



PROVIDE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Don't forget to give your child a pat on the back when he or she does something well or completes a tough assignment. By pointing out what was done and taking the time to give a compliment, you will motivate your child to continue to do good work. Keep in mind the following guidelines for positively reinforcing your child:

1. Be specific in your praise. Say what you are recognizing and why it is significant. Instead of saying to your daughter: "You always do such good work," say this instead: "You got your book report done one day early, and it follows the assignment guidelines exactly. Good job." Your daughter will know exactly what you are praising her for and she will be more likely to do the same thing next time.
2. Praise right away. Don't wait a day or a week to compliment a job well done. The closer the behavior is to its positive consequence, the more meaning it will have for the person being reinforced.
3. Praise publicly. When your daughter gets an A in Algebra after a semester of struggling, you can post a note on the refrigerator (for all to see) saying, "Susan, great job in Algebra."
4. Be on the lookout for things to compliment. You don't want to overdo it so that your praise becomes meaningless, but there is no reason to hold it back when it is deserved.

Be on the lookout for things to compliment.

5. Do something special. Bake a cake or cookies and bring it in for your kids' teachers when they do something out of the ordinary for your child, such as patiently helping her learn a difficult concept or arranging for special help when it's needed. When your team at work accomplishes something special, you can do this for them, too.



WHERE CAN I GO TO LEARN MORE?

Branden, Nathaniel. *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*. New York: Bantam, 1994.

Briggs, Dorothy Corkville. *Celebrate Your Self: Making Life Work for You*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977.

Burns, David D. *Ten Days To Self-Esteem*. New York: William Morrow, 1993.

Dreikurs, Rudolph. *Children: The Challenge*. New York: Plume, 1991.

Dinkmeyer, Don, and McKay, Gary. *Parenting Young Children: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) of Children Under Six*. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service, 1997.

SEE THESE HANDOUTS ON RELATED TOPICS

Assertiveness Skills (for Teens)
 Building People Skills (for Teens)
 Building Positive Teen Relationships
 Dealing with Peer Pressure (for Teens)
 Expressing Feelings Responsibly (for Teens)
 Goal Setting (for Teens)
 Helping Your Child or Teen Manage Stress
 Helping Your Kids Manage the Relocation Blues
 Helping Your Kids to Be Self-Confident
 How to Build Your Child's Self-Esteem
 Kids Who Sexually Abuse Other Kids
 Life Skills (for Teens)
 Listening Skills (for Teens)
 Personal Negotiation Skills (for Teens)
 Positive Reinforcement (for Parents)
 Teaching Your Child to Respect Others
 Understanding Body Language (for Teens)
 When Kids Underachieve



Helping Your Child Succeed in School



INTRODUCTION

Every parent wants his or her child to succeed in school. There are some specific things every parent can do to stack the deck in favor of the child's success. They are:

1. Build your child's self-esteem.
2. Know your child.
3. Set goals.
4. Turn disappointments into learning opportunities.
5. Make reading important in your family.
6. Pay attention to your child's work and ask to see it.
7. Provide positive reinforcement.

Let's take a look at each one of these strategies.



BUILD YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

Kids with high self-esteem generally do better in school (and in just about everything else they want to accomplish in life). There are hundreds of ways to convey the message "You are worthwhile" to your children. You are limited only by your imagination. Here are some places to begin.

1. Spend time with your child. If you are absent most of the time, he or she notices, and probably thinks it's because he or she isn't important enough.



Kids with high self-esteem generally do better in school (and in just about everything else they want to accomplish in life).

2. Look at your child when you speak to him or her. This conveys, "This is important and you are important."
3. Look at your child when he or she speaks to you. This conveys, "What you are saying is important. You are important."
4. Explain *why*. It takes more time, but it conveys that your child is important enough for you to spend the time helping him or her to understand. When you explain why, you are also saying, "I understand that you need to know why. I am going to help you get your needs met."

Explain *why*. It takes more time, but it conveys that your child is important enough for you to spend the time helping him or her to understand.

5. When your child tells you about something that happened at school, ask how he or she feels about it. Take the time to listen to the answer.
6. When you ask your child a question, encourage him or her to elaborate. Say, "Tell me more about that" or ask, "What was that like?"
7. When you ask a question, don't interrupt when your child is answering.
8. Take your child seriously.
9. Give your child a private space where he or she can express himself or herself.
10. When you are giving feedback, describe specific behavior. For example, "I like how you asked the question so politely" or "You still need to pick up the towels off the floor."
11. When there is a problem, focus on the issue, not the child. For example, "You didn't do the last 10 problems on this assignment" is more constructive than "You never finish anything."
12. Give your child a hug at least every few days.

When there is a problem, focus on the issue, not the child.

13. Say nice things about your child and let him or her overhear you.
14. Go in and say goodnight before your child goes to sleep. (This is easy to forget once your children become teenagers.)
15. Look up and smile when your child walks into the room.
16. Ask your child to tell you about the book he or she is reading or the video his or her class saw today in school.



KNOW YOUR CHILD

Each kid has a unique personality, style of learning, talents, interests, and abilities. Some children have no trouble succeeding in school, while others have a tougher time. Find out what aspects of the school experience are most difficult for your child and work with the teacher to set your child up to do well.

Find out what aspects of the school experience are most difficult for your child and work with the teacher to set your child up to do well.



SET GOALS

It is never too early to help your child learn to set and achieve goals. You can set daily, weekly, and monthly goals. These can focus on not just grades, but on projects, skills to be learned, assignments to complete, and other school-related challenges. Be sure to check on how your child is progressing toward meeting each goal and reinforce every step toward success.



TURN DISAPPOINTMENTS INTO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

When your child is not doing especially well in a subject, find out exactly where the problems are. Talk to both

your child and the teacher. Use this as an opportunity to teach your child that no one is always perfect and that it's okay to stumble and make mistakes. Find out your child's view on what went wrong and where the problems started. Ask questions and listen to make sure you understand. Talk about what can be done to solve the problem or to prevent it from happening again.



MAKE READING IMPORTANT IN YOUR FAMILY

Reading is such an important component of school success that you should do all you can to encourage your child to develop excellent reading skills. Spend time yourself reading and take your child to the library. Let your child read in bed on occasion. Give books as gifts. Read to your children before bed or while they eat breakfast. Ask your child to read to you. If you can afford it, make occasional trips together to the bookstore and buy books to build your family's library.

Reading is such an important component of school success that you should do all you can to encourage your child to develop excellent reading skills.



PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR CHILD'S WORK AND ASK TO SEE IT

Ask to see your child's homework. Show interest and encourage your children to talk about what they are learning in school. Ask often about how they are progressing and what kinds of grades they expect to bring home. When you see that problems might be developing, talk about what is most challenging and ask how you can help.

Ask to see your child's homework. Show interest and encourage your children to talk about what they are learning in school.