

Helping Children Learn[®]

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Rollins Elementary School



April 2019

High expectations can help your child's achievement soar

When families express high expectations for their children's academic achievement, the children's chances of success improve. Likewise, when families expect children to come up short, it is more likely that they will.

Kids are usually keenly aware of how their parents view them. So it's vital to set expectations that will motivate your child to be the best student he can be.

To make expectations effective:

- **Be realistic.** Make sure that what you expect is within your child's capabilities. Talk with your child's teacher if you are unsure.
- **Be clear.** To be sure your child understands, make a list—giving his best effort, completing work on time, etc.—and discuss it.
- **Be consistent.** Don't lower your expectations to make your child happy. Don't raise them because you've had a rough day.

Show your child how to set goals and work toward them, and remind him to take pride in his progress. Help him recognize his strengths and see himself as a student who can succeed.

Source: J. Loughlin-Presnal and K.L. Bierman, "How do Parent Expectations Promote Child Academic Achievement in Early Elementary School? A Test of Three Mediators," *Developmental Psychology*, niswc.com/soar.



Make time for family time

Frequent, meaningful, undivided attention from parents helps children do better in school. But life is busy, and time often seems to disappear.



To make family time a priority, treat it like an appointment. Write it on your calendar. Schedule some one-on-one activities that appeal to your child.

Don't stop reading aloud

Reading aloud with your child supports her reading skills—even if she can read with ease to herself. To enrich your read-aloud time:

- **Choose books** sometimes that are a little above your child's reading level. This exposes her to ideas and vocabulary she would not otherwise get.
- **Define words** your child doesn't know. Then ask her to think of words that have a similar or opposite meaning.
- **Ask your child** to guess what an unknown word might mean by the way it's used in a sentence.



Volunteering is a win/win activity

Learning improves for all the students at school when parents volunteer, and all parents have helpful skills to offer. National Volunteer Week, April 7–13, is a perfect time for you to give volunteering at school a try!

Here are five reasons to get involved now:

1. **Your child will benefit.** Even if you're not in her classroom, she will know you are at school. She'll feel important and know that you think education is important, too.
2. **You'll get to know** your child's teachers and other school staff. That makes it easier to ask for help when your child needs it.
3. **The school will benefit.** School staff will have more time to spend with students.
4. **It's easy!** And if you aren't available during school hours, there are jobs that can be done at home at night or on weekends.
5. **It's fun!** You can meet other parents. You may learn new skills. And you'll know you've done something really worthwhile.

Bolster basic math skills

To succeed with math in the future, your child must master the fundamentals now. Support him by promoting positive math habits. Encourage your child to:

- **Practice math facts.** Together, make flash cards with the facts he needs to know (12-4, 2x9, etc.). Your child has mastered a fact when he can give the correct answer in less than three seconds.
- **Try more problems** than the teacher assigns. Solid math skills take practice.
- **Use "mental math."** See if he can figure out an answer without using a pencil and paper or a calculator.



How can I get my child to stop arguing all the time?

Q: My child won't take *no* for an answer. No matter how I say it, she argues, and I end up getting angry or giving in. What can I do?

A: Your child is clearly persistent and smart. Both these qualities will help her in school, but you are right to want to deal with her arguing in a more positive way.

The process begins before you say *no*. When your child makes a request:

1. **Ask her to tell you** her reasons.
2. **Tell her you need some time** to think about it. This allows you to consider your answer and your reasons. For a small request, say "I'd like to think it over for a few minutes." For a big one, tell her you're going to need a few days to make up your mind.

Then, if your answer is:

- **Yes**, you may want to tell her that her logic convinced you she was right.
- **No**, take a few minutes to explain why. This lets your child know you take her requests seriously. She'll probably start arguing. Stay calm, but firm. "I listened to your reasons, and I already told you no." If she keeps arguing, tell her the discussion is over. If necessary, leave the room.



Are you an active listener?

Active listening means showing your child you care about what he's saying. In return, he's more likely to communicate openly with you. When your child talks, are you really listening? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ 1. **Do you make** time to listen to your child every day, without interruptions?
- ___ 2. **Do you wait** until your child has finished talking before you answer?
- ___ 3. **Do you ask** questions if you don't understand what your child is trying to say?
- ___ 4. **Do you rephrase** what your child says to confirm your understanding?
- ___ 5. **Do you set** a time in the near future to give your child

your full attention if you are unable to listen when he asks?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are strengthening communication between you and your child. For each no, try that idea.

"Information is giving out; communication is getting through."

—Sydney J. Harris

Plan for learning in April

This month is full of learning opportunities for you and your child:

- **April 12** is National Grilled Cheese Day. Challenge your child to invent her own version of the classic sandwich, then prepare and enjoy it together.
- **April 23** is World Book and Copyright Day, created to honor books and authors. Enjoy some favorite books together.
- **April 26** is the birthday of naturalist and artist John James Audubon. Have your child draw pictures of the birds she sees.

Foster self-determination

The best kind of encouragement helps your child rely on his own abilities, rather than on praise from you. When you encourage your child:

- **Notice effort** and progress. "It must feel good to know you worked so hard!"
- **Use descriptive words.** "Look at how organized your desk is!"
- **Don't focus** only on results. "I know you'll try again. What do you think you might do differently next time?"



Give your child chances to make good decisions

How can you help your child learn to make wise decisions? By giving her opportunities to practice making them. Be sure to:

1. **Offer acceptable options.** Your child can decide whether to do her reading or her math homework first, but not whether to do homework or watch TV.
2. **Link outcomes to choices.** Discuss possible consequences of each option.
3. **Help your child think** about what she learned from past decisions.

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