

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Family and School Partnerships
Fairfax County Public Schools

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IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Encourage attendance all year long

Good attendance has a huge effect on your child's school success. In fact, kids who miss a lot of school—even in the early grades—are more likely to drop out. They have more problems learning material and fall behind easily.

One school district asked families why their kids missed school. Here are their top answers—and some ways you can deal with those problems:

- **Your child feels sick.** If she doesn't have a fever of over 100° and she isn't obviously sick (vomiting, severe coughing, diarrhea), your child can probably go to school. If you do keep your child home, don't make it a "fun" day.
- **Your child won't get up.** Make bedtime earlier. Help her get ready for school the night before.
- **You need your child at home to help with younger kids.** If you work and need child care, be sure to have a backup plan if your sitter gets sick. It's not fair to ask an older child to miss school to care for younger kids.
- **Your child is worried.** Talk with your child. Is it a spelling test that worries her? Help her review the words. If it's something more serious, talk with the teacher. Together, you can probably solve the problem. Meanwhile, tell her the rule is that she *will* go to school—every day.

Source: Joyce L. Epstein and Steven B. Sheldon, "Present and Accounted For: Improving Student Attendance Through Family and Community Involvement," *Journal of Education Research* (Heldref Publications, www.heldref.org/jer.php).



MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

Get focused on good habits this year

The beginning of the school year is an important time for your child to develop good habits. Here are some to focus on:

- **Planning ahead.** When your child faces a big task, teach him to divide it into small parts. Then he should set a deadline for each section. This makes projects less intimidating. Best of all, it gets them done on time.
- **Being organized.** Inside the door, use a box or shelf as a place for your child to stash all the stuff that has to go to school tomorrow.
- **Managing time.** Make sure your child doesn't commit to too many activities. Always leave time for family and homework. Set a good example yourself by putting family first.

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Your involvement matters!

Research shows that children benefit when parents are actively involved in their education and their lives. You can:

- **Talk** to your child about school.
- **Keep** a learning-friendly home.
- **Encourage** reading for pleasure.
- **Be aware** of what he does with friends.
- **Keep** in touch with your child's teacher.
- **Attend** your child's games or events.

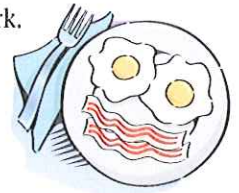
Source: Susan J. Paik, "Ten Strategies That Improve Learning," *Educational Horizons*, www.pilambda.org/horizons/v81-2/paik.pdf.

MAKING TIME COUNT

Make the most of mornings

Kids thrive at school when they can spend time with parents at home. So if you have to work in the evening:

- **Do some school tasks** in the morning. Get up early to check your child's homework. Help him review for a test.
- **Make breakfast** the main family meal. Sit down. Talk about the school day to come.
- **Plan as much family time** as possible on weekends (or whenever your days off are scheduled).



HOMEWORK

Set up a 'homework hub'

Children need a quiet area for studying. But that doesn't mean your child has to be banished to her room. Some children like to have people around, especially parents who can help. If your child feels this way, brainstorm about a distraction-free spot that might work for her.

