

10 Tips to Help Your Kids Do Better in School

LIVE WELL UTAH

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Now that the kids are back in school, here are some tips that may help promote a greater enthusiasm for learning this new school year.

1. **Set an Example:** One of things we know, from years of observation, is that the family environment makes a huge difference in forming good attitudes toward school success in youth. Let your kids see you involved in learning and reading. Take a class online, go with them to the library, read to them at night, study their topics with them or learn a new language.
2. **Promote Study Time:** Have a quiet place and perhaps set time to study every day. Make sure youth are taking a short break during their study time. Provide a simple snack or divergent activity for them during the break. Be as consistent as possible about when it is study time. Work with them on being as organized as possible in their homework and studying. Have bins and shelves for completed assignments to make the process as systematic as possible. It is also helpful to teach your children about keeping their school papers and assignments organized before they get home with them. Help them learn how to break assignments and studying down into more manageable tasks.
3. **Let Them Talk:** Studies have shown that children have higher IQ's when given the opportunity to talk often about many different topics. Provide a chance around the dinner table to discuss events of the day, concerns they have, or something they heard on the news. Ensure that there is emotional safety in expressing themselves. Let them tell you about their 'high' and 'low' points of the day.
4. **Support a New Interest or Enrichment Activity:**

Children who have a love of enrichment activities have a release from the doldrums of school. These activities provide an added purpose to their studies and to their day.

5. **Remain Supportive When They Get Low Grades:** True achievers seldom get perfect marks all the time. Unconditional acceptance is the rule. When your children are getting low grades, do your best to work with them, beside them, and for them. This may mean getting tutoring help, working with the teacher more closely, and talking to the child about his or her roadblocks on the subject. Be willing to hear them out, and do not compare them to their other siblings or peers who may be doing well in that subject. Be sure to find the balance of encouraging better grades and putting undue pressure on them. Be as constructive as possible on ways to do better next time.
6. **Set Standards of Expectation and Goal Setting:** There is nothing wrong with parents defining a level of expectation for school performance. Parents are to be parents, which sometimes means taking a proactive stand when children are not striving to do their best in school, which may mean disciplining for laziness, lack of hard work, and effort. Encourage your kids to set their own performance goals for the school year. Have them put them in writing and evaluate with them on a frequent basis. Checking on their progress toward goal accomplishment shows them you care and are playing an active part in their success. This also means attending back to school nights and parent/teacher conferences.
7. **Engage Your Student in Learning, Not Just Reading:** It is really easy for us to read something, but do we remember the idea or concept before moving on to the next paragraph? To help bridge the gap with your children between reading and learning, have them explain

the concepts to you every few paragraphs. Quiz them at breakfast the next morning. Help them realize that employers in later life do not want to have to repeat things over and over again to their employees. Now is the time for them to understand they are responsible for their own learning. Just as parents go to work every day, their job for now is learning. Observe and encourage different learning styles. Are they visual learners, auditory learners, etc.?

8. **Let Them Figure Things Out on Their Own:** Sometimes, in our goal to get study time over with, we jump in too quickly with the answers. Encourage youth to look things up on their own, to read something again, or to learn from their mistakes. Set up scenarios where they have to use some aspect of what they are studying to solve a problem. Driving my kids to and fro was a great time to pose a math problem to them, or throw out a social studies issue that is current today for them to think on, or ask them their opinion on the life of some person in history. Often as parents we are too quick to offer our advice on life's problems to our kids. We want to prevent them from making mistakes rather than letting them learn the art of figuring things out.
9. **Volunteer at the School:** Not only do teachers and faculty appreciate help at the school, but volunteering helps you get to know the teachers, the administrative staff, the lunchroom staff, other parents, AND it also sends a message to your children that their school experience is important to you. This can also be helpful in having conversations with your child about things at school generally. Maybe you will see why your child is less than impressed with a certain teacher, or that there are issues with others in the school setting. Even if you work full-time outside the home, contact the PTA/PTO President and let him or her know you are

interested in helping plan and implement activities at the school when you are not at work. (As a working mom myself, I know how difficult this can be, but it has paid off so many times throughout the years, that I cannot omit mentioning it.)

10. **Eat Together as a Family at Least 5 Meals a Week:** Studies show that the more times a week children eat together with their family, the better they do in school, the more they stay clear of anti-social behaviors, and the more articulate they are in their communication skills.

Being actively engaged in the overall school experience does take time, thought, and energy. But the rewards are worth it, for both them and you.

This article was written by Teresa Hunsaker, USU Extension family and consumer sciences educator, Weber County