

# PARENTS' GUIDE TO Student Success

## 5TH GRADE

This guide provides an overview of what your child will learn by the end of 5th grade in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. It focuses on the key skills your child will learn in these subjects, which will build a strong foundation for success in the other subjects he or she studies throughout the school year. This guide is based on the new Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by more than 40 states. These K–12 standards are informed by the highest state standards from across the country. If your child is meeting the expectations outlined in these standards, he or she will be well prepared for 6th grade.

### WHY ARE ACADEMIC STANDARDS IMPORTANT?

Academic standards are important because they help ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in college and the workforce. They help set clear and consistent expectations for students, parents, and teachers; build your child's knowledge and skills; and help set high goals for all students.

Of course, high standards are not the only thing needed for our children's success. But standards provide an important first step — a clear roadmap for learning for teachers, parents, and students. Having clearly defined goals helps families and teachers work together to ensure that students succeed. Standards help parents and teachers know when students need extra assistance or when they need to be challenged even more. They also will help your child develop critical thinking skills that will prepare him or her for college and career.

### HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

You should use this guide to help build a relationship with your child's teacher. You can do this by talking to his or her teacher regularly about how your child is doing — beyond parent-teacher conferences.

At home, you can play an important role in setting high expectations and supporting your child in meeting them. If your child needs a little extra help or wants to learn more about a subject, work with his or her teacher to identify opportunities for tutoring, to get involved in clubs after school, or to find other resources.

### THIS GUIDE INCLUDES

- An overview of some of the key things your child will learn in English/literacy and math in 5th grade
- Ideas for activities to help your child learn at home
- Topics of discussion for talking to your child's teacher about his or her academic progress

# English Language Arts & Literacy

In 5th grade, your child will read widely and deeply from a range of high-quality, increasingly challenging fiction and nonfiction from diverse cultures and time periods. Building knowledge about subjects through research projects and responding analytically to literary and informational sources will be key to your child's continuing success. Your child will write stories or essays that are several paragraphs long. By devoting significant time and effort to producing numerous written pieces over short and extended timeframes throughout the year, he or she also will gain control over many conventions of grammar, usage, and punctuation as well as learn ways to make himself or herself understood.

## A Sample of What Your Child Will Be Working on in 5th Grade

- Summarizing the key details of stories, dramas, poems, and nonfiction materials, including their themes or main ideas
- Identifying and judging evidence that supports particular ideas in an author's argument to change a reader's point of view
- Integrating information from several print and digital sources to answer questions and solve problems
- Writing opinions that offer reasoned arguments and provide facts and examples that are logically grouped to support the writer's point of view
- Writing stories, real or imaginary, that unfold naturally and developing the plot with dialogue, description, and effective pacing of the action
- Coming to classroom discussions prepared, then engaging fully and thoughtfully with others (e.g., contributing accurate, relevant information; elaborating on the remarks of others; synthesizing ideas)
- Reporting on a topic or presenting an opinion with his or her own words, a logical sequence of ideas, sufficient facts and details, and formal English when appropriate
- Expanding, combining, and reducing sentences to improve meaning, interest, and style of writing
- Building knowledge of academic words with an emphasis on those that signal a contrast in ideas or logical relationships, such as *on the other hand*, *similarly*, and *therefore*
- Producing writing on the computer

### Talking to Your Child's Teacher

#### Keeping the conversation focused.

When you talk to the teacher, do not worry about covering everything. Instead, keep the conversation focused on the most important topics. In 5th grade, these include:

- Reading closely and drawing evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction materials, including the ability to quote accurately from them when answering questions
- Adjusting communications to accomplish a particular purpose (e.g., providing more background information for audiences who do not know the topic well)

Ask to see a sample of your child's work. Ask the teacher questions such as: Is this piece of work satisfactory? How could it be better? Is my child on track? How can I help my child improve or excel in this area? If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside the classroom?

Fifth grade is a milestone and a pivot point for students. The classroom focus on arithmetic during the elementary grades will develop into a more formal study of algebra in middle school. To be ready for algebra, students must have an understanding of fractional arithmetic, in part because even simple equations cannot be solved without fractions. Because of this, whole-number arithmetic comes mostly to a close in 5th grade, while multiplying and dividing fractions becomes a major focus.

## A Sample of What Your Child Will Be Working on in 5th Grade

- Adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators (e.g.,  $2\frac{1}{4} - 1\frac{1}{3}$ ), and solving word problems of this kind
- Multiplying fractions; dividing fractions in simple cases; and solving related word problems (e.g., finding the area of a rectangle with fractional side lengths; determining how many  $\frac{1}{3}$ -cup servings are in 2 cups of raisins; determining the size of a share if 9 people share a 50-pound sack of rice equally or if 3 people share  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound of chocolate equally)
- Generalizing the place-value system to include decimals, and calculating with decimals to the hundredths place (two places after the decimal)
- Multiplying whole numbers quickly and accurately, for example  $1,638 \times 753$ , and dividing whole numbers in simple cases, such as dividing 6,971 by 63
- Understanding the concept of volume, and solving word problems that involve volume
- Graphing points in the coordinate plane (two dimensions) to solve problems
- Analyzing mathematical patterns and relationships

### Keeping the conversation focused.

When you talk to the teacher, do not worry about covering everything. Instead, keep the conversation focused on the most important topics. In 5th grade, these include:

- Multiplying and dividing fractions, and solving related word problems
- Decimals (concepts and arithmetic)
- Volume (concepts and problem-solving)

Ask to see a sample of your child's work. Ask the teacher questions such as: Is this piece of work satisfactory? How could it be better? Is my child on track? How can I help my child improve or excel in this area? If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside the classroom?

**Talking to  
Your Child's  
Teacher**

# Help Your Child Learn at Home

Learning does not end in the classroom. Children need help and support at home to succeed in their studies. Try to create a quiet place for your child to study, and carve out time *every day* when your child can concentrate on reading, writing, and math uninterrupted by friends, brothers or sisters, or other distractions.

You should also try and sit down with your child at least once a week for 15 to 30 minutes while he or she works on homework. This will keep you informed about what your child is working on, and it will help you be the first to know if your child needs help with specific topics. By taking these small steps, you will be helping your child become successful both in and outside the classroom.

Additionally, here are some activities you can do with your child to support learning at home:

## English Language Arts & Literacy

- Invite your child to read his or her writing out loud to other family members. Ask questions about your child's word choices and ideas.
- Discuss your family stories and history. Encourage your child to ask relatives questions about their lives. Put the information together in an album or brainstorm different ways to tell family tales, such as poems or short stories.
- Go to a play or musical with your child. Discuss the way the actors bring the words to life.

## Mathematics

Look for "word problems" in real life. Some 5th grade examples might include:

- Doing arithmetic with decimals, for example when balancing a checkbook.
- Multiplying with fractions — for example, if you used about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup measure of vegetable stock, then how much stock did you use? About how much is left?
- Using the length, width, and depth of a garden plot to determine how many bags of garden soil to buy.

For more information, the full standards are available at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).



**National PTA**  
1250 N Pitt Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Toll-Free: (800) 307-4PTA (4782)  
PTA.org • info@pta.org