

Volunteer Insights

Inspiring Catholic Faith and Principles While Encouraging Academic Excellence

Back To School 2008

Homework Suggestions for Parents

- **Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework.** Avoid having your child do homework with the television on or in places with other distractions, such as people coming and going.
- **Make sure the materials your child needs, such as paper, pencils and a dictionary, are available.** Ask your child if special materials will be needed for some projects and get them in advance.
- **Help your child with time management.** Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don't let your child leave homework until just before bedtime. Think about using a weekend morning or afternoon for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.
- **Be positive about homework.** Tell your child how important school is. The attitude you express about homework will be the attitude your child acquires.
- **When your child does homework, you do homework.** Show your child that the skills they are learning are related to things you do as an adult. If your child is reading, you read too. If your child is doing math, balance your checkbook.
- **When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers.** Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches your child that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for him or her.
- **When the teacher asks that you play a role in homework, do it.** Cooperate with the teacher. It shows your child that the school and home are a team. Follow the directions given by the teacher.
- **If homework is meant to be done by your child alone, stay away.** Too much parent involvement can prevent homework from having some positive effects. Homework is a great way for kids to develop independent, lifelong learning skills.
- **Stay informed.** Talk with your child's teacher. Make sure you know the purpose of homework and what your child's class rules are.
- **Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework.** Have your child do the hard work first. This will mean he will be most alert when facing the biggest challenges. Easy material will seem to go fast when fatigue begins to set in.
- **Watch your child for signs of failure and frustration.** Let your child take a short break if she is having trouble keeping her mind on an assignment.
- **Reward progress in homework.** If your child has been successful in homework completion and is working hard, celebrate that success with a special event (e.g., pizza, a walk, a trip to the park) to reinforce the positive effort.

Make Sure Attending School is a Top Priority

Your child's teachers will do their best to help your child learn and succeed in school. But there's one thing only you can do—get him or her to school on time every day.

Children who don't attend school regularly fall behind and score lower on tests. They can have a hard time making and keeping friends—especially in elementary school.

A study of the nation's fourth graders, conducted by the The U.S. Department of Education, showed that almost one in four (19 percent) had been absent from school three or more days in the month.

Show your child and his teachers that you know attendance counts:

- Make dental and other appointments during non-school hours
- Don't let your child skip school for reasons that wouldn't prevent you from going to work.
- Avoid taking your child out of school on exam days.
- Discuss the consequences of missing school. Not understanding. Needing to do make-up work.

Ideas for Parents: Starting the New School Year Right

The beginning of a new school year can be the start of a journey toward success if parents, students and teachers work together. Here are some suggestions from the National Education Association for parents who want to help their child start the new school year right.

The First Day Jitters

Start talking now about the upcoming school year and the first day of classes. Discuss what to expect on the first day—catching up with old friends and meeting new ones, learning classroom rules and finding out what's ahead. Take note of how you feel about your child going off to school. If you're anxious, try not to let it show!

If you're new to the area, take time to visit the school before classes begin. Walk, drive or show your child the bus route to familiarize him or her with the trip to school.

Getting to Know You

Make time to get to know your child's teacher and teacher assistant. Let the teacher know that you appreciate feedback on your child's progress—both positive and negative. Alert the teacher to anything out of the ordinary that's going on with your child or family. Make a point of meeting other school staff members: the principal, school secretary, bus driver, cafeteria staff and others who work at the school. The better you know the school and how it operates, the more likely your child will be to have a productive and positive school experience.

A Place of One's Own

Whether it's a bedroom desk or the kitchen table, every child needs a regular place to study and complete homework. This area should be well lighted and equipped with school supplies like paper, pencils and a dictionary. Siblings should respect the time set aside for studying and not distract the child who is doing homework.

Kids (and Parents) Love Routines

Set aside a specific time for studying every night. Discuss with your child what time of day would work best. Right after school? Just before dinner? Immediately following dinner? If your child attends an after-school program, find out if students will be expected to do homework there. If your child completes homework assignments away from home, plan to review the work at a set time every night. If homework has already been completed, have the child use study time for reading or reviewing problem areas.

Four Tips for Alleviating Back to School Anxiety

For most children, going back to school signifies a move from the lazy, hazy days of summer to a regimented school routine and poses unique challenges that must be overcome. "It's a school night" becomes part of the parental lexicon for the next ten months and children typically resist the concept.

Here are four tips to help alleviate your child's back-to-school anxiety:

- 1) Know: Your child and how they handle transition
- 2) Communicate: Let your child know that you are aware of their anxiety and that you are here to help see them through

Create High Expectations

To learn, children must believe that they can learn. As the parent, you are the most important adult in your child's life. The feedback you give your child—what you say and do about his or her abilities—will have a lasting impact on your child's self-confidence. Be encouraging and praise your child for the amount of effort that he puts into a project. Let her know that doing her best is what counts.

Reading Can Be Contagious

Research shows that children who are read to in their early years do better in school. Make reading a habit in your home, for both you and your child. Each night before bed, read to your child for 10 to 20 minutes. If the child is learning to read, ask him or her to read to you. For older children, set 30 minutes aside each night for family reading time when everyone reads together silently. Keep plenty of reading materials available—books, magazines and newspapers. Let your kids see you reading and they're more likely to pick up the habit.

Be Prepared for Your Next Parent-Teacher Conference

Talk with your child beforehand about what he thinks are his best subjects or what he likes least. Find out if your child has anything that he would like you to ask. Write down your own list of questions. Feel free to ask about your child's progress or about anything you don't understand about the school program. Expect the teacher to show you samples of your son's or daughter's work and to discuss how student progress is measured. Ask how your child interacts with other students. Most importantly, talk to the teacher about ways you can work together to help your child.

Schools + Communities = Success

To be effective, schools need the support of parents and the community. Find out key dates during the year when there will be opportunities for you to participate in school events. Mark your family calendar and your personal datebook now to hold those dates.

Look for specific ways that you can support your child's school. Offer to speak to your child's class (or others) about a special hobby or area of expertise. Encourage a local business to adopt your child's school. Join the Co-Op to ensure that you have a voice in the work of the school.

(<http://www.nea.org/parents/startnewyeartips.html>)

their difficulty

- 3) Support: Your child in ways to build upon their strengths and talents
- 4) Reach out: To teachers and other professionals for assistance should your child continue to experience difficulties

Transitions are never easy, especially for a child who may feel that their world is out of their control. Assist your child to regain that control in a strength-based supportive way and share in their excitement as they head back to school.