

Supporting Your CHILD'S EDUCATION

You can help your youngster succeed in school. How? By getting involved in his education. From talking to him about what he's doing in school to staying in touch with his teacher and attending school events, there are many easy ways to support your child's learning. Consider these suggestions.



EVERYDAY STRATEGIES

Encourage your youngster to do his best at school with these ideas for supporting his education at home.

COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS. Set high expectations for your child, and he'll be likely to try to meet them. For example, let him know you expect him to work hard in school. Talk regularly about what you expect in the short term (study for a quiz) and long term (go to college). Then, be sure to recognize his successes along the way.



MAKE TIME FOR READING. Reading regularly can help your youngster do well in all subjects. Books introduce her to new words—and new worlds. Plus, developing the reading habit now can help her enjoy reading for a lifetime.

Try to read to your child at bedtime each night, and encourage her to read on her own, too.

KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING. Have him explain the steps in a science experiment or tell you about a story he's writing. Your curiosity will show him that his schooling matters to you. At the same time, going over the information will reinforce what he is learning.

SEE YOURSELF AS AN "ASSISTANT." You can support your youngster when she does homework...without doing it for her. Look through her backpack together, and find out what her assignments are. Then, help her schedule enough time so she's not rushing to do them at the last minute.

PROVIDE EXPERIENCES.

Each time your child visits a nature center, helps you grocery shop, or attends a concert, he collects new knowledge. For example, he might learn the names of frog species, use a scale to weigh vegetables, or hear classical music. Take him on errands with you, and try to plan family outings that will expose him to new ideas.



AN ACTIVE ROLE

When you stay up to date on what's going on in school, your youngster feels supported. Here's how you can play an important part in her academic life.

KNOW SCHOOL POLICIES. At the start of the year, go over the school handbook together. You and your child will find everything you need to know about policies (discipline, attendance). *Tip:* Help her remember school procedures by reviewing the handbook a few times during the school year.

USE TOOLS. Together, look at the school schedule and write important dates on your family's calendar (test days, class pictures). Also, read school newsletters and websites. *Note:* If your youngster's school offers an online grade service, use it to check on his progress regularly.

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ATTEND SCHOOL EVENTS. Make time to go to book fairs, plays, and other school functions. Take siblings along to events that are open to families, such as a school carnival or family math night. When your whole family gets involved, your child will feel proud of her school.



USE SPECIAL SERVICES. If your youngster gets special services (for a learning disability or because English is his second language), stay in touch with the resource teacher. Attend annual reviews of his IEP (Individualized Education Plan). Talk to your child about what he's entitled to (extra time for tests, preferential seating), and encourage him to take advantage of the services.

HELP STRIKE A BALANCE. When your youngster wants to sign up for extracurricular activities, make sure she will have enough time for schoolwork, family, and fun. You might have her concentrate on one club, after-school class, or sport at a time, for example.

PARENT-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Students are most successful when parents and teachers work together. Use these ideas for communicating with your child's school.



INTRODUCE YOURSELF. Meet teachers at open houses or back-to-school nights. Then, stay connected by saying hello at school events, volunteering when possible, and responding promptly to notes and emails.

SOLVE PROBLEMS EARLY. Contact staff members before small issues grow into large ones. If your youngster is having trouble with a subject or seems frustrated, call the teacher. Ask what you can do to help, and look for solutions together.

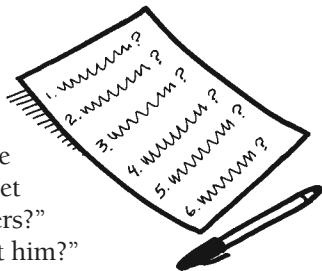
SHOW APPRECIATION. Keep in touch with your child's teacher when things are going smoothly as well as when you have a question or concern. For instance, you might email her to thank her for suggesting a good book to your youngster or providing extra help with math.

GET THE MOST OUT OF CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences give you the chance to find out how your youngster is doing in class. Try these suggestions.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

- Prepare a list of questions to take along. For example, you might ask: "What should my child know or be able to do by the end of the year?" "How does he get along with peers and staff members?" "Do you have any concerns about him?"
- Think about information that might help teachers understand your youngster. You can share strengths, weaknesses, hobbies, and interests. Consider letting teachers know about personal news affecting your child (divorce, a death in the family).



AT THE CONFERENCE

- Listen carefully to what the teacher says. Make notes so you can remember points to share with your child or to follow up on later.
- When it's your turn to talk, mention your most important concerns first, in case time runs out. If you need more time, you can ask the teacher to schedule another meeting or a telephone conversation. Be sure to ask for the best way to reach her (email, phone call, note) in the future.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

- Talk to your youngster about what his teacher said. Be sure to include compliments she gave, as well as areas to improve. Together, work out an action plan, including steps your youngster will take and ways to check on his progress. Post the action plan in his room, and discuss it regularly.

Home & School CONNECTION®