



BACK TO SCHOOL



September 2008



Preparing Your Child for School Success

Parents- Tips on How to Make This the Best Year Ever!

Parents can help their children actively engage in learning in many ways. For example:

- Make sure they eat well and get enough sleep.
- Talk with them every day about what's going on at school.
- Limit the amount of time they spend watching TV or playing video games.
- Attend school conferences, performances, and other events.

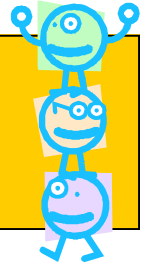
If your child complains about being unhappy at school, take the complaints seriously, and ask questions:

1. Do you feel safe at school?
2. Is the work too hard? Too easy?
3. Do you feel the teachers care about you?
4. What about the other students?
5. Do you find it hard to make friends?

Discuss your findings with teachers and administrators. Work with them to make your child's learning experience a positive one!



Building Block #16:
My parents/guardians and my teachers encourage me to do well.



Expecting the best from young people is an important way of expressing our belief in them. When we expect our children to do well, they know that we consider them capable. **Be clear and specific about your expectations regarding school.** You might, for example, tell your children that you expect them to:

1. Take **responsibility for completing homework** assignments without being reminded.
2. Get to school **on time** every day.
3. Make a **positive effort** in their classes and during other school activities.

Be sure to give recognition for their accomplishments and efforts.

Always leave room for learning from mistakes. When your children don't live up to your expectations, sit down and discuss what they think needs to be done in the future. Avoid making negative comments such as "You're so lazy" or "What's the matter with you?" that can hurt a child's self-esteem. If you are particularly upset about the situation, wait to talk to your child until you've had time to calm down.

School should be a positive and exciting part of children's lives. Keeping communication open at home will provide a wonderful line of support that they can use at any time.

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Block #6:
My parents/guardians are actively involved in helping me succeed in school.



Block # 23: *I do an hour or more of homework each school day.*

Homework Hints

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAY: “I’ll know you care about my schoolwork if you come to my teacher conferences (even though I don’t really like having those conferences or you being there).”

Here are some tips for you and some ideas to pass along to help your children make the most of their study time.



Parent ACTION TIPS

for a great school year!

- ◆ Be clear about your expectations with regard to school. Expect young people to do their best, but allow them room to make mistakes.
- ◆ Make lifelong learning part of your family’s outlook. Share your enthusiasm for life with your children, and help them discover that learning can be exciting and fun.
- ◆ Ask open-ended questions about what’s happening at school, such as “What challenges you at school?”
- ◆ Encourage your children to read for the sheer pleasure of it. Keep interesting books and magazines around the house, and visit your local library together. Take turns reading to each other.
- ◆ Let your children see that their school is important to you too. Attend school activities and conferences, get involved in the parent organization, or help plan a fundraising event. Show interest in what goes on each day at school.

- Provide a place to study that is free of distractions such as television noise and people talking on the phone.
- Instill a positive attitude. Help your children to think, “I can do this.”
- Keep all necessary supplies in one place, such as a plastic tub or shoebox.
- Have separate folders for each course to help keep paperwork organized, so it doesn’t get lost in the bottom of a backpack.
- Establish a regularly scheduled time for doing homework. This time probably should not be immediately after school. Young people need a little time to relax.
- Recommend that your children keep an assignment notebook so they know what homework must be done each day.



Block #32: *I'm good at planning ahead and making decisions.*

Adolescents obviously can't plan for everything, but planning can be a great help when it comes to stress management. **The following questions may help your child plan ahead:**

- Do I have any quizzes to prepare for?
- Am I up to date on assignments?
- Should I start working on the project that's due next week?

Keeping a to-do list is an excellent way to cut down on stress, and crossing out items as they are finished provides a feeling of accomplishment. The sense of organization and control from these simple ideas can make schoolwork more organized and enjoyable.

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Explore more ways to make decisions...

- Find someone at school—a teacher, school counselor, or coach—who can help you make long-range plans for what interests you so that you can determine class and activity choices.
- Start a lunchtime or after-school discussion group where students can talk about tough choices they're facing or have faced in the past. Ask a school counselor to sit in and offer guidance.
- Get involved with decision-making committees and boards at your school.
- Help plan events at your school—a dance, a new club, the annual open house, or whatever interests you.

Adapted from *What Teens Need to Succeed* by Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., Judy Galbraith, M.A., and Pamela Espeland, © 1998. Free Spirit Publishing Inc.



Block # 12: *My school has clear rules and consequences for behavior.*

Welcome School Boundaries

Students have a right to attend a school where boundaries are clear, appropriate, and respected by everyone. A school with boundaries is a school where students are free to learn. A school without boundaries—or one where boundaries are ignored or violated—is a school where learning takes second place to survival. If you think that your school's boundaries are stupid, insulting, or too restrictive, consider the alternative.

If some school boundaries seem inappropriate, don't just ignore them. Talk to your teachers, your principal, or the student council about changing them.

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With Your Friends

- ◆ Make a pact to support each other in school when there's pressure to violate school boundaries.
- ◆ Never pressure each other (or anyone else) to violate school boundaries.
- ◆ As a group, model responsible behavior for other students. Show that you respect the school boundaries.



Block # 25:

I spend three or more hours a week reading for pleasure.

Make reading a family affair.

- ⇒ Spend time reading as a family every day (or whenever schedules allow). Gather in the living room, family room, or den for an hour or half-hour at a time that works for everyone.
- ⇒ Make frequent visits to the library. Everyone in your family should have his or her own library card.
- ⇒ Have older siblings read aloud to younger brothers and sisters. Reading aloud is a perfect activity for cold winter evenings and lazy summer afternoons.
- ⇒ Play word games (Scrabble, Boggle) together. Put magnetic words and letters on the refrigerator; write messages and poems to each other.

Adapted from *What Teens Need to Succeed* by Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., Judy Galbraith, M.A., and Pamela Espeland, © 1998. Free Spirit Publishing Inc., Minneapolis, MN; 866-703-7322.

A Daily Checklist for Building Blocks in Your Children

You can use the blocks to help you choose the ways you want to intentionally build the strengths of your child. Try using this checklist as a start or create your own.

Today I will:

- ask how my child is doing. (Block #2)
- really listen to my child. (Block #33)
- act responsibly. (Block # 30)
- be honest with my spouse, kids, friends, neighbors—even salespeople. (Block # 29)
- offer my child opportunities to contribute to the family and to others. (Blocks # 7,8,9)
- notice what's happening in my neighborhood. (Block #13)
- ask what my child learned, liked, and didn't like in school. (Block #6)
- tell my child about my day. (Block #2)
- keep track of what my child is doing. (Block #11)
- provide a quiet place for homework. (Block #23)
- know when to turn off the TV. (Block #20)
- give my child ways to grow in body, mind, and spirit. (Blocks #17,18,19)
- tell my child one thing I love or appreciate about her or him. (Block #38)