**Education: HELPING KIDS SUCCEED IN SCHOOL**

By Richard Bromfield, a Harvard Medical School psychologist. From *American Profile Magazine, date unknown.*

**Doing well in school can foster children’s self-esteem,** protect against the perils of adolescence, and bring rewards such as career freedom, higher salaries and health care. There’s no better time than the start of a new school year for parents to renew their support of their children’s studies. Here are some ways parents can help their children succeed in school:

* **Care about education, and let it show.** Speak about school and learning with respect and enthusiasm. Be cheerful about the start of the school year. Allow yourself and your child to enjoy buying back to school supplies. An occasional and heartfelt chat about what education has meant to you, or, perhaps your regret that you didn’t study harder, can touch your child.
* **Make reading a family matter.** The ability to read is key to learning and school success. Read to your young children, and read along with your older ones. Make regular visits to a bookstore or a library. Help reluctant readers find books and magazines that interest them. Rent or borrow audiobooks for the car. Encourage weak readers to read daily. Practice can make most any child a better and more willing reader.
* **Take interest in your child’s thinking.** Invite your child’s input during family discussions about the world, family issues, politics, and other topics. Even young children have opinions to share. Try not to dismiss or critique every opinion with your older, wiser perspective. Showing children that their ideas matter teaches them to take themselves and their reasoning seriously, and readies them to engage more fully in school.
* **Model learning.** Strive to be lifelong learners. Make “I don’t know” a welcome statement, and show your child how you both can find the answers. Let your child accompany you as you learn to fix a pipe, bake a cake, or research a mutual fund. Accompanying parents on their own discoveries will convince children that learning can be a lifelong and self-directed endeavor that is relevant and useful.
* **Support teachers.** Avoid making disparaging comments about your children’s teachers. Unless a teacher is way out of line, encourage your children to respect and work with their teachers. Learning to get along with others prepares children to appreciate different perspectives and to deal with future bosses and co-workers.
* **Create the space and mood for homework.** Establish reasonable times and places for homework. Try to eliminate distractions, avoid watching television or playing music loudly while children study, for example. Let your children earn play or TV time after they’ve done their homework. Try to be near during homework time to provide help and support, it needed.
* **Be a thoughtful helper.** When your children ask for help, give just enough assistance to get them back on their way. If a child is stuck on one part of a math problem, edge him or her in the right direction and let him finish it. A parent’s job is to enable children to do their own work, not to do it for them. Keep your eye on the bigger goal of shaping your child into an independent and capable learner.
* **Take notice.** Monitor your children’s schoolwork. If they are succeeding, share your pride. If they aren’t, help them discover why they are not. Meet with teachers and work together to find out what is amiss and what can be done. Many children have learning issues that can be effectively dealt with and, often, overcome. Try to reward effort more than the finished product.
* **Education takes place over a lifetime, but parents can do much to ensure their children’s engagement and success along the way.\***