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## School Success

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## SCHOOL SUCCESS

*"The more committed a child is to learning, the more likely it is that he or she will grow up healthy."*  
Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., What Kids Need to Succeed

One of the most difficult challenges facing parents and teachers today, is that of encouraging youth to value learning and make a personal commitment to education. Youth who develop a love of learning will not only increase their chances of academic and career success as adults, but will also be more likely to avoid problem behaviors and negative peer pressure. This newsletter looks at different aspects of learning and offers suggestions to parents and other adults who are working together to **help youth succeed.**



Motivating youth to achieve in school is a difficult task, but can become easier as students realize the rewards of their hard work, and begin to enjoy the positive feelings that come as they experience academic success.

☑ **PARENTS:** Always take an interest in your youth's school work, asking on a regular basis, "Tell me about what you are studying." Find ways to relate what's being taught in school to real-life situations. This can be done through dinner-time discussions, walks, field trips, etc. Encourage self-motivation by helping youth see connections between things they are interested in, and what's being studied in school.

☑ **SCHOOLS:** Give recognition for a job well done, and be sure to include awards for effort, improvement, and achievement in other areas (such as

citizenship). Teachers can serve as powerful motivators for youth, and should take the time to get to know students on an individual basis, and offer support and encouragement.

☑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Teach youth about setting goals and working to achieve those goals. Ask them about their future plans, and talk about goal-setting as a way to fulfill those plans. Youth leaders should ask youth about their grades, school work, and classes on a regular basis.

☑ **COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS:** Support apprenticeship programs or career days within your community. Encourage successful adult leaders to share their experiences with youth, helping to motivate youth to succeed in classes and coursework that will prepare them for a desired career or profession.



Learning should be enjoyable! Youth who come to school ready to learn, and who actively participate in class discussions and activities, will not only learn more, but will have fun in the process and develop a lifelong love for learning.



☑ **PARENTS:** Make sure your youth arrives at school well-rested, and with a good breakfast -- this will help them stay alert and engaged. Take family trips to the library, and check out books or tapes on a variety of topics. Make yourself available to help youth with their homework, and volunteer to help track down information needed for research projects.

☑ **SCHOOLS:** Effective teachers use a variety of teaching methods to involve students in the learning process. Survey students about their individual interests and hobbies, and whenever possible, integrate that information into the subject material. Let the students select a Teacher of the Year, and recognize this teacher at an awards assembly.

☑ **COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS:** Offer community education classes for youth and their families. Make opportunities available for school-to-work experiences for youth throughout the business community and in local government organizations. Provide support to youth as they explore career areas that tie in with their current school studies.



Homework, though often dreaded by students, provides the skills and knowledge needed to succeed academically. In addition, students who spend six hours a week (or more) on homework are also likely to develop good study skills, work hard, increase self-discipline and perseverance -- all skills which will benefit them as lifelong learners.



☑ **PARENTS:** Help youth get into a regular routine for completing homework by finding them a quiet place and a consistent time for their studies. If your youth don't have homework each day, encourage them to read or study something of interest during their set study time. Make snacks available during study time -- it's hard to concentrate on an empty stomach!

☑ **SCHOOLS:** Provide support for students having difficulty with homework assignments, such as an after-school homework club. Teachers should coordinate major projects, spreading them throughout the year so that students aren't overloaded. Find ways to reward effort on homework assignments, in addition to the traditional grading system.

☑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Keep in mind your youths' school and homework involvement as you schedule weeknight activities. Schedule regular "homework help" activity nights, where youth leaders assist students with classroom projects or assignments. Plan activities later in the evening if possible, after homework is finished.



Research indicates that youth who feel connected to their school, or who have a sense of school pride and school spirit, are much less likely to drop out than students who feel no such connection.



☑ **PARENTS:** Promote school pride in your youth by providing school T-shirts or sweat shirts for them to wear (they make great birthday presents). Post the school calendar and other notices on a bulletin board that can be accessed by everyone in the family. Read the school newspaper, and ask your youth about special events or school issues.

☑ **SCHOOLS:** Host regular "school spirit" activities, involving students, teachers and parents whenever possible.



These activities could include decorating bulletin boards, holding a contest to write a school slogan or spirit song, designing home room banners and mottoes, giving monthly awards to the most enthusiastic, or most involved student, teacher or staff member, etc. Encourage a show of school spirit for all activities, not just athletic competitions.

☑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Announce school events in church bulletins and encourage members who might not have children to attend and support other youth in the congregation.

☑ **COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS:** Recognize school accomplishments in the media and in city council/government meetings and bulletins. Support school fund-raising efforts and find ways to combine community resources to best support the local schools



Reading is *the* basic skill which can determine a student's success (or failure) in school. Youth who spend time each week reading for fun, not only experience success academically, but are also more likely to avoid trouble.



☑ **PARENTS:** Find creative ways to promote reading at home. Encourage your teens to read the newspaper, the comics, cartoon books, or other magazines. Keep a


variety of reading materials around the house and let your youth catch you reading! Help your youth apply for a library card, and ask for their input as you start a home library. When your children are young, read *to* them, and as they grow older, find time to read *with* them.

☑ **SCHOOLS:** Celebrate reading through an *author of the month* spotlight and other such activities. Assign students to write book reviews for the school newspaper or the school's TV news program. Set aside time during each school day when students can read a book of their choice. Provide opportunities for students to write their own books, or write books for elementary-age children. These books can be donated to local elementary schools or shelters and enjoyed by young children.

☑ **COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS:** Support literacy efforts in your community by providing financial support and encouraging volunteer efforts. Make sure that your local library is adequately funded and that services are available to all in the community.



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**Parents' To-Do List**

1. Help my kids with their homework.
2. Ask my youth about what they learned in school today.
3. Get a library card!
4. Send my teen's teacher a thank you note.
5. Read a good book.
6. Make time for fun!

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