

## A National Research Report:

# What Principals Would Tell Parents to Help Parents Help Their Children

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Here's what elementary and secondary principals said when asked what they would tell parents, "**If they could tell parents just one thing to help them help their children**":

1. **Take time to talk with your children, and *listen* to what they have to say.** (Overwhelmingly #1)
  - Dept. of Ed. study: Average American mother spends less than 30 minutes a day talking to her children. Average American father--15 minutes.
  - Talk when your child comes home from school.
  - Make a point to talk 1:1 with each child, not always just group talk.
  - Talk, sing, laugh, read, listen with your children.
2. **Take an active interest in your child and what he or she is doing in school--and monitor their progress.**
  - Don't just ask, "What did you do in school today?" Ask questions like, "How are you doing?" "What are your latest test grades?" "Do you feel you are achieving?" "What was the most interesting thing you did today?" "What did you do best today?" "What is coming up tomorrow?"
3. **Let your children know you love them. Take the time to show that you care.**
4. **Help build your child's self-esteem, the opinion she has of herself.**
  - Let them know that you think they are valuable, capable human beings and that you know they can succeed.
  - Give them positive feedback on all areas of their lives.
  - Support them in their activities including homework, sports, dealing with life experiences.
  - "Don't put children down. If you look for what the child is doing right, you won't have time to see the things he is doing wrong."
  - Point out to your child when she is doing something right. Don't stress when she is doing something wrong.

- "Be careful of the words and ideas you say and share with your children. You are one of the most important people in the world to your kids and they want to make you happy. What you say to them and how you say it will set the tone and goals of their lives for years to come. Use encouragement freely and criticism very seldom.

**5. Teach children to be responsible.**

- Tell them that you love them and hold them accountable for their decisions. Tell them up-front the positive and negative consequences certain behavior will result in.
- Stand beside your child, not in front of beside them. Help them face life's challenges with you at their side.
- Love them enough to let them hate you sometimes—when you have to take an unpopular stand in their best interest.
- Give your child responsibilities at home.

**6. Read to and with your children *everyday*.**

- Set an example by reading yourself.
- Make reading materials available.
- Encourage your child to start his own library.
- Children are never too young nor too old to read to them. Reading provides time together, reading practice and good language background.

**7. Make certain kids spend time on homework.**

- Provide an adequate place and insist on a set time for homework. (Try "as soon as" technique—you can set your own time for homework as soon as your grades are acceptable.)
- Discuss homework with your child.
- Help your child do homework effectively. SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Restate, Review).

# If Principals Could Tell Parents Just One Thing To Help Them to Help Their Children

## Elementary Principals

- Know what you're getting into by becoming parents!
- How important it is to take an interest in your child.
- Take the time to care!
- Love 'em!
- Love them enough to let them hate you sometimes (when you have to take an unpopular stand in their best interest).
- Nobody trains us to be parents.
- You have the right and the responsibility to come in to school to make sure schools are doing the best possible job.
- If you have concerns, talk to the school first before going to the community.
- Stand beside your child, not in front or behind them (help them face life's challenges with you at their side).
- Listen. Draw them out.
- Before reacting to what your child says about school, share the information with the school and the teacher. Listen to the school and teacher and work with the school and teacher and child to the child's benefit.
- When the school and parent are not in agreement, the child loses.
- Volunteer some time at school. Spend one hour to involve yourself with the school program. It will help you to become familiar with the school. Share your skills.
- Point out to your child when he/she is doing something right. Don't stress when they do something wrong.
- Don't put children down. If you look for what the child is doing right, you won't have time to see the things he is doing wrong.
- Support your school. Parents and schools must work together.
- Visit your child's school.
- Two-way communication between home and school is critically important.

## • Secondary Principals

- Communicate high expectations about work ethic and education.

- Display an interest. Demonstrate enthusiasm and participate in their school activities and the educational process.
- Demonstrate an active interest in them. How? Monitor their progress. Encourage and support. Work with the school, teachers, counselor and principal.
- Spend some time every day actively listening to your kids.
- Tell them that you love them and hold them accountable for their decisions. Let them know up-front the positive and negative consequences certain behavior will result in.
- That they are valuable, capable, loved human beings. That they can succeed with education.
- Read to them. Have them read to you. Eat dinner together at the table and not in front of the TV.
- Teach them to be responsible.
- Reinforce learning at home.
- Listen without criticism to what the kids have to say.
- I would tell parents to give their kids positive feedback on all areas of their lives. Support them in their activities including homework, sports, dealing with life experiences.
- Provide structure for time spent at home which insures appropriate time for sleep and study.
- Spend time talking to your kids. (More time than a few minutes a day.)
- Reading is one of the most important things your child can learn. Read to them and with them from the time they are young until they are teens. This provides time together, reading practice and language background.
- Learn to hear while listening to your child.
- Provide a stable, loving environment for your child. Give your child responsibilities.
- Take an interest in what they are doing. Be supportive. Encourage them to do and be their best.
- Show a sincere interest in everything they attempt to do.
- Devote at least 15 minutes of time to each child per day, whether it be reading to them, talking with them, or playing a game of the child's choice. Make sure each child has your undivided attention during this time.
- Be firm, fair and tell them ahead of time what you expect and any consequences of non-conformity. Involve kids in the development of rules and regulations.
- Know where your child is at all times and with whom.
- The perceptions of adolescents are not necessarily reality.
- It is the responsibility of the parents to share in the process with the school to educate their child. They must show interest in their child's education.
- Continue to provide support for your children -- throughout their formal education.
- Study time each school night.

- Make some basic rules at home and stick with those rules as much as possible. Don't be afraid to say "no."
- Be a positive, consistent role model and friend.
- Take an interest in what students are doing in school. Ask questions: "How are you doing?" "What are your latest test grades?" "Do you feel that you are achieving?"
- Show an interest in your child's activities and thoughts.
- Be concerned with your child's self-image, how he/she sees himself/herself.
- Insist that your child spend more time reading. It is not that important what they read, be it newspaper, magazine ...
- Have your child sit down with you and establish a time schedule for study and to get everything ready for school the next day and place it by the door.
- Share your time with each of your children. Shared activities can and will produce a better home and school.
- Talk more with them.
- Spend some positive time with them everyday. Set aside some structured time everyday for kids to do schoolwork. (Show the importance.)
- Talk to them and listen to them.
- Listen to what your child has to say. Get the true picture and be supportive.
- Open communications with children. Do things as a family. Set a good example.
- Spend time on helping students with homework or at least enforce homework time!
- Remember the problems that you faced as a teenager. How did you feel; how did you react to certain situations?
- Every day when your child comes home from school, talk with him/her. Ask what he has done for the day. (Listen and talk with your child.)
- Make certain that kids study an appropriate amount of time every day. Teach values.
- Spend some time every day talking with them on a 1-1 basis.
- Spend more time listening to and also just being with your child.
- Spend time with their children. Talk with children. Sing with children. Read with children. Listen to children. Make children feel as special, worthwhile, important as they are. Accept your child as a child at his/her developmental level.
- Be careful of what words and ideas you say and share with your children. You are one of the most important people in the world to your kids and they want to make you happy. What you say to them and how you say it will set the tone and goals of their lives for years to come. Use encouragement freely and criticism very seldom.
- Read to/with them every day. Teach by example. Discuss what is read.
- Get involved with your child's education.
- Don't let your kids work (outside job) so much while they are in H.S. Spend more time on homework.

--From a study by Dr. John H. Wherry, President, The Parent Institute, Publisher of the newsletters *Parents make the difference!*, *Parents STILL make the difference!*, *Helping Children Learn*, *Helping Students Learn*, *Building Readers*, *Firm Fair & Consistent* and *Educators' Notebook on Family Involvement*, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, Virginia 22039-7474  
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