



A Union of Professionals

Helping Your Child Succeed: What Parents & Families Can Do At Home To Help Their Children Meet High Standards

Ask your child about school.

Each day, ask your children to tell you at least one thing that they learned or that happened at school. If your child answers "nothing," ask something more specific like "What did you do in math class?" Usually, children have something worth saying and are more likely to share it if you make it clear you're interested.

Even hearing a humorous story from your child is positive. The key is to get your children talking about school.

Find time for praise and rewards.

When your children work hard, complete tough tasks or earn good grades on a test, let them know you're proud. Consider saying so with words and rewards.

Rewards don't have to cost money lengthen your teenager's curfew for a special event or extend other privileges.

Even when your child's efforts disappoint you, avoid negative labels. Children who are always called "dumb" or "idiot" are more likely to live up to *that* standard, instead of trying harder. AFT believes that every child is capable of doing better. Parents and school staff must show all children that we want and expect them to learn.

Make sure homework gets done.

Be sure to ask your children if they have homework. This helps reinforce homework's importance. Here are other ideas:

- Find a quiet spot in the home for your children to work--or turn off the TV or music to make it quiet.
- Pick a location that is close enough for them to ask you or another family member questions about their assignment.
- Ask to see the finished homework.
- If your child often seems confused or unsure about homework assignments, contact the teacher yourself by phoning or sending a note.

Place limits on television.

Studies have shown that students who watch too much television are more likely to receive poor grades. Time in front of the television can be better spent studying for a test, reading a book or even working on a puzzle with family members.

Try to set limits like these:

- One hour of TV each school night is a good limit to consider. Another approach is to reduce your child's TV viewing from three hours to two--then later try reducing it to just one hour.
- Supervise your children's viewing and guide their decisions on which programs are appropriate to watch.
- Early in the evening, check the TV listings and identify programs that may have violent or otherwise inappropriate themes.
- If you receive cable television, *The Learning Channel* and *The Discovery Channel* have programs that are both enter and educational. Call 1-800-813-7409 for more information on these networks.

Encourage your child to read.

Keep plenty of books, magazines and newspapers at home. You needn't buy a lot of books - you can borrow them from a local library. Ask your children about what they're reading. Discussing stories with your children helps teach them to express themselves and makes reading more fun.

One of the best ways to encourage reading is to let your children *see you* reading. Try to spend at least 10 minutes--20 minutes, if possible--at night reading to preschool children. If you have difficulty reading, be a storyteller. Telling stories to your children develops their curiosity and language skills.

Establish discipline at home.

As a parent, grandparent or guardian, you are your child's first teacher. Children learn from your words and actions. Here are some other tips:

- Keep rules simple and understandable.
- Make it clear in advance what your children can expect if they break a rule.
- Praise your children when they make an extra effort to help around the house or show consideration for another person.
- Consider involving your children in setting some family rules. Young people are less likely to break a rule that they helped to decide in the first place.
- Proper discipline at home teaches a child self-control and respect for others--qualities that lead to a productive and successful adulthood.

Respond quickly to discipline problems.

If your child is becoming violent or out of control at home, seek help. Teachers, counselors, religious leaders, neighbors and others in your community can offer advice and support. Don't be afraid or ashamed to turn to others.

Teach your child values.

Each family has its own personal, religious and/or cultural values and traditions. But there are also basic values that bind all of us together--being honest, showing respect for ourselves and for others, and having compassion.

Look for ways to instill these and other values in your children. Remind your child of the Golden Rule: "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*" When reading books or watching TV with your child, look for opportunities to discuss the importance of values.

Make summer a learning time.

Learning doesn't have to stop just because school is out. There are many free or low-cost activities that you can share with your children that make learning fun. Some of the places and events near you that help learning continue through summer include:

- museums
- libraries
- cultural festivals
- street fairs
- historic sites

Remember: Many cities and states have tourist agencies or offices you can phone for more information. For other ideas, call the AFT Learning Line at 1-800-242-5465.