

# Upper Elementary Parent Guidebook

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*“It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings.” Ann Landers*

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# Help Your Child Succeed

*Students in the upper elementary grades need a lot of direction, guidance, and support from their parents.*

## **Provide school supplies and a place to study.**

If your school has a list of recommended supplies, be sure to get everything on the list. If your school doesn't supply student planners, also purchase a planner or an assignment notebook.

Make sure that your child has a place to study at home that's quiet, well-lit, and comfortable. This area should have a surface for writing and be equipped with paper, pencils, a calculator, and a dictionary. If possible, keep these items together in one place.

## **Help set academic goals.**

Sit down with your child at the beginning of each grading period and help your child set realistic goals for the term. At the end of the term, discuss what went well and what could have been improved.

In addition to setting goals for grades, also set one or two goals regarding homework, extra reading, behavior, organization, and/or attendance. Setting goals will give your child something specific to work towards.

## **Insist on daily attendance.**

When students miss school, they miss class instruction, discussions, assignments, group projects, quizzes, and tests. Parents who allow their children to miss school when they aren't ill not only hurt their child's education, they also send a message that school isn't important. If your child doesn't want to go to school, or if you're seeing a pattern of excuses to miss school, talk to your child or to your child's teacher or counselor.

**Attendance is the number one school success factor!**

## **Attend all parent programs.**

Most elementary schools have “open houses” for parents. These programs give parents an opportunity to see the school, to meet their children’s teachers, and to learn something about the subjects their children are studying.

When you attend one of these parent programs, you learn valuable information about your child’s school and curriculum. You also show your child that you are interested in his/her academic progress.

## **Participate in parent-teacher groups.**

Parent-teacher groups are an important part of every elementary school. These volunteer groups help bring parents, teachers, and school administrators together. They also help bring awareness to activities and issues that affect the welfare of the school.

Through fundraising, parent groups can help cover the cost of field trips, and they can bring enrichment programs to the school (speakers, musical performances, science-on-wheels programs, etc.).

Your participation in a parent-teacher group helps build a sense of community. It demonstrates the value you place on your child’s education, and it shows that you are committed to making your child’s school the best that it can be.

## **Use rewards and consequences to encourage change.**

Rewards are most effective when you want to encourage a change in attendance, effort, or behavior. (As your child gets older, doing well will be its own reward.) A reward for improved effort or for a specific achievement can be very motivating for a child. Of course, for most students, a parent’s approval is still the best reward. Make it a point to recognize effort and to acknowledge each academic success, even if it’s just a good grade on a homework assignment.

Students need to know that there are consequences for poor school performance. Consequences are most effective when they are reasonable and logical. For example, a reasonable and logical consequence for handing in homework late might be no TV, music or phone calls after dinner until all homework is done.

## Encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Make sure that your child eats well, exercises, and gets plenty of sleep. Have nutritious food at home and send healthy lunches to school. Insist on a reasonable bedtime hour, and make sure that your child does something active every day.

## Help improve organizational skills.

With more classes, more homework, and more activities, it's important for students to develop good organizational skills. When students are organized, they get better grades, they are less frustrated, and they have more time for family and friends. *Organization is an area in which parents can really help their children.*

Use the following suggestions to help your child become more organized.

- Make sure that your child has a folder for each class. Remind your child to put all handouts, assignments, and returned tests in the appropriate folders. Loose papers should not be stuck inside books or stuffed into a backpack.
- Set up files at home for returned papers, quizzes, and tests.
- Have your child use a student planner, assignment notebook, or agenda to keep track of assignments. Check it regularly to make sure that your child is using it correctly.
- Encourage your child to clean out his/her backpack and desk every week.
- Help your child learn how to organize and prioritize homework. Have your child explain to you what needs to be completed, and then help your child develop a plan to get it done.
- Large assignments often seem overwhelming. Show your child how to break down large assignments and projects into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- Each night, have your child get everything ready for the next day.

## Monitor homework.

How you approach the subject of homework says a lot about the value you place on education. *Make sure that your child understands that you consider homework to be very important.*

The following tips can help ensure that your child's homework is always completed accurately and on time.

- To keep up with schoolwork and after-school activities, students need to develop good time-management skills. Help your child identify time wasters, such as watching too much TV or spending too much time playing video games. By eliminating or reducing time wasters, your child will have more time for other activities.
- Help your child determine the best time to do homework. Some students want to get their homework done right after school; others want to take a break and do their homework later. The important thing is that your child create a schedule that makes homework a part of his/her daily routine.

### Sample Schedule

3:00 – 4:00 Snack/chores  
4:00 – 5:00 Homework/studying  
5:00 – 6:15 Dinner  
6:30 – 7:30 Soccer practice  
8:00 – 9:00 Free time before bed

- Your child may ask for help with homework from time to time. If your child needs help, go over the assignment and try to explain anything that seems confusing. Also, be available to help organize work, listen to presentations, and help review for tests and quizzes.
- When your child is working on homework, remove distractions to promote a more productive learning environment. For example, turn off the TV and make homework time a quiet time in your household. Although a call to a classmate with questions about an assignment is acceptable, social calls or other interruptions by friends should not be allowed.

**Never do homework  
for your child..**

- Students must learn to be responsible for keeping track of their assignments, completing assignments accurately, and turning assignments in on time. *Parents need to make homework their child's responsibility.*
- If homework seems excessive or if your child consistently struggles with homework, contact the teacher and express your concern. Work with the teacher to ensure that homework does not become a problem for your child.
- If your child is not doing his/her homework, first make sure that the homework isn't too difficult or that there isn't some problem with the class. Then come up with a plan in which the completion of homework becomes your child's responsibility, and if it's not completed, your child's problem.
- In the upper elementary grades, students often are required to do group projects. These projects are usually fun for students; however, if some of the group members don't do their part, students can sometimes get frustrated. If your child expresses frustration over a group project, explain how important it is to be able to work as part of a group. Give examples of how you must work in groups at your job, in your church, community, and family.
- Encourage your child to use any "free time" during the school day to get started on homework. Students who use class time wisely have much less work to do at home.
- If your child has a tendency to rush through homework just to get it done, insist that you look over all completed homework.

*Always be as positive and encouraging as possible about school and homework.*

## **Encourage independent problem solving.**

Parents need to know what's going on at school, and they need to monitor their children's academic progress. It is, however, important for students to learn how to solve their own problems and how to take care of their own affairs.

Being able to get their questions answered and their problems resolved helps students gain confidence and become more independent. It also gives them a sense of empowerment. In the upper elementary grades, most problems can be resolved and most questions answered just by going to the right office or by talking to the right person. Whenever your child has a question or problem, try to help your child figure out how to take care of it on his/her own.

You want your child to become more independent; however, it's important for your child to know that you are always available to help.

## **Promote active learning.**

Many of your child's early school experiences involved quiet learning activities such as reading, writing, and doing homework. Although quiet learning is still a large part of your child's day, in the upper elementary grades, your child will be encouraged to become a more active learner.

Active learning involves problem solving, exploring personal interests, and asking and answering questions. Participating in team sports and clubs, visiting museums, and playing a musical instrument are all activities that support active learning.

There are many ways that you can promote active learning at home. Spend time listening to and talking with your child. Discuss current events, movies, music, and TV shows. Involve your child in family discussions and ask for your child's input. Play games such as Scrabble, checkers, and chess. Turn daily activities such as meal preparation into learning experiences and involve your child in family projects.

Active learning pursuits will help your child grow and develop intellectually. These activities will also help your child be more successful in school.

## SUMMARY

# Help Your Child Succeed

- Provide school supplies and a place to study.
- Help set academic goals.
- Insist on daily attendance.
- Attend all parent programs.
- Participate in parent-teacher groups.
- Use rewards and consequences to encourage change.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle.
- Help improve organizational skills.
- Monitor homework.
- Encourage independent problem solving.
- Promote active learning.

*“Try to eat dinner as a family as often as possible. Research shows that students whose families eat dinner together do better in school. They are also less likely to get in trouble. Turn the television off and talk about your day. It’s a great time for families to reconnect.” Bob Arnette, counselor*



## Work with Your School

*Support and work with the principals, teachers, and counselors at your school. Like you, they want your child to enjoy school and be successful.*

### Support the school and the teachers.

Children's attitudes about education and school are, to a great extent, determined by what their parents say and do. Your child needs to know that you support the teachers and the administrators at your school. *Your child also needs to know that you consider education to be a top priority.*

You can best convey your interest in education and your support of your child's school by doing the following:

- Insist that your child be in school, on time, every day.
- Expect your child to work up to his/her potential.
- Show an interest in what your child is learning.
- Talk about the importance of getting a good education.
- Expect your child to follow the school rules.
- Attend all parent programs and parent-teacher conferences.
- Show consistent interest in your child's academic progress.

### Communicate with your school.

It's easy today for parents to stay informed and to communicate with school personnel. Most schools now have their own Web site, and parents can often communicate with teachers via e-mail.

If there's ever a situation (e.g., health problem, death in the family, divorce) that might affect your child's attitude or performance, be sure to contact the school and explain the situation.