



Tips to Help Your Child Do Better at School

As a parent, it's natural to want to help your child get the best grades possible. But sometimes this is easier said than done. Here are some proven approaches to help you help your child.

- 1. Focus on effort rather than grades.** Show confidence in your child's abilities but don't ask too much of them. Not everyone can or needs to be at the top of their class. Praise your child's effort and persistence, rather than his/her academic ability or intelligence compared to others. Ask how your child feels about a low grade, whether that represented good effort, and how you can work together to improve it. This approach helps to build self-esteem, encourages them to make the best effort and remain motivated to learn.
- 2. Connect effort at school to achieving future dreams.** When children are small, they're often asked what they want to be when they grow up. Encourage your child to talk about goals, plans, and dreams for the future and help them to see the connection with the effort made now in school and great options for the future.
- 3. Help your child to set realistic goals.** It is good to expect your child to do well in school, but don't expect every assignment to be an A. To avoid frustration and poor self-image, help your child set achievable short-term goals, like getting a better grade on the next test. Create a list of goals, together, and then put that list in a place where he can see it every day. Remember to celebrate when your child is able to meet a goal. Their self-confidence and enthusiasm will grow.
- 4. Seek out help.** Teachers should be able to suggest ways for you to support your child's learning progress at home. Consider a tutor if your child is struggling. If your child is having consistent, long-term challenges paying attention or behaving at school, you may also consider talking with your pediatrician. Be sure to work with your child to create and maintain an environment in which they can do their best.
- 5. Celebrate and reward success.** Let your child know that you're proud of the effort they are making by allowing a special privilege, offering a reward, or simply giving them a pat on the back (or better – a hug!) for a job well done. Just be sure that the rewards are realistic and not too difficult for your child to earn. Remember that even bringing a "D" grade up to a "C" can be a major achievement. Make it a cause for celebration. The privilege or reward could be watching a favorite television show, using the internet, or hanging out with friends. Recognize that every small step is progress toward a "giant leap"!
- 6. Make sure homework is completed and completed well.** Make homework a household priority. Check your child's planner and homework regularly. Let your child know that all homework and assignments must be completed. Set aside a regular time and provide a quiet, well-lit, and distraction-free workspace to complete homework. Be available to help but don't correct wrong answers – point out mistakes and guide your child to figure out the right answer.
- 7. Help your child get organized.** Organizational skills make a huge difference at school and will serve your child well throughout life. Encourage your child to use their homework agenda, check it regularly with them and ask about tests and due dates. Folders and binders can help them find information quickly and keep classes separated. Help keep backpacks uncluttered and store all school items in a safe place. Keep the study area neat and organized.

- 8. Encourage curiosity, learn to step back.** Help your child become an independent learner. Engage them in conversations, share interests, and talk about current events. Nourish your child's curiosity about the world. Find ways to help your child connect learning to real life, like using math skills to help with grocery shopping. Allow your child the freedom to experiment with making choices. Take time every day to listen to them. Encourage your child to talk about their school experiences of teachers and with other students. If problems arise, then you will have a better understanding of the circumstances that may have contributed to it.
- 9. Eat, sleep, structure.** Students who eat well and get enough sleep do better in school. Eight hours is the minimum number of hours a child should sleep each night. Don't count on weekends to "catch up" on missed sleep because that isn't how their bodies work. School-age brains need lots of fuel to stay sharp. Poor nutrition and skipped meals lead to exhaustion. Provide a good breakfast. Make sure there are plenty of healthy snacks available, like fruit, raw veggies, cheese, and natural popcorn. Too much sugar from soda and candy will make your child feel sluggish. If you can manage it, get yourself ready before your kids get up so that you can respond to any morning emergencies.
- 10. Be a role model.** Being a role model isn't simple. Nobody is perfect, but understand that you are leading by example. Read, study, or take a class, and do your homework together with your child. You can also "teach yourself" a craft or a skill. Even something as simple as setting a goal for yourself to read a book every week, and read quietly while your child is doing homework. Let your child know that learning is important to you. Allow them to see your mistakes and how you fix your slip-ups. This shows them that it's okay to make mistakes as long as you own up to them and strive to correct them. Take a mature approach to conflict in your household and show how to handle disagreements calmly and respectfully. Studies show that children are negatively affected by household tension. Work with your child and other household members to create and maintain a positive home environment.

Conclusion

By following these steps every parent can help their children to stay motivated in school, follow their own unique paths to short-term achievements and long-term personal success.

If you would like more information on this topic you can contact Family Centre and ask to speak with the Community Support Worker at 232-1116.

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