

## PARENTS MATTER! *Helping Your Child Do Well in School*

What parents do at home can be very important in children's school success. The purpose of this piece of writing is to discuss the importance of parents and the family in children's school learning, and to discuss some things parents can do at home to help children do well in school.

### PARENTS MATTER!



Researchers looked at the differences in the average performance of 8th graders' mathematics scores among 37 states. They found three factors that accounted for almost all the difference:

- Students missing too much school
- Variety of reading materials in the home
- Too much TV watching.

In other words, most of the differences in learning across states can be explained by what goes on in the home.

What you do at home with your child is powerful! In fact, research studies have found that what you do to help your child is more important than how much money or education you have.

Parents who are more involved in their children's education are able to get their children to do more homework. And research has shown that students who do more homework learn more.

***Studies have shown that when families are involved in their children's education in positive ways the children have:***

- ***Higher grades***
- ***Higher test scores***
- ***Better attendance at school***
- ***Complete more homework***
- ***Have more positive attitudes and behavior***
- ***Graduate at higher rates***
- ***Go to college more often***

### FOUR STEPS PARENTS CAN TAKE TO HELP THEIR CHILD BE MORE SUCCESSFUL AT SCHOOL

#### 1. Read Together

The first and perhaps most important activity you can do at home to help your child do well in school is to read with him. Reading out loud to children is the single most important activity you can do at home to help your child learn to read well. Reading to children and listening to them read is related to success in school. However, only one half of parents with children under age 9 say they read to them every day, and only 13% of parents read to their children during the ages of 9 to 15. Below are some reading activities you can do with your child.

***Reading to children from ages 1 to 9 is one of the most important things you can do at home to help your child learn***

- **Read out loud to your child every day.** Spend about 15 minutes or more every day and read something interesting to your child. You can also spend time listening to her read to you.

**Research has shown that having reading materials available in the home, whether it is owned or borrowed from the library is directly related with children's success in reading.**

- **You can take your child to the library** and help him get a library card.
- **Help your child find interesting things to read.** Help your child find books related to her interests and hobbies. Your child needs to

learn that reading can be enjoyable. In school, she has to read what is assigned, but she also can read for her own pleasure. So, help her find books that will be of interest to her.



## 2. Use TV Wisely

If your child is spending too much time watching TV, he will not have time to do other important activities, like reading, playing, talking, doing homework, or doing a hobby. Your child needs to spend time doing these things in order to learn and grow as a person.

**American children spend an average of 4 hours each day in front of the television--that's 28 hours per week**

**At this rate, they will have watched 22,000 hours of TV by age 18--more time than they will spend in the classroom**

Surveys of parents show that most parents want to limit their children's TV viewing. This is hard to do if you work or are not at home.

Research has also shown that children who watch more than 10 hours of TV a week, or more than 2 hours per day, learn less than children who watch less TV. This means that the more TV children watch over 10 hours, the less they are likely to learn.

Below are some things you can do with your child and TV.

- **Limit the amount of TV your child watches.** Moderate amounts of viewing are okay, but try to limit your child to no more than about 2 hours of TV per day. If your child is watching more than 10 hours per week, or an average to 2 hours each day, it can interfere with schoolwork and learning.
- **Help your child select programs to watch.** Many television programs show scenes of violence and sex that will not be right for children. Also, some shows may promote morals and values that are different from your own. Help your child select more educational programs.
- **Watch programs with your child.** The program will give you chances to talk with your child about important topics.



### 3. Create and Maintain Family Routines

Another thing parents can do to help their children do well in school is to set up daily family routines. Studies have shown that students who do well in school have parents who create and maintain family routines. Routines help children by making their life more predictable and enjoyable.

Routines usually include regular time for **doing homework, doing chores, eating meals together, and going to bed at certain time.** Sitting down and eating a meal as a family is a great time to talk with your child about the events of the day. Also, **tucking your child into bed every night** is a great chance to communicate with your child.



An important part of the family routine should be making time for homework and studying each day. You can help your child to plan this time.

Your child can improve her grades and learning by doing enough homework. Research studies have shown that the more homework students do, the more they learn. Students with less mental ability who do enough homework get grades as good as students with more mental ability that do no homework.

When should you start teaching your child to do homework and study for tests regularly? The earlier you start the better. You should be working with your child by the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade to help her learn to spend time each day doing homework and studying. About 10 minutes per day per grade is a good rule of thumb. For example, a child in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade should be spending up to 50 minutes per day in homework.

**Most teachers start assigning homework by the third or fourth grade.**

Another thing you can do to help your child study at home is to provide a quiet place to study. This place should be well lit and have few distractions from phone calls, radio, TV, and other interruptions.

You can encourage your child's efforts to learn by being available for questions and spending time discussing what was learned. You do not need to know all the answers. It is more important that you show interest. If you do not know the answers, your child can call on other family members, teachers, or librarians for help.

### 4. Have High Standards for Your Child's Schoolwork

Another important step you can take at home is to **set high standards for your child's schoolwork.** You can help your child set goals for school, such as what kinds of grades to work for. You will need to set these goals so that they are realistic. That is, try to make the goals so that your child can meet the goal with some effort.

**Encourage** your child to work hard to reach his goals. Children like to play rather than work; however, they need to learn to work hard when it is time to work.



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Be sure to **show your interest** and concern by asking your child about his schoolwork and how he is doing in school. This will communicate to him that schoolwork is important.

Also be sure to **reward** your child for the effort he makes in doing his schoolwork and homework. You can do this by praising his effort. For example, "I really appreciate the hard work you put into your studies. You sure are trying hard!" You can also use physical and social rewards for reaching goals.



*AR State PIRC/Center for Effective Parenting  
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NW Arkansas Center: (479) 751-6166*

*For additional resources, visit our website:*

**[www.parenting-ed.org](http://www.parenting-ed.org)**

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