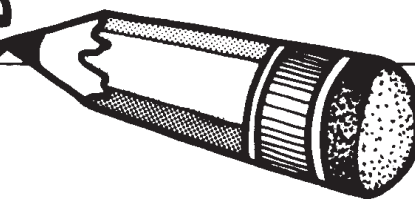


Parenting Pipeline



*A newsletter for parents of fourth-grade children
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service*

Welcome to Parenting Pipeline.

Parents want to help their children build self-esteem, develop creativity and reach physical, social, emotional and intellectual potential. This newsletter will help you better understand your fourth-grader. It will be distributed each month of the school year.

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

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 subjects. Continue to encourage reading for enjoyment by reading to and with children at home.

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 rest, a nutritious diet and a little extra nurturing.

Supporting Your Child

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

- **Relate personal experiences** and family stories that reinforce the message that effort, persistence and good character count.
- **Give children responsibilities** at home to foster self-reliance, industriousness, resourcefulness.

- **Teach children to plan ahead** by requiring them to place schoolwork and household chores before play.
- **Recognize and encourage positive behavior, efforts and performance** as well as correcting misconduct.
- **Encourage children to work to the best of their abilities in school** and to make the effort needed to succeed in their studies.
- **Establish family rules** (by such things as setting curfews and restricting activities during the school week) that provide youngsters with structure and a guide to their actions.
- **Expect to see homework assignments.** Parents should question their children if homework appears to be too excessive. Fourth grade is a time to introduce children to homework and help them adjust to being responsible for their work. Homework should not be given every day. Fourth graders need to adjust gradually without being overwhelmed.
- **Make effective use of leisure time** at home. Talk to children about their experiences to help them extract meaning from events. This skill is important to success at school. Also, limit the amount of time children spend watching television and monitor their choice of programs.
- **Show support for the school** and teachers. Get children to school on time, regularly and with needed schoolwork and supplies. Support school disciplinary measures, and work with the school to meet the child's needs. Get to know the 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 and visiting the classroom.
- **Join with other parents to improve the school.** A group of parents working together, such as through PTA, is more effective than just one person. Volunteer to spend time at school at least once during the year to read a story, chaperone a field trip, or teach a special lesson or science experiment. Teachers appreciate support and your children will know you value their education.

Families and schools working together provide the best possible environment for the schooling of children.

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 own 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
- boys enjoy staying unkempt, girls are very concerned about their appearance
- peer conformity in dressing is important
- sets high standards and gets down on himself when he doesn't achieve them
- is easily upset
- begins hero worship of older members of the same sex
- 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

Children of all ages experience problems that require the guidance of an adult. Parents can give children the ability to recognize, solve and cope with their problems.

A fourth-grader may have experienced problems in previous grades, such as friendship problems, and now has new concerns, such as managing homework. 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

It's easier to solve a problem if your child has a clear understanding of it.

Example: You want to _____ and your friend wants to _____.
What can you do so you both will be happy?

3. Generate Ideas

Go for quantity. List as many as possible. Encourage all ideas, silly and practical. Avoid criticizing ideas. Review the problem often to generate thought.

4. Evaluate Ideas

Consider all ideas. Help your child learn to distinguish between good and poor ideas. Examine consequences of each by using, "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 for a decision. Help implement the idea by asking, "What do you need to do first?" Plan time to evaluate. If the solution is not working, try again. Congratulate your child for his efforts and for working toward a solution. Avoid fixing things for your child.

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with fourth-graders by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other nutrition, youth and family programs.