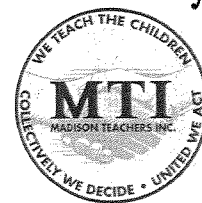


Shaping *your child's* Success

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A monthly column to supercharge families for educational success

Love your child and tell them that you love them often

Don't depend on the schools to build a sense of identity. Our children need to have positive identities, so teach them about their ancestors so they know they come from strong, positive people. Your job at home is to provide your children's basic needs - to love, nurture and help them feel confident about going to school. Make sure your children get enough rest, nutritious food and love. **Our children need to hear positive things.** Whisper something positive in your child's ear late at night and when they wake up in the morning. Tell them, "You are the most beautiful child in the world."

Build confidence

In order to instill confidence, encourage your children to perform their best at school. When they bring home school work, take an active interest in what they are doing. Talk to them about their performance and take pride in their accomplishments. If they get an A, tell them, "Great! Keep up the great work. I'm proud of you." If they get a C, encourage them to do better by telling them, "That was good, but I know you can do better." Our children need to have a "can do" spirit about their ability in school. **Instill feelings of self-worth in your children so that they don't need a reward for good behavior in school.**

Foster academic skills

Focus on developing the skills children will need to be successful in school such as sharing. They will have to work in a group in school and in their careers, so teach them to share things at home. Teach them how to take turns. Encourage children to plan for their future. *Talk to your children when they are in kindergarten about going to college.* Children as young as six years old are not too young to learn how to save money. Buy them a piggy bank, or use a recycled jar and teach them how to put aside a dollar a month, or a quarter a week. Play games with them. Read with them. Go to the bookstore and spend time looking at books or take them to the public library. Find some children's songs and sing with your children. Go on a walk or go fishing and talk about nature. Talk with your child about academic things when you are at home. Talk about what is on the outside of the cereal box when you are having breakfast. **Very few of these things cost money so don't let a limited budget keep you from doing these activities.**

Encourage your children to pronounce words correctly.

They won't get them all right but it builds self-esteem when a child can speak with confidence. Also make sure your children know their birth names and how to spell them. The earlier children know how to recognize and write the letters in the alphabet and numbers 1 through 10, the more prepared they will be for school.

Teach responsibility

Teach children to be responsible for their own school assignments. Emphasize that it is their responsibility to put their papers in their own backpacks, even when they are just starting school. Our children should not come to school and say to the teacher, "I don't have that paper because my mom or dad didn't put it in my backpack."

Talk about school everyday

You must communicate with your child's teachers to make sure you are doing what you can to support academics at home.

Respond to notes that come home from school.

Encourage children to talk about school. If you ask them how their day at school went, they might answer with one phrase, like, "It was bad." Rather than just accepting that answer, ask a follow-up question such as "Why was it bad?" The goal is to get them talking about school.

Be positive

Teach your children to be positive about school. If you are experiencing conflict with a teacher, don't put the school or the teacher down in front of your child. Model this for your children by teaching them it is their job to go to school and learn and it is your job to deal with any mistreatment they may encounter. Tell them that you have their back and they should let you deal with the staff. One of the hardest things to get your child to understand in school is unfairness. Do the best you can to teach them to ignore that and press on with their work. Counter the unfairness with positive reinforcement so that your child does not think they are inferior.

Demand respect from your children.

When parents allow children to disrespect or talk back to them, they will bring that to school.

Be present in school

Go to school. Make sure your face is known to your child's teachers. Attend parent conferences. Chaperone field trips. **If you are uncomfortable walking in the school, find a pastor, sibling, colleague or former teacher that can go with you to meet with school staff.**

Summary

All of these suggestions should be instilled in children long before school starts. Avoid using excuses for why you can't help your child succeed. Above all, remember that you are your child's first teacher. The most important building blocks you provide for your child's success in school are encouragement, positive reinforcement, responsibility and your own involvement at home and at school.

You are Your child's first teacher

by Vivian Franklin & Shirley Files
First grade teachers at Frank Allis

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