

**Prepared for:**

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# 7

## **Proven Ways to Motivate Children To Do Better in School**

**One of a series of Parent Guides from**



**Elementary Version**

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## 1

## Set Proper Expectations

Expect your child to succeed, and her chances for success improve greatly. Expect her to come up short, and the odds are that she will. Children are usually keenly aware of how their parents view them, and they often tailor their actions to those views. So it's very important to have high expectations—and communicate them to your child. It's equally important to base your expectations on your child as an individual who has strengths and weaknesses like all individuals.

Set appropriate expectations by:

- **Communicating with your child.**

Talk kindly but honestly with your child about where she thinks her interests and abilities are, and where she thinks she has less interest and ability. Then share your own opinions, based on your observation of your child. Look for common ground, but never dismiss your child's self-assessment as inappropriate or unrealistic. Those areas that both you and your child view as her strengths may represent the areas where she will truly shine. These should be the focus of your highest expectations for achievement. On the other hand, those areas where you both agree she struggles should be the focus of different expectations. Here, make it clear that you expect to see her top effort. If the effort expectation is met, then she has succeeded. It is natural to be concerned with results. But if you look only at the final product, you might miss the enormous amount of work that went into every step.

- **Re-evaluating as necessary.** Your child will grow and change, and so will her interests and abilities. Plan to review expectations with your child about every three months (more frequently if needed). Talk often and make adjustments if you and your child agree that any of your expectations were too low—or too ambitious for the moment.



## 3

**Show Your Child You Think School is Important**

Taking time to set expectations and goals with your child clearly communicates your interest in helping her to be her best. Build on that by showing your enthusiasm for education in a variety of ways. These include:

- **Maintaining a relationship with your child's teacher.** Tell the teacher about your expectations and your child's goals. Ask her for suggestions on achieving them. Also ask the teacher to clearly state her own expectations and goals for your child. Agree on a way for the two of you to exchange information about your child. After an initial face-to-face meeting, many teachers and parents find that email is an efficient way to keep in touch.
- **Supporting the programs at your child's school.** Attending events such as back-to-school night, conferences, plays and family math night show your child that being at school is a priority for you. If schedule and resources allow, also consider volunteering at school and participating in school fundraisers.
- **Creating a suitable environment** for homework. Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to study. Ask her to let you know which supplies she needs, and offer to pick them up for her. Be available during homework time to look over homework and give suggestions, but never do your child's homework for her. If your child has difficulty doing his homework, write a note to her teacher explaining the problem.
- **Keeping up with your child's assignments.** Doing school work is your child's responsibility, but you should be aware of what she is studying as well as the status of homework assignments, tests and class projects.
- **Staying positive about school and schoolwork.** You may not always think so, but your attitude does rub off on your child. Whenever possible, mention that the latest social studies unit sounds interesting or that the upcoming field trip should be exciting. Say a good word about your child's teacher, too. "I really like the way Mr. Thomas always sends home a study guide before your science tests. I know it helps you to feel more prepared."

