

## Tips for Parents

- Attend your school's open house, even at the high school level. You will have an opportunity to meet your child's teachers and other school personnel and find out about bus schedules, lunch options, dress codes, and other practical information. This is a perfect time to ask about the school curriculum and express any questions or concerns.
- Reading aloud from the time of birth is one of the most important ways you can help your child get ready for school. When your child is old enough, have him read to you or discuss the book he is reading.
- Having trouble getting your children out of bed in the morning? Perhaps they're not getting enough sleep. Preschool children need 11-13 hours of sleep, school-age children need 10-11 hours of sleep, and teens need 9 hours. When children are well-rested they are more able to pay attention at school.
- Make a "school portfolio." Teachers use portfolios to track how children's skills are increasing over time. You can do the same thing at home by collecting samples of your child's work across subject areas. Use a file folder, scrapbook or special box. This can be a fun project to work on WITH your child!
- Make use of daily opportunities to talk with your child about school, such as while you are riding in the car or eating dinner. Find out what is happening in your child's world, both socially and academically.
- Have realistic expectations for report cards. Encourage children to try their best, but know that not all children are able to get an A in every subject. Praise children for their effort, not just for their specific grade. Remember, letter grades are only *one* way to keep track of your child's progress.
- Make the most of your parent-teacher conference by writing down questions you would like to ask in advance. Remember, this is your chance to work as a partner with your child's teacher. However, if your child is struggling, don't wait until the conference to voice your concerns. You can contact the school any time you have questions.
- Help your child with homework by setting up a special "homework corner" in your home. Make sure it is quiet and free of distractions, like TV and cell phones. Stock the area with supplies needed for homework (pencils, calculator, paper, ruler, etc.) Remember, your role as a parent is to provide support for homework, NOT to do the homework for your child.
- Create a new family tradition, like a weekly game night. These activities strengthen your bond as a family and provide opportunities for fun, conversation, and learning new skills.

- Develop a partnership with school from the beginning of the school year. Talk with your child's teacher about the best ways to communicate. It may be writing a note, calling the school, emailing, or writing notes back and forth in your child's daily planner. Remember, it is your right to contact the teacher any time you have questions or concerns.
- Monitor screen time and put a limit on how much time your child spends watching TV, playing video games, and using the computer. Be a good role model by showing your kids there are other things to do besides surfing the internet and watching TV. Screen time is easier to monitor if you keep screens out of kids bedrooms.
- Give specific feedback for what your child does well. Tell her exactly what you saw that you liked: "I really like how you worked hard on your homework tonight! You did it all by yourself! I am very proud of you!"
- Have a teenager? It's never too early to start thinking about college. Help your teen by encouraging her to think about and explore many different career options. Brainstorm a list of colleges she is interested in and talk about why she might want to go there. Plan time to visit several college campuses before the senior year.
- When parents teach children to be responsible at an early age, children gain the skills needed to be a responsible adult. How can parents teach their children responsibility? Don't do things for your children that they can do for themselves. Be clear and consistent about your expectations. Let children experience the natural consequences of their behavior.
- Use positive communication strategies with the school. If there is a problem, try to solve it with the teacher first before going to a higher level. Avoid blaming the teacher for problems your child is having. Instead, ask how you can work together to solve the problem. Give positive feedback to teachers when things are going well.
- If your child is struggling in school, try to find out why. Is he having trouble staying organized? Is she having reading difficulties? Does he not understand the topic? Talk to your child, as well as the teacher, to try to find answers to these questions.
- Be involved in school decisions. You can join parent groups, advisory councils, or other committees. Attend school meetings, public board meetings, and vote in school elections.
- How is your child's school doing? Take some time to review the school's report card on the New York State Department of Education's website at <https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb/>. This report can help you get information

about the school, see how students are doing on state tests, and find out if the school is meeting the goals of No Child Left Behind.

- Help your child start a homework routine by setting aside time every day at the same time to do homework. It does not have to be right after school. The length of time depends on the child's age and the amount of homework they have. Have children use this time everyday. They can use it for studying or reading if they do not have a specific assignment to do.
- Make school a priority. As soon as your child starts school, let her know that you expect her to attend school every day and do her best while there. Explain that it is her job to go to school and learn. Talk about the consequences of missing school in terms that mean something to her (having to stay after school to make up missed work, attending remedial classes, missing out on time with friends, going to summer school).
- Help your teen become a responsible adult by letting him know your expectations, but encouraging him to make his own decisions and handling some problems on his own. Teach your teen life skills such as filling out forms, balancing a budget, managing a calendar, cooking, and doing laundry.
- Become involved in community activities and programs. Attend workshops or trainings that provide information about ways you can support your child at home. Use family support programs that help with parenting, health, nutrition, and other topics that might interest you. Attend free events in the community—they are fun and help you meet and connect with other families.
- Remember that you are the first and most important teacher of your child. By communicating with teachers, monitoring your child's progress, and supporting learning at home, you have the power to make a difference in your child's education.