

November–  
December  
2007



**SEPTA's 10<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary**

# The Advocate

*for the Chances for All Children to Learn to Soar*

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## Homework Strategies for Busy Families

*By Sharon Marshall Lockett*

Today's families are busier than ever. Helping your children with their homework may seem like another task that takes up too much time. Fortunately, homework is something that can be managed creatively, reducing the amount of time spent on it while increasing its effectiveness and the sense of connection you have with your children.

### **Make homework a shared activity**

Invite your child's friends over so they can do homework together. Don't be afraid to join in these study sessions from time to time. When you do, ask the students to explain their answers—encouraging them to explore their reasoning helps them learn their assignments more thoroughly. It's all right to let them

digress periodically, as long as they get their work done. It makes learning more enjoyable.

Two-parent households can optimize their total "together" time by sharing responsibilities for homework, evening chores, and child care. Older brothers and sisters can tutor younger children.

Single-parent households can join forces; while one parent helps the children with homework, another can take care of meals, chores, and child care for younger children. These arrangements can provide all parents with a little more time to spend getting involved in their children's education, and a lot more moral support.

### **Use alternative sites**

Some schools have realized they need to provide homework and tutoring centers. If your (continued page 2)

### The Advocate

The Advocate is the free public newsletter of the Special Education PTA of South River.

Published monthly from August to June of each year by the Executive Board Members of the SEPTA - this newsletter is mailed directly to families of classified students of the South River Public School District from the Office of Special Education. Additional copies are available at the South River Public Library. Past editions of the Advocate can be downloaded from our website. Interested individuals may sign up for our electronic newsletter and a listing of other newsletters related to special education issues by visiting our website at:

[www.specialeducationpta.org](http://www.specialeducationpta.org)

Questions related to the Special Education PTA as an organization, the services we provide, and our calendar of events can be answered by telephone at: (732) 651-7157 or by email at [info@specialeducationpta.org](mailto:info@specialeducationpta.org)

If you would like to submit letters or articles, post information or contribute pictures to be included in future editions of the Advocate please contact our newsletter by email at: [info@specialeducationpta.org](mailto:info@specialeducationpta.org)

## Can you spare a few minutes a month?

Would you like to help us plan our Holiday Party or Spring 2008 Event?

We are actively looking for anyone who would be willing to help plan

either of these events....

Please contact SEPTA at: (732)651-7157

email us at: [SRPTAAvocate@verizon.net](mailto:SRPTAAvocate@verizon.net)

## Homework Strategies for Busy Families

school does not provide after-school study halls and tutoring, let them know you need help during the gap between the end of school and the end of your work day. Programs exist to help schools provide trained helpers to students on campus.

Day care providers also should be approached about setting aside time for children to do their homework. Request that they have staff available to help.

Community centers, libraries, and places of worship are among the community-based groups that have begun to offer tutoring. Often, college students who are interested in the helping professions volunteer their time at these locations. Contact your town government to find out whether these programs are offered and how to sign up.

### Make the most of homework time

The time your children spend on homework can be reduced drastically by applying the following proven principles of learning:

**Use senses to increase learning.** Research confirms that using all the senses can enhance learning. Reading aloud, drawing pictures, and using mental imagery can help students learn and retain lessons more quickly and thoroughly.

**Break lessons into manageable chunks.** Children can grow frustrated by studying too much material at one time. Limit new material (spelling words, vocabulary, dates, names) to between 15 and 25 items. Review 20 items and add five new ones during a study session.

**Study the unknown.** Divide material to be learned into two stacks: that which they already know, and that which they need to learn. Have them study only what they don't know for 5–15 minutes. Wait 2–24 hours; mix the material up, and divide it again.

**Ask questions.** Have your child create a question and/or read the questions at the end of a chapter before he or she begins to read a textbook assignment. Tell your child to say the answer out loud when he or she comes across it while reading.

**Associate.** Alphabetizing, sequencing, and categorizing make learning easier. Singing information to the tune of a familiar song can also enhance learning and retention.

**Personalize.** Substitute your child's name for characters in a story. Relate a math problem to a child's allowance. Transfer something learned to an everyday event

### Know your child

Every child is different, so it's important to begin by

learning what works best for each one. Pay special attention to the following items:

**Food.** A child experiencing either low or high blood sugar levels will have short-term memory impairment. Never insist that homework be completed before dinner. Provide healthy snacks during study sessions.

**Energy level.** Is your child a morning person or an evening person? Evening people need to stay up late to finish homework; morning people will be more productive if they get a good night's sleep and get up early to do homework.

**Personality.** Is your child quiet and reflective or outgoing and always in motion? A quiet child will sit at a table to read or complete assignments; a child in motion might need to talk through an assignment with you or discuss homework over a game of catch before writing.

**Strengths.** At what activities does your child excel? Use his or her strengths to help compensate for weaknesses. An artistic child will benefit from drawing a picture about an essay topic before writing. A mathematically inclined child may become more engaged in an art project by drawing and coloring numbers.

**Patterns.** Observe and record your child's study patterns. Include times of the day and various reactions to food or stimuli. These observations may help your school and healthcare professionals find solutions to learning difficulties.

The best strategy for tackling homework is to use study time efficiently and, most importantly, get help from available resources.

*Sharon Marshall Lockett is director of Educational Innovations/SCORE, a national cocurricular support program based in Laguna Niguel, California, and author of Home Sweet Homework: A Parent's Guide to Stress-Free Homework & Studying Strategies that Work. She can be reached at [sharon@homesweethomework.com](mailto:sharon@homesweethomework.com).*

### Help Wanted:

Would you like to help with our Newsletter, or Website? Have you come across an interesting book, article or website that deals with education, special ed., or parenting that you'd like to share with others? Write a short summary and we'll love to put it in our newsletter and web page. Email it to: [info@specialeducationpta.org](mailto:info@specialeducationpta.org)

### Interested in

obtaining a copy of the

**SEPTA of**

**South River's**

**S. E. Resource CD-**

**Rom?**

Contact SEPTA

at (732) 651-7157

Or Email us at:

[info@specialeducationpta.org](mailto:info@specialeducationpta.org)

Cost: \$7.50

# SEPTA Membership Form

SEPTA needs your support to continue to provide you and your children with the programs, speakers and activities you currently receive.

Your support has allowed us to provide for an annual scholarship to a graduating Senior of the South River School District, the SEPTA Holiday Party, an annual donation of books, computer programs and magazines to the SEPTA Resource Library in the South River Public Library, recreational programs for special needs children and a variety of speakers for the parents and teachers of our community.

Please help us to continue our commitment to the special needs children and their families.

Please mail the below membership form to:

**SEPTA of South River**

**81 Johnson Place, South River, N.J. 08882**

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*Please cut on dotted line and return lower half to SEPTA*

## SEPTA Membership Application 2007-2008

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

# of memberships \_\_\_\_\_ x \$6.00 each                      Membership Total \_\_\_\_\_

Tax Deductible Danation \_\_\_\_\_                      Grand Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like information sent to you via email on upcoming events / workshops?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Email : \_\_\_\_\_

Would you interested in being on one of these committees?

Fundraising \_\_\_\_\_ Refreshments \_\_\_\_\_ Membership \_\_\_\_\_

Special Events \_\_\_\_\_ Speakers/ meeting Topics \_\_\_\_\_ Resource Library \_\_\_\_\_

Scholarship \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

# Ed Extras

Helpful information about learning brought to you by Reading Rockets, Colorin Colorado, and LD OnLine

## Creating Learning Traditions

This holiday season consider adding some new traditions for your family that will make meaningful memories and strengthen foundations for reading and learning success.

### Listen, laugh, learn

- Listen to audio books while you're traveling to visit family, wrapping gifts, or cooking for the holidays.
- Lyrics to holiday songs are fun to read and sing together. It is also good fun and good collaborative writing practice to make up your own lyrics to familiar tunes.
- Start a story-telling tradition by revisiting holidays of the past. Old family photographs at holiday gatherings will help prompt stories about your own life and family traditions.

### Read, relax, respond

- Put reading and writing skills to practical use. Plan holiday meals by reading cookbooks together, writing the shopping lists and finding the needed items at the store by reading signs and labels. Read the recipe and cook together. During the simmering and baking, kids can write and decorate menus or place cards for special holiday meals.
- Set aside time just for reading. Curl up on the couch together and read aloud an old favorite or check out books about another culture's winter celebrations.
- Work on those letters. Improve writing skills with letters to Santa and writing thank you notes for holiday gifts to relatives and friends.

## Learning That's Hands-On Holiday Fun

Focus on reading readiness and enjoy winter holidays at the same time, with these simple activities you can incorporate into your preschooler's daily routine:

- Winter's chill offers a different medium for writing and drawing. Let your children "write" on frosted windows or in the snow.
- On short trips to the store or holiday vacations to visit family or friends, play this game to help your preschooler recognize different sounds. Say "We're going to the store. What sound do you hear in the beginning of the word store? It's the /s/ sound. What else starts with /s/ that we can get at the store?" (or, "What are we bringing to grandma's house that starts with /g/?")
- In conversation about holiday celebrations, introduce interesting and new words to your preschooler. For example, "Dad got a *plethora* of ties last year. Since he has so many ties, let's get him a different gift." or "I like our family *tradition* of baking cookies together. It is something we do every year that I really enjoy."
- Let your preschooler have a hand in holiday list-making. Even if it is just sitting with you as you write a shopping list, your preschooler will benefit from exposure to the power and practicality of literacy.
- Set aside time just for reading. Curl up on the couch together and read aloud an old favorite or check out books about another culture's winter celebrations.

For more holiday reading, visit:

[www.readingrockets.org/articles/books/c360/](http://www.readingrockets.org/articles/books/c360/)

Visit our sister sites, [ColorinColorado.org](http://ColorinColorado.org) and [LDOnLine.org](http://LDOnLine.org), for more information about learning.

*mark your calendar!*

## Up Coming Events:

### Board of Education Meetings

Pre-Meeting - Monday, December 17 7:00 pm.  
Regular Meeting -Thursday, December 20 7:00 pm

Pre-Meeting -Tuesday, January 22, 7:00 pm.  
Regular Meeting -Thursday, January 24, 7:00 pm.

Pre-Meeting—Tuesday, February 19, 7:00 pm.  
Regular meeting—Thursday February 21, 7:00 pm.

Pre-meetings are held in the Board Conference Room  
Regular Meetings are held in the High School Library

### SEPTA Meetings

Wednesday December 19th, 6:30 pm.

Wednesday January 23rd 6:30 pm.

Wednesday February 20th 6:30 pm.

All meetings are held at the Primary School Media Center