We’re a family of readers

When families share a love of reading, children develop stronger literacy skills and are more motivated to pick up a book. Here’s how some of our readers have made reading a family affair.

Tell the truth
Show your child that being truthful matters—even in situations where no one would know the difference. For example, if you leave a store without noticing an item under your cart, let him see you return to pay for it. Explain that being honest is the right thing to do and it makes you feel good.

The best gifts
This holiday season, help your youngster brainstorm presents that don’t cost a lot of money. For instance, she might make a book of coupons that family members can redeem (“Good for one dog wash”). Or the two of you could bake muffins for teachers and neighbors.

Worth quoting
“Kindness is like snow. It beautifies everything it covers.” Kahlil Gibran

Clearing out clutter
Try these ideas for decluttering during winter break, and your youngster will start the New Year with organized spaces to work and play:

- Have your child sort through her backpack and study area. She could file old tests and quizzes, save favorite papers and projects, and discard anything she won’t need when school starts again.
- Let your youngster start a donation box in her closet for outgrown clothes and toys. Once the box is full, decide together where to donate it—she’ll discover the satisfaction that comes from helping others.
- Suggest that your child label separate containers for smaller items like erasers and sticky notes. Putting them into the correct bins gives her practice with sorting and makes school supplies easy to find at homework time.

Oglethorpe Elementary School
Our focus is on teaching and learning- SOAR!
I can handle that!

What is your child capable of doing for herself? Probably more than she realizes. Encourage her to become more responsible with these tips.

Manage a social life. Let your youngster call friends to set up her own get-togethers. She can also RSVP to birthday parties and pick out and wrap gifts. If she’s sleeping over at a friend or relative’s house, ask her to pack her own overnight bag herself.

Do minor repairs. Teach your child how to use a screw-driver and other tools safely. You can watch as she puts her know-how to work fixing a younger sibling’s toy or tightening a loose doorknob.

Track “inventory.” Is your youngster running low on crayons, shampoo, or her favorite cereal? Encourage her to be responsible and make a list on the refrigerator.

Cook food. Your child can learn to make sandwiches and salads, mash potatoes, and whisk eggs. With supervision, she could peel and chop vegetables and use the microwave. Idea: Encourage her to be creative in the kitchen and come up with her own recipes.

Drugs: Start a conversation

It’s never too early to discuss drugs with your youngster. In fact, opening the lines of communication now will pave the way for more serious conversations as he gets older. Consider this advice.

- **Begin with questions.** Find out what your child knows about drugs. What has he learned in health class or heard from other kids? Using his knowledge as a starting point will lead to a more meaningful discussion and allow you to correct misconceptions.
- **Discuss safety rules.** When you take medication or give any to your youngster, read the instructions together. Explain that taking more than directed is dangerous and that he’s not allowed to take medicine without your permission. Note: Be sure to keep your medicine cabinet locked.

Motivated from within

**Q:** My daughter told me that her friends “all” get rewards for good grades and she wants to get rewards, too. How should I handle this?

**A:** Help your child see that doing well is a reward in itself. That way, she won’t get in the habit of depending on rewards like money or stickers.

First, encourage her to focus on the excitement of learning rather than just on her grades. Say she aces a science test. Of course you’re proud of her and you’ll let her know it. But also ask her to explain a concept or show you an experiment or activity she did in class. (“You answered that an apple floats but a grape sinks—I’d like to see that!”)

Also, help her see how her effort leads to natural rewards. If she brings home a good math grade on her report card, you could say, “Great job. I know you worked hard to learn multiplication facts. Bigger problems will be easier now that you’ve memorized those.”

Over time, she’ll realize how rewarding it is to learn new things, work hard, and succeed—without rewards from anyone else.