

8 Tips for Elementary School Success

January 16, 2010 by [Suzanne Koup-Larsen](#), [Susan Stopper](#)

Research shows that parent support is more important to school success than a child's IQ, economic status or school setting, according to the U.S. Department of Education. But how can you most effectively nurture your budding young student? Here are Delaware Valley educators' tips for elementary school success.

1. Think Long Term

We know students need to learn reading, writing and math skills in elementary school, but to succeed throughout their school years, the two things they really need to know are study skills and how to learn. "As a parent, help your child develop effective study skills and strategies for time management," says Kelly Goula, Lower School director at Moorestown Friends School in Moorestown, NJ. This will help her learn any subject.

2. Have the Right Attitude

Parents should show excitement and enthusiasm for their child's school, says Jarrettown (PA) Elementary School Principal Cheryl Arena-Malfi, EdD. "This will put the child in a positive frame of mind to come to school and be successful," she says. Conversely, unkind words about the child's school or teacher can have a negative effect on a young student's mindset.

"If you want your children to be interested in their school, you have to be interested in their school and in the subjects they are studying," says MaryKat Parks Workinger, editorial director at EduGuide, a national non-profit organization that provides resources to support student achievement.

Volunteer in their classroom if you can. But more importantly, ask your children what they're doing in school, discuss the topics they're studying and talk about how they're handling assigned projects.

"When children see that their parents are interested, it shows them there is value in what they're doing," says Elly Alexander, a librarian and classroom teacher at Albert Einstein Academy in Wilmington, DE.

Source: <https://www.metrokids.com/8-tips-for-elementary-school-success/>

3. Communicate

“It is critically important to build a relationship with your children’s teachers,” says Workinger. Try to meet with teachers briefly in the first few weeks of the school year.

“Communicate with the teacher often,” says Debbie Panchisin, EdD, director of elementary curriculum for Appoquinimink School District in Odessa, DE. You can get in touch by e-mail, notes, phone calls or face-to-face.

A parent might recognize a problem sooner than the teacher. “Teachers truly appreciate things being brought to their attention,” says Beth Kessler, a 4th grade teacher in Bucks County, PA. “There are sides of the educational experience that come out at home that teachers might not see. The most important thing is that the parents approach the education of their child with the teacher as a team effort and a common goal.”

Also, “if your child has a physical, social, or academic challenge, explain it briefly in a note. This kind of personal contact tells teachers that you are involved, that you value them, and that you are open to discussions about your child’s weaknesses, as well as his or her strengths,” says Workinger.

4. Stick to Routines

In the morning, make sure your children wake up at a consistent time every day and eat breakfast. Strive for consistency in their nighttime routine too. Advise your children that “if you make sure your backpack is ready the night before, you’re not scrambling the next morning and you start the day off right,” says Vicki Dugan, a 1st grade teacher at Ashbrook Elementary School in Lumberton, NJ.

Kids benefit from a consistent homework routine, including a regular time of day and comfortable workplace. Keep school supplies in a small box near the child’s homework spot, Dugan suggests.

5. Support Strengths

“Recognize and encourage strengths,” says Genes Marquez, a teacher at the Montessori Academy of New Jersey in Delran, NJ. There is a tendency sometimes to focus only on areas where children need extra help. Emphasizing children’s strengths and helping them develop their areas of interest builds self-esteem and keeps kids motivated.

“Support their interests,” says Marquez. “That’s when great things happen.” Look for opportunities to expand on learning outside the classroom. If your child is interested in space, take him to a museum with a space exhibit or a planetarium. If he is interested in animals, take him to the zoo.

If you devote time to a problem learning area, continue emphasizing your child's strengths. It is important that a child understands that struggling in one area doesn't mean he is a poor student.

6. Be a Reading and Writing Role Model

It's important to show students that adults use reading and writing skills every day. Demonstrate those skills by reading, even if it's just street signs or directions; write for your children, even if it's just a note tucked in with lunch. "Let them see that schooling goes beyond 8:30am to 2:30pm," advises Patricia Scott, EdD, principal of St. Edmond's Academy in Wilmington, DE.

"When the foundations of reading are in place, everything else falls into place more easily," says Kessler. "Read with your child, alongside your child, and even on your own to model the importance of it."

"Take your children to the library from a young age," says Alexander. "The kids who are comfortable with books tend to be the successful kids."

7. Demonstrate Relevance

Help your children see that what they learn in school is useful and relevant to their life. Workinger says, "If they are studying fractions, the next time you are baking, show them how measuring cups and spoons divide ingredients and talk about how important it is to know the difference between a quarter cup and two-thirds of a cup — the difference between delicious and yuck!"

8. Support Homework Independence

"I don't advocate parents sitting with their child to do homework," says Goula. Learning independence and responsibility is an important lesson of the elementary school years, and homework is key to this process.

Have a pre-homework chat to summarize assignments and to review directions. After this brief meeting, slip away, but check back later to see if there are any questions or problems. Above all, let the child work on his own.

Suzanne Koup-Larsen and Susan Stopper are contributing writers to MetroKids.

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