

Ten Things Parents Can Do To Help Students Succeed

1. Build relationships with your child's teachers.

Find out what each teacher expects of your child and how you can help your child prepare to meet those expectations.

2. Read.

Reading is the foundation for all learning. Read to your young child, encourage your older child to read to you, or spend time together as a family reading. All this helps your child develop strong reading habits and skills from the beginning and reinforces these habits and skills as your child grows. Reading is one of the most important contributions you can make to your child's education.

3. Practice writing at home.

Letters, journal entries, e-mail messages, and grocery lists are all writing opportunities. Show that writing is an effective form of communication and that you write for a variety of purposes.

4. Make math part of everyday life.

Cooking, gardening, paying bills, and even shopping are all good ways to help your child understand and use mathematics skills. Show that there may be many ways to get to the right answer and encourage your child to explain his or her method.

5. Ask your child to explain his or her thinking.

Ask lots of "why" questions. Children should be able to explain their reasoning, how they came up with the right answer, and why they chose one answer over another.

6. Expect that homework will be done.

Keep track of your child's homework assignments and regularly look at his or her completed work. Even if there aren't specific assignments, find out how you can stay informed about what your child is working on so that you can help at home.

7. Use the community as a classroom.

Feed your child's curiosity about the world 365 days a year. Use the library to learn more about the history of your town. A visit to a

farmer's market can help your child picture our state's rich agricultural tradition. Take your young child to zoos and parks and your older child to museums and workplaces to show how learning connects to the real world.

8. Encourage group study.

Open your home to your child's friends for informal study sessions. Promote outside formal study groups through church or school organizations or other groups. Study groups will be especially important as your child becomes older and more independent. The study habits your child learns now will carry over into college and beyond.

9. Help other parents understand academic expectations.

Use your school and employee newsletters, athletic associations, booster clubs, a PTA or PTO meeting, or just a casual conversation to help other parents understand what academic standards mean for them, their children, and their school and how they can help their children learn at home.

10. Spend time at school.

The best way to know what goes on in your child's school is to spend time there. If you're a working parent, this isn't easy, and you may not be able to do it very often. But "once in awhile" is better than "never."