reading aloud** gives parents and children an opportunity to share

affection. Preschoolers feel positive attention when their parents read aloud to them—which builds children's feelings of self-worth and confidence.

3. **Reading aloud** encourages children to think and use their imaginations.
4. **Reading aloud** is another way to help preschoolers learn language. Children with strong language skills tend to do better in school.
5. **Children** almost always hear words in books that they don't hear in everyday language. So reading aloud to children is one of the most effective ways to strengthen their vocabulary.

Source: "Importance of Reading Aloud," Reach Out and Read, [niswc.com/ec\\_readaloud](http://niswc.com/ec_readaloud).

## Help your child recover from small setbacks



As your preschooler explores and tries new things, it's only natural that he will experience some

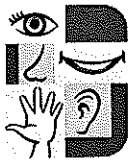
failures. Learning how to bounce back in these situations will serve him well in school and in life.

To help your child recover:

- **Be empathetic.** "I can see how sad you are that you didn't make it across the monkey bars. It's disappointing when you try to do something and it doesn't work out."
- **Offer encouragement.** "Sometimes kids must grow before their arms are strong enough to make it across the monkey bars. You're growing fast and I think you'll be ready soon. Let's try again and see how far across you can get!"
- **Be a good role model.** Your child notices how you react to your own disappointments, so handle them with grace. For example, if a new recipe doesn't turn out well, say "I tried something new and gave it my best shot—that's what matters most. I'll try again."

Source: J. Lahey, *The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed*, Harper.

## Introduce your preschooler to the power of the five senses



Children learn about their world through seeing, touching, tasting, hearing and smelling. To help your child appreciate what he can do with his senses:

- **Play 1-2-3 Look and See.** Put five items on the table. Ask your child to look at them, then cover his eyes. Take one item away. When he opens his eyes, can he guess what's missing?
- **Make a "feely" bag.** Place a variety of small items in a paper bag. Have your child close his eyes, reach his hand in and pick up an item. Can he guess what it is without looking?
- **Take a smell walk.** Lead your child around your house with his eyes closed. See what smells he can sniff and name.

- **Have a taste test.** Have your child place salt on the tip, side and back of his tongue. Then, repeat with sugar and lemon juice. Discuss which part of his tongue is more sensitive to which taste.
- **Have a listening minute.** Stand outside in the dark with your child. Have him guess the sounds he hears in the night.

**"If I, deaf, blind, find life rich and interesting, how much more can you gain by the use of your five senses!"**

—Helen Keller

## Taking regular walks can help your preschooler learn and grow

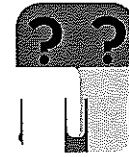


Parents often rack their brains for new ways to nurture their children's learning. Simply add learning to an activity you are probably doing anyway: taking a walk.

Walking will not only help your child stay physically fit, it can also boost her observation, math and communication skills. The key is to make walks interesting and fun. Here's how:

- **Count cats or dogs**—or anything you see! Different kinds of cars. Fire hydrants. Swings.
- **Search for five things** you and your child have never seen before.
- **Identify shapes.** What do you see that is round? Square? Oblong?
- **Point out numbers**—on mailboxes, buildings or signs.
- **See how many things** your child can find of a certain color.
- **Look for things** that need to be fixed. Overgrown weeds. A pothole. Broken windows or fences.
- **Find things** that make each of you happy. Fall leaves. A baby in a stroller. A smiling neighbor.
- **Identify letters** of the alphabet on signs. Or call out the first letter of things you pass. "M" for mailbox.
- **Play a game of I Spy.** Look ahead of you and say, "I spy something ... (smooth, pink, etc.)." See if your child can locate it. Take turns spying and guessing.
- **Be silly.** Every 20 steps or so, do something for your child to imitate—clap your hands, hop, skip or dance.
- **Notice things** that have changed since your last walk.

## Are you teaching your child to be a keen listener?



Listening is a vital skill for school success—and it can be fun to practice! Are you finding creative ways to help your child develop her listening skills? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you play games** that require careful listening, such as Simon Says?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you take turns** telling a story with your child? You make up a sentence, then your child makes up the next sentence.
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you send your child** on short missions to bring you things? Each round, you can add more items.
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you clap** a rhythm and ask your child to clap back the same rhythm?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you play** Guess the Sound? Your child shuts her eyes and you make a sound—jingling keys, crumpling paper, pouring water, etc. Your child has to guess the sound. Then switch places!

### How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your child have fun as she strengthens her listening skills. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

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# Family routines increase your child's social-emotional health



Routines don't have to be boring—and they can help your preschooler succeed in school and beyond.

According to research, kids who follow at least five positive family routines have stronger social-emotional health (SEH) than those who don't. And the better your child's SEH, the better able he is to form relationships, grasp emotions, and do well in school.

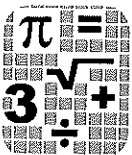
Routines help young children feel secure and figure out their place in the world. They also provide kids with structure. Routines don't need to be complicated. Simple, steady rituals are all it takes.

Here are three common routines that can benefit your child:

1. **Eating together.** Sharing daily meals with your child is the most basic and beneficial household ritual you can adopt.
2. **Sharing stories.** Whether it's a fairy tale at bedtime or a picture book each morning, start a reading routine with your child. In addition to improving his emotional health, it will boost his word smarts, too.
3. **Playing.** It doesn't matter what you play—just that you play regularly. From "weekend puzzle night" to Tic-Tac-Toe Tuesday, find a playtime routine that works for your family and follow it.

Source: E.I. Muñiz and others, "Family Routines and Social-Emotional School Readiness Among Preschool-Age Children," *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

# Focus on building skills that lead to future math success



Researchers have found that a preschooler's ability to grasp certain math concepts is a strong predictor of how she'll

perform in math when she reaches fifth grade. Three skills in particular have a significant impact on a child's future math success—counting, patterning and comparing quantities.

Luckily, there are lots of fun and simple ways to strengthen your preschooler's skills in these areas. Play a game of:

- **Count the shapes.** Sharpen your preschooler's counting and shape-recognition skills at the same time! Pick a room in your house, then see how many examples of a particular shape she can find there. Can she find five rectangles in the kitchen? How many circles are there?

- **What comes next?** Draw a simple pattern of colored squares (red, blue, green, red, blue, green). Stop coloring after a certain square, such as blue. Now ask your child what comes next. Is it another blue square? Is it a red one? Or does the pattern call for green? Once she masters simple patterns, challenge her with more complex ones.
- **Which has more?** Make two unequal piles of small objects. (Use coins, pieces of cereal, paperclips, etc.) Ask your child to tell you which pile has more in it. Then ask how she knows. (Is it taller? Is it wider?) Count together to see if she's right!

Source: B. Rittle-Johnson and others, "Early Math Trajectories: Low-Income Children's Mathematics Knowledge From Ages 4 to 11," *Child Development*, The Society for Research in Child Development, Inc.

**Q:** My son isn't very physically active, and I'm worried that he isn't getting the exercise he needs. How can I encourage him to move more?

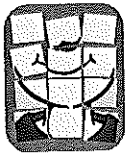
## Questions & Answers

**A:** Regular exercise helps children build strong muscles and bones, develop motor skills and boost self-esteem. It's never too early to start integrating exercise into your child's daily life.

- To promote physical activity:
  - **Schedule regular times** for exercise and stick to them. Think about when your child is likely to have the most energy.
  - **Take turns choosing** the activity. If your child likes soccer, for example, agree to play at least once a week.
  - **Plan activities** that make your child feel successful. Don't play games or sports that require too much agility or are too hard for him.
  - **Keep an exercise log.** It's fun to look through it and see how committed your whole family is to good health.
  - **Drive less and exercise more.** Brainstorm with your family about places you can walk to instead.
  - **Think of creative ways** you and your child can exercise. You could play a game of tag or have a sit-up contest. On rainy days, you might build an indoor obstacle course or make up a dance.
  - **Use exercise rather than food** as a reward. For example, "After you pick up your toys, we can go on a family walk."
  - **Limit screen time.** Watching videos and playing computer games doesn't require much physical or mental energy.

# The Kindergarten Experience

## Stereotypes can impact your child's self-image



Little girls may start out confident about their intelligence, but things change somewhere along the way. Studies show that while five-year-olds consider women to be as smart as men, they soon change their opinion. By age six, girls begin to see boys and men as brainier than girls and women.

Surprisingly, girls in first grade and beyond tend to think that girls work harder in school than boys—but they consider boys to be naturally smarter.

Why the shift? It may be because most of the explorers, scientists, artists and others studied in the classroom are male. That can send the message that women don't rise to the same heights as men. But that's because in previous generations, women were not afforded the same opportunities.

To help your kindergartner see that women are just as smart as men:

- **Applaud her effort.** When she buckles down to complete a task, pat her on the back. Show her that working hard matters. You don't need to be born knowing something in order to master it.
- **Offer examples.** Read children's books about famous women like Amelia Earhart and Sojourner Truth. Point out all the strong, successful women around your child. From her pediatrician to her kindergarten teacher, women are doing important, meaningful work!

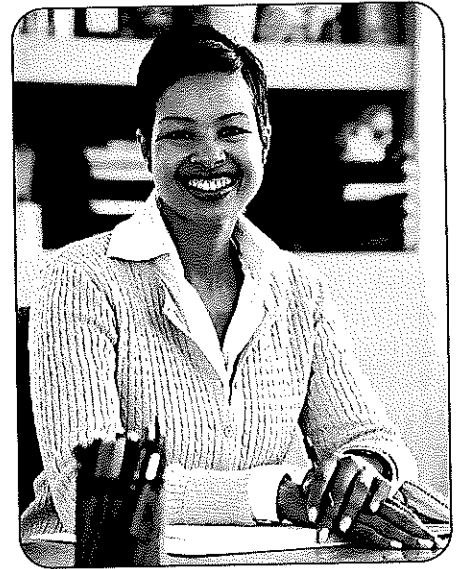
Source: L. Bian and others, "Gender stereotypes about intellectual ability emerge early and influence children's interests," *Science*, The American Association for the Advancement of Sciences.

## Preparation leads to successful parent-teacher conferences

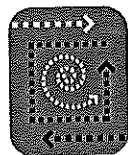
Among the many *firsts* in kindergarten is one for parents—the first parent-teacher conference. Whether your meeting is in person or online, it's natural to feel anxious. But a little preparation will go a long way toward easing your butterflies and ensuring a positive experience.

To prepare:

- **Review schoolwork.** In the days leading up to the conference, pay extra attention to your child's learning. Is homework time going smoothly? Does he seem to be struggling or excelling in certain areas? How does he feel about school?
- **Make a list.** What do you want to discuss? Include any changes in your child's life. Also ask questions, such as, "How are my child's reading skills developing?"
- **Be on time.** Conferences can be short, so don't waste a minute!
- **Keep an open mind.** All students have areas in which they can improve. Sometimes this is hard for parents to hear. Focus on solutions and remember your shared goal: helping your child succeed!



## Reinforce the concepts of size with three simple activities



There are lots of ways to help your kindergartner explore the concept of size. Encourage him to notice and compare the things around him. Use words like *bigger*, *smaller*, *shorter* and *longer* to describe them.

Then, try a few of these activities:

1. **Read the fable** "The Lion and the Mouse." Discuss the sizes of the characters. How big are their ears? Their paws? Their voices? Then, compare other animals you see,

such as a cat and a dog. Which animal is smaller?

2. **Make pancakes of all sizes.** Put them in order from smallest to largest. Which one does your child want to eat? The smallest pancake or the biggest one of all?
3. **Compare lengths.** Ask your child to measure and then compare the lengths of different items. For example, "This crayon is four inches long and that banana is eight inches. The crayon is four inches shorter than the banana."