How to Help Your Child Succeed in School

As a parent, one hopes for a healthy child both physically and emotionally and a child who grows up to be a successful individual. To achieve these goals, the best place to start is to help your child succeed in school.

TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR CHILD SUCCEED:

Get involved at your child’s school.

Attend back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences so you can meet the teachers and learn the layout of your child’s school. Read the student handbook to get important information about the school’s expectations, attendance policies, dress code, use of electronic devices and acceptable language. Take time to explore the school’s website where you can find information regarding the school calendar, staff contact information and upcoming events. Elementary-age students are usually excited to see their parents involved at their school events, while secondary students tend to feel the opposite.

Be sure your child is ready to learn each day.

Give your child a nutritious breakfast to begin their day. This will give them energy, and help their memory and learning process. Be sure they get enough sleep each night—school-age children need between 10-12 hours of sleep. Lack of sleep can cause irritability, poor behavior in class and can affect a child’s ability to pay attention. Try to eliminate a hectic schedule for your child during the school week. Many teens don’t stop to eat during the day. Provide them with healthy snacks that they can eat on the run, such as apples, bananas, peaches, nuts, etc. Ask your child if there is a specific food they like.

Teach your child organizational skills.

A child is never too young to learn organizational skills. Teach them how to use an assignment book to record their homework, and use a homework folder to put their completed work in for the next day. Check with your child’s school if they provide these items, or if you need to purchase them yourself. Help them develop a priority list for the week’s work. If you start when they’re young, your child will continue to develop these great learning tools which will carry them through all levels of education and into adulthood.

Support the school’s homework expectation.

For a younger child, by reinforcing the importance of homework, you help them develop a sense of responsibility and a good work ethic. Together with your child, create a quiet, well-lit and comfortable workspace in your home with all the supplies they need to complete their homework assignments. It’s very important to keep in mind that each child learns differently. Some can sit for hours and study, while others are more active and may need to move around. Take the time to figure out how your child studies best.

Teach your child good study skills.

Studying for a test can often create feelings of anxiety. Learn ahead of time when your child will have a test so you can begin to work with them on how to study. Teach your child how to breakdown the overall tasks into smaller manageable chunks—this will help if they are feeling overwhelmed.

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Teach your child good study skills (continued). The more you can help your child learn good techniques, the more these good habits will pay off throughout their lifetime. If you feel your child is stressed or overly anxious with test studying, talk with their teacher to see if they can help with some additional tools. The more you can help them at an early age, the more successful they will become in secondary school. Life is full of situations that test us each day. The more your child can overcome their anxieties, the more helpful it will be for their overall development.

School Attendance is important and serious.
It is important to know the school’s attendance policies. If your child is sick, keep them home. If your child is sick often and missing many school days, talk with their teacher about how to help them complete their missed school work. Sometimes children want to stay home from school due to school issues, such as: being bullied, having a problem with their peers, not completing their homework or feeling anxious about a test. When your child says they are sick, keep this in mind to see what’s really going on.

Talk to your child about school.
Talk to your child about their school throughout the week. For a younger child, these discussions are usually easier than with a teenager. Dinner is a great time to ask your child what happened at school. If you make this a routine when your child is young, as they get older, it will be much easier to have these discussions. One approach is to ask your child, “What was the high of your day, and what was the low of your day?” For older children, it may be easier to talk to them while you’re driving in the car, walking the dog or preparing meals. These are times when you’re not making direct eye contact with them and makes it easier to talk.

Talk to your child about social skills.
Spend time discussing positive social skills with your child. Talk about how to make friends, what are the qualities that make a good friend and how to keep friends. Describe what bullying is and ways your child can deal with a bullying situation.

Talk with your child’s teacher to see how they are doing at school. If your child is experiencing issues, don’t wait until the situation escalates—reach out to the teacher or school staff right away. Let your child know that you’re available to talk to them if they are having a problem at school.