

27 Parenting Tips for School Success

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Parents can play a significant role in the academic success of their children. Unfortunately, many parents don't realize the importance of their involvement in a child's school career and are not sure how to get involved in a constructive way. In some cases, too much or too little parental involvement becomes detrimental to the child – a difficult obstacle for many to overcome. The good news is that there are relatively easy steps you can take to show your child you are interested in his or her school work and offer the necessary help and support along the way.

The Parent-Child Relationship

A successful school experience begins at home, with the relationship between the parent and child. This process involves developing good habits at home that your child will easily adapt to during the school year. It also incorporates nurturing a comfortable, trusting relationship with your child that will make him more willing to come to you when problems and challenges in the school environment do occur. Some of the ways to encourage your child's success in school include:

Good Habits

Good home habits will limit distractions and put schoolwork at the forefront throughout the academic year. First, instill a love of reading in your child, by keeping plenty of interesting books at home and reading together on a regular basis. Let your child see you sit down with a good book frequently and take trips to the library where you can explore the many interesting subjects together.

Next, limit activities at home that will distract your child from his academic duties. Watching television and playing video games are typically activities that consume more hours than homework in the majority of American households. By the same token, teach your child to use the Internet for constructive purposes like research and limit the amount of time spent randomly surfing online.

Building Relationship

It is important to establish open lines of communication with your child, so he feels like he can come to you when troubles at school start. Talking and listening is something to do together on a daily basis, even if it's just to rehash details of the day. Ask your child about what happened at school, and include open-ended questions like, "What was your favorite thing that happened today?" to get the communication wheels turning.

The Parent-Teacher Relationship

It is important for parents to get to know their children's teachers, creating an open line of communication between the parent and school throughout the school year. Getting to know your child's teacher is an important component of tuning into where your child is academically and identifying potential problems and obstacles in their earliest stages. Make time to introduce yourself to your child's teacher right at the beginning of the school year, and convey your interest in helping your child succeed academically. Attend parent-teacher conferences and carefully read all correspondence from your child's teacher and school.

When you are building a relationship with your child's teacher, there are some things to avoid if you want the relationship to be a positive one, including:

- ***Do not expect a teacher to single your child out for additional attention.*** Teachers have large classrooms filled with students that have assorted needs, behavior issues and learning deficiencies. They must divide their time among students as they see fit.
- ***Do not blame the teacher if problems arise within the classroom.*** Even if the teacher is responsible for the issue, it is much more constructive to focus on solving the problem, rather than placing blame. In the long run, the positive relationship you maintain with the teacher will be much more beneficial for your child.

- ***Do not show up for a meeting with the teacher without scheduling it ahead of time.*** Teachers are busy people who like to have time to prepare for parent meetings. Schedule the meeting with the teacher at a time that is convenient for both of you, and let the teacher know what you want to talk about so he can prepare accordingly.

Homework Helps

One of the biggest ways parents can get involved in the academic endeavors of their children is through the nightly homework. While most children are not wild about the idea of cracking books at home, homework is an essential task that teaches children to work independently and gives parents a glimpse of what the child is learning. To ensure homework time is successful, consider the following tips:

Establish a Routine and Set Rules about Homework Time

Children tend to get on homework without grumbling much better if they know when and where homework is supposed to be completed. Simple rules like no television before homework is completed sets priorities and prevents distractions. A routine also teaches the child good study habits that will carry with him throughout his academic career.

Make an Organized Place for Homework Completion

Like a routine that tells a child when homework should be done, an area of the home set up for the task fosters productivity and focus. A homework corner can be established as early as first grade, when those first sums and writing practice sheets begin to come home. The center should be equipped with all necessary supplies, including paper, pencils, erasers and good lighting so students can put all of their attention on the task at hand.

Check Homework to be Sure it Gets Done

Once a child is finished with his homework, look it over to be sure it is complete and correct. If your child is struggling in a particular subject and you don't feel equipped to help him, find a tutor or another family member who can walk him through the work. When the homework is completed, don't forget to praise him for a job well done!

Dealing with the Underachiever

One of the most frustrating components for parents who are working to help their children succeed in school can be the underachiever. These bright children may demonstrate their aptitude in some ways, such as standardized tests or basic interactions with adults, their grades do not reflect their apparent abilities. Parents of these students may devote a significant amount of time and energy into helping these children overcome what may be perceived as study or learning deficiencies – often to no avail. If an underachiever is in your family, these tips may offer some solutions:

Teach the Student Self Control

When children learn to take control of their desire for immediate gratification, they learn the rewards of their efforts can be far-reaching.

Encourage Independence

Underachieving students usually need to learn to focus on a task and stick with it until completion – without nagging from a parent or teacher. However, this is not an easy lesson for these children to learn, and it takes plenty of time and patience before the concept catches on.

Cultivate Will-Power

Underachieving children need to learn to force themselves to stick with a task until it is finally finished. Will-power might also be referred to as self-discipline, and it is a necessary component for all aspects of a successful life.

Consider the Spiritual Side of a Work Ethic

When students learn to transform negative moods and attitudes into positive, productive outcomes, it can change their entire outlook on life.

Teach Personal Responsibility

Students who do not tend to pull their own weight need to learn that their success or failure rests on them alone – not on their teachers or parents. When students learn that they hold the key to their destiny, they become more motivated to succeed academically.

Develop Rational Thinking

Logical thinking is an important component of succeeding in the real world. Students need to learn to look at the world in realistic terms and meet problems head-on if they are going to see success in their endeavors.

Hazards of Helicopter Parenting

Some parents tend to move to the extreme when it comes to getting involved in their children's academic success. This phenomenon has been referred to as "helicopter parenting" by some experts – the act of hovering over a child, trying to tackle any threat or problem that comes in their child's path. Helicopter parents even take this approach well into the high school and college years, helping students with roommate issues, teacher conflicts and course scheduling.

Characteristics of Helicopter Parents

Some of the common characteristics of helicopter parents include:

Constant Contact with the Child

This is particularly true of college students who talk to their parents multiple times a day. However, even high school students who are called by their parents regularly throughout the school day suffer the implications of helicopter parenting.

Constant Contact with the School

Helicopter parents communicate with their child's school for every detail of their child's academic career. By the time children reach the teen years, the students should be expected to interact with teachers and administrators on their own most of the time.

Academic Decisions made by Parent not Child

When a parent decides what courses a child should take or what extracurricular activities to participate in, helicopter parenting may be the culprit. While advice and input is generally welcome, the actual decisions should be made by the child.

Parents Feels Guilty if the Child does not do Well

Parents who begin to take on a child's accomplishments as their own are probably too involved in the process – a telltale sign of helicopter parenting.

Disadvantages of Helicopter Parenting

While micro-parenting of this sort may seem to offer benefits on the surface, the hazards of this parenting style are far-reaching for the children. Some of the hazards of helicopter parenting include:

Children are Not Able to Mature as They Should

Helicopter parents stunt their children's academic, psychological and social growth, with impedes them once they get into high school and college. Children of helicopter parents are not allowed to develop independence and problem solving skills on their own because their parents are always there to smooth the way for them.

Parents Become Overly Anxious about Child's Performance

When parents become overly involved with their children, they also become more anxious about every detail of their children's lives.

Schools Must Use Resources to Deal with Parents, Rather than Students

When parents are meeting with teachers and administrators regularly, there is less time in the school day for student interactions.

Overcoming the Helicopter Parenting Syndrome

If you find yourself fitting into the profile of a helicopter parent, there are things you can do to overcome the syndrome before it becomes any more detrimental to your child. Consider the following steps:

Put the Child in the Driver's Seat

Instead of calling your child, let your child call you. Encourage your child to try to solve problems on his own before he asks for help. That way, when the call does come, you can rest assured you are offering much-needed assistance rather than taking control of the situation.

Stay out of Personal Conflict

This would involve issues with friends and even teachers. Encourage your child to solve the problem on his own, and only offer advice when directly asked. Never contact these people on your own in an effort to resolve the situation – that is your child's job.

Develop Your Own Interests

By cultivating your own hobbies and interests, you have less time and attention to apply to your child's. Remember that when he was young, you were available for all of his needs. Now, he should be prepared to handle the large majority of those needs on his own, freeing you up to develop your own life passions outside of child-rearing.

Learn When to Step In and When to Stay Out

There are times when you will still be called on to get involved in your child's life, such as when you suspect he is engaging in harmful behavior or gets into a problem beyond his scope of control. The job of a parent never ends, but it does evolve into the role of a coach rather than a caretaker. Learn the difference between the two so you can offer your child healthy, productive support and advice when he needs it.

The role of the parent is a significant one when it comes to the academic success of a child. From teaching your child good homework habits to dealing with specific issues like underachievement, your child needs you to be his coach, advocate and fiercest fan throughout his academic career.

Resources:

University of Illinois Extension, "Study Habits and Homework - Helping Children Succeed in School." Available at <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/succeed/parental.cfm>

Learning to Give, "Ways to Cooperate with Teachers for the Benefit of Your Child." Available at <http://learningtogive.org/parents/helping/>

Colorin Colorado, "20 Ways You Can Help Your Children Succeed in School." Available at <http://www.colorincolorado.org/families/school/helpyourkids/>

TutorFi.com, "Six Tips for Helping an Underachieving Student." Available at <http://www.tutorfi.com/MotivatingYourChildorStudent/underachievingstudent>

GreatSchools.org, "How Not to Be a Helicopter Parent." Available at <http://www.greatschools.org/parenting/teaching-values/535-helicopter-parent.gs>