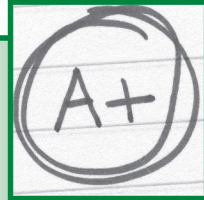


ISSUE AT A
GLANCE



Being an Advocate for Your Child
Page 1+4



Diving into the GPA
Page 2



Major Building Blocks for
Early Readers
Page 3



HUNTINGTONNews

FOR PARENTS

Volume 84

BEING AN ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

One of the top recommendations you will receive as a parent from every teacher that your child has throughout his or her education is to stay involved. When your child is younger, staying involved means helping your child with homework, encouraging him or her to become more organized and a strong time manager, and generally keeping him or her on track. As your child becomes more independent, your duties will become less hands on. Your child will take the lead on his or her education while you step into a support role.

While your parent role will certainly evolve over time, there is one aspect that should always be important: you must always advocate for your child as a student. How can you best support your child? Here are several tips:

Make sure your child's needs are being met. There may come times in your child's educational career when he or she needs additional help or support. Your child might struggle in a subject and require one-on-one help outside the classroom. Perhaps your child will encounter anxiety problems that require the expertise of the school guidance counselor. Or maybe you'll notice that your child might benefit from an

instructional approach that is different than the one preferred by his or her teacher and will want to discuss how best to help your child flourish. Whatever the situation, if you ever sense that your child's needs are not being met in the classroom, talk with his or her teacher. He or she will likely welcome your ideas and insight.

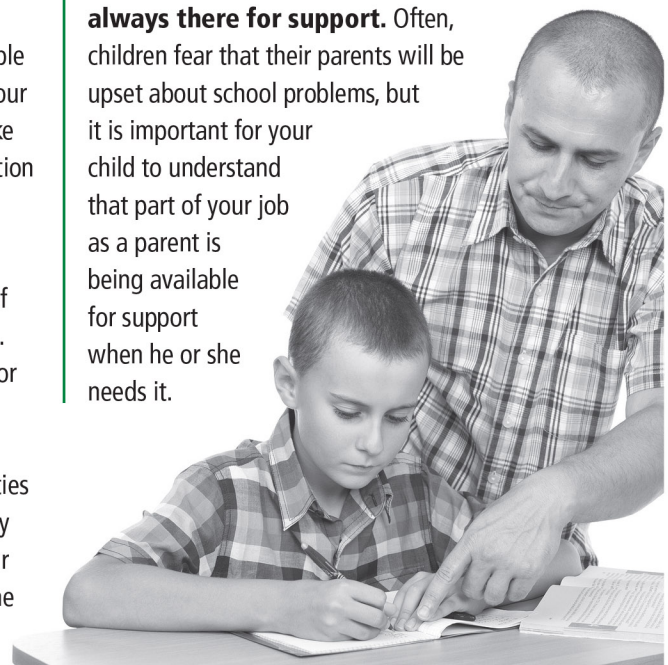
Establish a working relationship with the teacher. It goes without saying that your child's teacher should be your first point of contact at school and you should reach out early in the school year to lay the foundation for a positive, cooperative, mutually respectful partnership. Let the teacher know that you are always available should he or she have questions about your child's needs or school performance. Make clear your intentions of helpful collaboration for the benefit of your child.

Identify and nurture your child's strengths. Help your child take notice of his or her strengths and build upon them. Reach out to his or her teacher and ask for suggestions on how to give your child opportunities to build on those strengths through academic enrichment opportunities or extracurricular activities. He or she may have suggestions as simple as giving your child additional fun projects that he or she may enjoy.

Educate yourself about your child. Get to know your child as a student and do your own homework on how he or she learns. Once you better understand your child's learning preferences and styles, personality, strengths and weaknesses, you can do a little research on the most effective role for you as a parent. Your child's teacher will certainly have insight as well. The better you understand your child as a student, the more you can help him or her flourish—and the better you can support him or her when challenges arise.

Let your child know that you are always there for support. Often, children fear that their parents will be upset about school problems, but it is important for your child to understand that part of your job as a parent is being available for support when he or she needs it.

Continued on page 4



DIVING INTO THE GPA



Whether you have a new high school student or are drawing on memory from your own experience, you probably have some sort of understanding of what the Grade Point Average (better known as GPA) means and how it is calculated. However, there are a number of factors that make the GPA calculation slightly more complicated, and schools do not all calculate GPA consistently.

Here are some of the components of the GPA that you need to know before you get out your calculator:

- **GRADE POINTS** Each letter grade your student receives is assigned a numerical value. For example, A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1 and F=0.
- **GRADING SCALE** Your school's grading scale determines the letter grades that students receive. For some schools, grades awarded are A through F (no+or-), with a simple grading scale like the below:

GRADE	%	GRADE POINTS
A	90-100	5.0
B	80-89	4.0
C	70-79	3.0
D	60-69	2.0
F	0-59	1.0

Other schools have a more complicated grading scale, such as the following:

GRADE	%	GRADE POINTS
A	95-100	4.00
A-	93-94	3.67
B+	91-92	3.33
B	86-90	3.00
B-	84-85	2.67
C+	82-83	2.33
C	76-81	2.00
C-	74-75	1.67
D+	71-73	1.33
D	66-70	1.00
D-	63-65	0.67
F	0-62	0.00

- **WEIGHTED GRADE POINTS** Many high schools weight grades—meaning, they award additional grade points for Advanced Placement (AP), Honors, International Baccalaureate (IB) or other college preparatory courses. For example, a school might award the following points for weighted grades:

GRADE	%	WEIGHTED GRADE POINTS FOR HONORS	WEIGHTED GRADE POINTS FOR AP/IB
A	90-100	4.5	5.0
B	80-89	3.5	4.0
C	70-79	2.5	3.0
D	60-69	1.5	2.0
F	0-59	0.5	1.0

How exactly do you calculate a student's GPA? In its simplest form, your student's GPA for each semester can be calculated as follows: Total grade points earned / Total classes taken. Assume a student receives the following grades, none of which were AP, Honors or IB courses:

Class 1	A
Class 2	B
Class 3	C
Class 4	A
Class 5	B

Assuming the grading scale is A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1 and F=0, this student would receive a total of 16 grade points (4+3+2+4+3). To calculate GPA, take 16 points divided by / 5 classes = 3.2 GPA. However, there are a few other things you need to know about the GPA and its calculation:

- **WEIGHTING** Weighting impacts the number of grade points a student receives and every high school's policy is different. Check with the school for specifics on what classes receive what number of grade points, how weighted GPAs are calculated and more.
- **CUMULATIVE VS. SEMESTER GPA** A semester GPA is only for that semester. Your student should be sure to keep track of his or her cumulative GPA for all courses taken to date as well. The cumulative GPA is used to determine class rank and graduation honors and is used by colleges in their admissions process.
- **CREDITS** If your student's school awards partial credits for certain courses (physical education or a computer lab, for example), those classes might not receive the same number of grade points as an English or a math class. In this case, you'll need to be sure to include credits earned in the GPA calculation. In the above example, if your student received an A in a sixth class that only received 0.5 credits (while the other five were one-credit classes), his or her GPA would be calculated as follows: (4+3+2+4+3 grade points) + (4 * 0.5 grade points for the sixth class) / 5.5 classes, or 18 / 5.5 = 3.27 GPA.

BOTTOM LINE: calculating the GPA may not be as straightforward if your school weights certain classes. It's also important to keep in mind that when your teen begins to apply for colleges, those colleges will convert his or her weighted GPA to a 4.0 scale. To fully understand how the GPA is calculated and keep a running calculation of your own from term to term, ask your child's teacher to direct you to the appropriate staff person in your school or district who can provide you details on the GPA calculation policy and help you understand it.

Major Building Blocks for Early Readers

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR YOUNG READER AT HOME

If your child is an early elementary school student, you likely know how critical these first few years are in his or her reading development. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the International Reading Association, learning to read and write isn't automatic—parents and teachers must expose young children to books and experiences in drawing, pretend play and symbolic activities and guide their instruction in learning to recognize letters and sounds in order for them to become literate. Also, the spectrum of literacy development is wide. Some children may acquire skills at different times than others, and the best teachers try different approaches and techniques based on the knowledge that students have.

As your child navigates preschool through the early elementary grades, he or she will acquire a range of literacy skills that will help him or her become a capable reader. Here are a few of those building blocks and tips for how you can best support your reader's learning (as researched in depth by the National Reading Panel, a collaborative jointly established by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development):

PHONEMIC AWARENESS Put simply, the smallest units (or sounds) of spoken language are called phonemes. As your child learns more about language, he or she must understand that words are composed of different sounds (/t/ /a/ /p/ in *tap* and /p/ /i/ in *pie*, for example), that some words make the same sounds (*bag*, *band* and *bet* all start with the /b/ sound) and often, sounds are formed from multiple letters. Songs and games are a great way to help children understand the various sounds that words

make. Give your child a word (*row*) and have him or her add sounds to the beginning and end of the word to form new words (such as *grow* when /g/ is added to the beginning, or *rows* when /s/ is added to the end).

PHONICS Phonics instruction includes the teaching of letter sounds, the relationships between letters and sounds, and decoding words. One of the more effective approaches to helping students learn phonics is encouraging them to spell words out based on how they sound. Your child will learn different categories of phonics, such as consonant blends (*bl*, *br*, *sl*, *scr*), short vowels (*cat*, *dot*), long vowels (*stay*, *road*, *tie*) and consonant digraphs (*sh*, *ph*, *gh*). As your child begins to understand the sounds associated with these different letters and letter groups, he or she can use that knowledge to sound out new words.

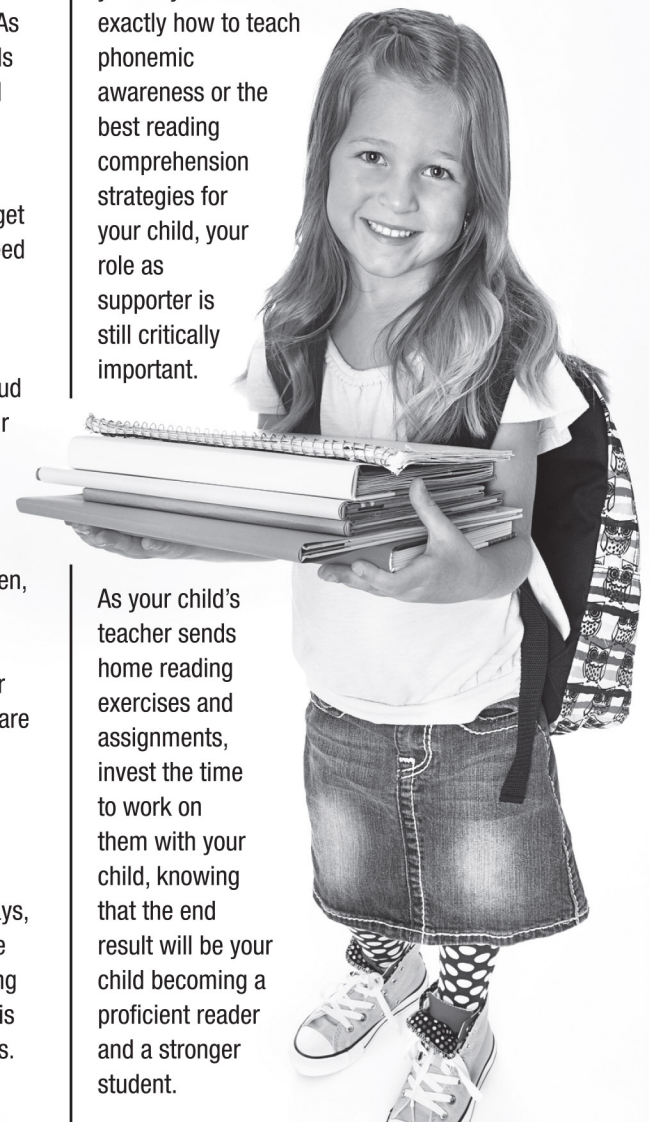
FLUENCY The goal for all students is to get them to read fluently—with accuracy, speed and good expression. Without a doubt, practice makes perfect. Read aloud with your child every day. Take turns being the reader and allowing your child to read aloud and offer constructive feedback when your child reads.

VOCABULARY At a young age, children must learn high-frequency words that are common in written and oral language. Often, these sight words are not easy to decode, and therefore, it is important that newer readers can recognize them on sight. Over time, children must also learn words that are commonly used but unlikely to be known. Reading, writing and talking are the best ways to help children expand their vocabulary.

READING COMPREHENSION These days, there is great emphasis on the importance of reading comprehension—and it has long been known that reading comprehension is essential in the acquisition of literacy skills. A form of active thinking, comprehension

involves inferring information that the author does not say explicitly, interpreting ideas and thinking through texts' meaning. There are many reading comprehension strategies that you can try at home: summarizing passages while reading a story (and having your child do the same), asking questions about the story, thinking through the plot, structure, problem and setting of a story, and pausing to confirm understanding while reading challenging or intricate passages.

It is easy to take for granted that a child will learn to read, but there are many pieces that must fall into place for it to happen. While you may not know exactly how to teach phonemic awareness or the best reading comprehension strategies for your child, your role as supporter is still critically important.



As your child's teacher sends home reading exercises and assignments, invest the time to work on them with your child, knowing that the end result will be your child becoming a proficient reader and a stronger student.



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Continued from page 1

If he or she is struggling and doesn’t know how to turn things around, explain that you want him or her to come to you for guidance—no matter the circumstances. Together, you can come up with a plan to tackle big problems.

Ask questions. Many parents assume that their presence as a classroom volunteer or PTA parent is the best way to show their child that school is important. However, making school a priority at home and asking questions about your child’s school work and learning have an even greater impact on student educational outcomes. Although it may seem like a subtle form of advocacy, your attitude toward your child’s education is highly influential. Ask your child about school and about his or her favorite subjects as well as those that cause him or her the most stress.

Being an advocate for your child is about supporting his or her learning, working effectively with his or her teachers and other school staff, and letting your child know that he or she is supported. Remember that one of the most important things you can do as your child’s advocate is to be a good influence—teach your child to advocate for him or herself, too. In doing so you will arm your child with the confidence to speak up when he or she needs help and communicate with teachers and peers to his or her benefit.

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