

Helping your Child Succeed in School

Every child has the power to succeed in school and in life – and every parent, family member and caregiver can help.

We know that children tend to do the same things as their parents. What we say and do in our daily lives can help them to develop positive attitudes toward school and learning and to build confidence in themselves as learners. Showing our children that we both value education and use it in our daily lives provides them with powerful models and contributes greatly to their success in school.

As children's first and most important teachers, it is important that all parents build strong ties to their children's schools. When parents and families are involved in their children's schools, the children do better and have better feelings about going to school.

Although school is very important, it does not really take up much of a child's time. In the United States, the school year averages 180 days; in other countries, the school year can last up to 240 days and students are often in school more hours per day. Parents, families and caregivers can do a great deal outside of school to help a child acquire the skills to be successful in school. These include:

Encourage your child to read – Helping your child become a reader is the single most important thing that you can do to help the child succeed in school – and in life. The importance of reading can't be overstated. Reading helps children in all school subjects and is the key to lifelong learning.

Talk with your child – Talking and listening play major roles in children's school success. Children who do not develop good talking and listening skills often have trouble learning to read, following directions and paying attention in class.

Monitor homework – Let your child know that you think education is important and that homework has to be done.

Limit TV viewing and video game playing – American children on average spend far more time watching TV or playing video games than they do completing homework or other school-related activities.

Encourage your child to use the library – Libraries are places of learning and discovery for everyone. Helping your child find out about libraries will set him on the road to being an independent learner.

Help your child learn to use the Internet safely and effectively – For children to succeed today, they must be able to use the Internet, however it is important that parents and caregivers teach children safety measures and monitor use.

Encourage active learning – Active learning involves asking and answering questions, solving problems and exploring interests, as well as participating in sports, having fun with friends, acting in school plays, playing a musical instrument or visiting museums and bookstores.

(Helping Your Child Succeed in School, Helping Your Child Series, US Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach, www.ed.gov)