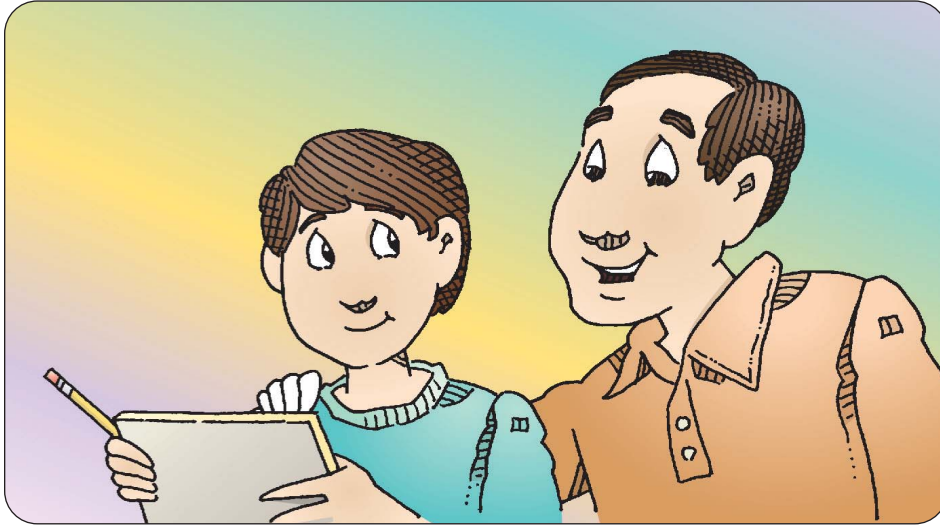


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Elementary School Parents[®]

Rolling Hills Elementary

make the difference!



Foster an attitude of success in your child this school year

Henry Ford said it best: “If you think you can—or you think you can’t—you’re right.” But how can you foster an attitude of success in your child?

One strategy is to give your child positive, accurate feedback. Kids make slow progress. Learning to ride a bike, or divide by seven, doesn’t happen overnight.

Here are three steps to take to help your child see that he can succeed:

1. **Tell your child the progress** you’ve seen. You could say, “The way you describe Grandpa’s workshop in your writing makes me feel like I’m there.” Or, “That drawing of the human heart helps me see exactly how blood moves.”
2. **Link your child’s success** with his own effort. “You stuck with that

math problem. Now you found the right answer.” “You took the time to copy over that book report. It’s much neater—and you corrected a few misspelled words.”

3. **Give your child confidence** to take the next step. Sometimes, kids need a little boost if they’re having trouble. So remind your child of a time when his effort paid off. “Remember how you worked until you memorized your times tables? I’ll bet the same thing will work for learning states and capitals.”

You’ll build your child’s belief that he can succeed. You’ll also help him recognize successful ways to solve problems.

Source: Deborah Stipek and Kathy Seal, *Motivated Minds: Raising Children to Love Learning*, ISBN: 0-805-06395-1 (Owl Books, 1-888-330-8477, www.henryholt.com).

Insist your child show respect to teachers, staff



Being respectful is just as important at school as it is at home. Encourage your child to show respect to her teacher by:

- **Being courteous.** She should say “please” and “thank you” to her teacher.
- **Doing what’s expected.** Everyone in school has a job to do. If the teacher didn’t plan any lessons, no one could learn anything. If students don’t do their jobs—homework, listening to the teacher—it makes it more difficult to learn.
- **Addressing the teacher** by name. Just saying “Good morning, Mrs. Jones” is an easy way to show respect.
- **Listening to the teacher’s** comments. Teachers want students to learn more. That means they have to point out mistakes. Your child will do much better in school if she can hear the teacher’s concern as she’s pointing out ways she can improve.

Source: Ruby Payne, *Understanding Learning: The How, the Why, the What*, ISBN: 1-929-22904-6 (aha! Process, Inc., 1-800-424-9484, www.ahaprocess.com).

Send your child to school with three things to ensure success



By now, the teacher has sent home a list of things your child needs for class this year. But don't forget to prepare your child by

instilling:

- 1. Concentration.** Block out some time each day for quiet study. During this time, no one (not even you) watches TV or talks on the phone. Instead, everyone reads or does homework.
- 2. Organization.** Hang a checklist by the door. Have your child check off all the things that should go to

school. Stick another list of the things that need to come home in his book bag. Set up a “parking place.” Inside the door, use a box or shelf as a place for your child to stash all the stuff that has to go to school the next day.

- 3. Motivation.** How can you encourage your child to do his best? Set aside time each day to ask him about school. Look for ways he can show you what he's learned. If he is studying percentages, have him estimate how much the sales tax will be if you're food shopping.

Commit to finding & spending time with your child this year



There's some good news about parents these days. They're spending more time with their kids. That's good for parents and kids.

But with parents also spending more time at work—and getting to and from work—it isn't always easy. How can you find the time to spend with your child?

Here are some ideas:

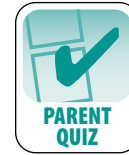
- **Include your child** in your exercise routine. Sadly, too many kids and parents struggle with weight. Set aside time to take a brisk walk with your child. Or put on a video and work out at home together.
- **Schedule it.** Many families have plans for a family night once a week. Make this a habit and protect the time.
- **Remember that sometimes “good enough” really is.** Not everything in life has to be perfect. So feed your child a sandwich—and then take a walk to look at the stars.

The truth is that your child wants you to be less stressed and tired.

- **Do chores with your child.** Use the time to teach important life skills.
- **Watch your child's favorite TV show together.** You'll learn more about what your child is viewing and you can talk more about it.

Source: Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, ISBN: 0-375-70719-0 (Vintage Books, 1-800-733-3000, www.vintagebooks.com).

Are you helping your child practice responsibility?



Building responsibility is a lot like building muscles. The more your child acts in a responsible way, the more likely she is to

do so again. The behavior she learns at home will show up at school.

Are you helping your child be responsible? Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the statements below to find out:

- ___ **1. My child is responsible** for getting herself ready for school in the morning.
- ___ **2. We have a regular** homework time in our house. It makes it easier for my child to be in charge of her schoolwork.
- ___ **3. My child knows** that choices have consequences. I follow through every time.
- ___ **4. My child is responsible** for getting her belongings and homework to school. We have a place where everything goes, and we pack her book bag at night.
- ___ **5. If my child forgets** something, I don't rush to take it to school.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your child build her “responsibility muscles.” For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

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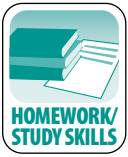
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Have an idea to share?

The editors of **Parents make the difference!** pay \$25 for each original idea published (in English, please), and you will receive credit in the article.

Send ideas to **Parents make the difference!**, Editorial Staff, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474 (or www.parent-institute.com/ideas/pmd). Materials sent cannot be returned.

Ask your child to use a notebook to track homework assignments



“Do I have math homework? I can’t remember!”
Sound familiar?

Get your child off to a great start this school year by teaching him to use a homework notebook.

Any small notebook will do. When the teacher gives homework, your child should write answers to three questions:

1. **What is the assignment?** Finish problems one through 10, write a book report, learn spelling words.
2. **What do I need to do it?** Take home my spelling list. Bring home some graph paper. Bring home my history book.
3. **When is it due?**

Source: Bernadine Hoffman, *Successful Homework Habits: A Parent’s Guide*, ISBN: 1-420-83114-3 (AuthorHouse Publishers, 1-800-839-8640, www.AuthorHouse.com).

Help your child set attainable goals for a successful school year



Want your child to be a self-motivated learner?
To start a school project well before the due date?
To finish schoolwork on

time without your having to bribe or nag?

Then take time now to teach your child the “fundamental success skill” of goal setting. Take these steps:

1. **Explain what a goal is.** It’s something your child shoots for—like a football player trying for a touchdown. Goals often start as dreams or wishes. For dreams to come true, your child has to work hard.
2. **Give your child a “Goal Notebook”** in which to record his goals, progress and achievements.
3. **Help your child make a “dream list”** of short-term goals—things he’d like to have, do, achieve or improve this day, week or month. Goals might be about friends, hobbies, sports, exercise, savings or new skills. Encourage him to also think of school—homework, behavior, reading, grades, etc.
4. **Select one goal** and write it down using this simple formula—I will (do) (what) + (when). For example,

I will spell at least eight of the 10 words right on my next spelling test. I will learn all the state capitals this month.

5. **Make sure the goal is achievable.** It should be within your child’s control and ability. He should have enough time and resources to do it.
6. **Plan for success.** Help your child decide what steps he’ll take and when to achieve his goal.
7. **Track progress.** Each time your child takes a step toward his goal, have him mark his effort in his goal notebook. Give him a sticker.
8. **Celebrate success.** Take pictures. Have a “victory dinner.” Say, “See what you can do when you try!”

Source: Michele Borba, *Parents Do Make a Difference: How to Raise Kids with Solid Character, Strong Minds, and Caring Hearts*, ISBN: 0-7879-4605-2 (Jossey-Bass, 1-888-378-2537, www.josseybass.com).

“All children with high self-esteem ... come from homes where there are guidelines and structure, enforced with love.”

—Dr. John Q. Baucom,
*Simple Secrets of Parenting:
Easy as ABC* (Child & Family Press)

Q: My daughter is in fifth grade. This year, her three best friends have another teacher. She says she has no friends in her class and she hates school. Should I ask if she can be moved to the other class?

Questions & Answers

A: Kids learn lots of lessons in school. One lesson your daughter will learn this year is that she won’t always get to choose the people she works with.

She may feel like it is the end of the world, but you can help ease her mind by:

- **Talking about your own life.** Have you ever had to work with someone you had to learn to like? Share that story with your daughter. Let her know that learning to make friends with new people is a skill she’ll need when she goes to middle school.
- **Talking with the teacher.** Will there be times when the two classes work together? Does she have any other ideas about ways your daughter can make friends in this class?
- **Spending some time in the classroom,** if you can. The teacher will be glad for your help—and you can see how kids interact. Perhaps your daughter will find another girl who loves horses as much as she does. Or there might be someone in the class who once played on a soccer team with her. Suggest that she spend some time with those students.

Remind your daughter of the old song: “Make new friends, but keep the old.” She’ll always be friends with the girls in the other class. But this year, she’ll have a chance to make some new friends, too.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Working With Your School

Make attending school a priority for your child



Your child's teachers will do their best to help your child learn and succeed in school. But there's one thing *only you can do*—getting him to school every day.

Children who don't attend school regularly fall behind and score lower on tests. They can have a hard time making and keeping friends—especially in elementary school.

How often a child is absent in elementary school sets a pattern for absences in later school years. Lots of absences often leads to students dropping out of school completely.

A recent study of the nation's fourth graders showed that almost one in four (19 percent) had been absent from school three or more days in the last month.

Let your child and his teachers know you know attendance counts:

- **Tell your child** how important school is. Be interested in what he's learning.
- **Discuss the consequences** of missing school. Not understanding. Needing to do make-up work. Missing out on friends.
- **Make dental** and other appointments during non-school hours.
- **Don't let your child** skip school for reasons that wouldn't prevent you from going to work.
- **Avoid taking your child** out of school on exam days.
- **Keep track** of your child's absences. See if there are any patterns that need to be changed.
- **Talk to the teacher** if your child regularly doesn't want to go to school.

Create routines for homework at the beginning of the year

Children who spend more time on homework, on average, do better in school. So ensuring your child has what she needs to do her homework is one of the best ways you can support learning at home.

Make sure your child has:

- **A well-lit study area.** This can be at a desk or table top. If at the kitchen table, make the kitchen off limits to others during study time. Turn off the television, too.
- **A homework "Survival Kit."** Include pencils, pens, paper, tape, pencil sharpener, erasers, crayons, markers, glue stick, scissors, dictionary, ruler.
- **Standby support.** Get phone numbers of classmates your child can call with homework questions.



- **A set study time.** Which would your child prefer? Right after school, leaving the evening free to play? Or after an hour of play or after dinner?

Source: Michael Popkin, Bettie Youngs and Jane Healy, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents of 4 to 14 Year Olds*, ISBN: 1-880283-15-8 (Active Parenting Publishers, 1-800-825-0060, www.activeparenting.com).

Find out how to get involved to support your child and school



Research shows children of involved parents have higher grades and attendance rates. They're more motivated to learn and have higher self-esteem. They also can have fewer discipline problems.

Being involved is a way to tell your child you believe school is important. It helps you stay informed about your child's learning. Plus it can give teachers much needed support.

Make a commitment to:

- **Be present.** Check the school calendar and plan to attend all

parent events—Open House, Back-to-School Night, conferences, PTA meetings.

- **Keep in touch.** Introduce yourself to your child's teacher. Ask for the best way to communicate with her. Read everything the school sends home.
- **Offer to help.** Ask the teacher, the librarian and other school staff for ways you can support your child's learning and the school.
- **Monitor schoolwork.** Being involved goes beyond helping in the classroom. Supporting learning at home is essential, too.