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School success requires parent involvement

By Kathleen Olson, Extension Educator, Family Relations

Your children are learning the most from you - by watching you, talking to you and interacting with you. In many ways, parents are the most important teachers children will have and it's important to support your children's education both at school and at home.

School success depends on six factors fostered in the home by parents.

1. **Expectations** - Children learn better when parents have clear and reasonable expectations. Talk with your child's teachers to be clear about what you both expect in behavior. Ask about the quality and quantity of schoolwork required and make sure your children understand what will happen if they do not meet expectations and the benefits of what will happen if they do.
2. **Structure** - Children learn better when parents provide a regular routine. Help them schedule their time. Make sure they have time to get schoolwork done. And to provide balance, allow time for fun activities.
3. **Learning** - Children learn better when they have opportunities outside of school. Children don't stop learning when they leave school, but they also absorb experiences they have outside of school. The more positive and constructive learning experiences children have outside of school, the better they do in school.
4. **Support** - Children learn better when parents regularly give them support and praise. Give your children frequent verbal support and praise them often in their schoolwork, progress and efforts. Let kids know that you care about them and how they perform in school; because this increases their self-confidence and helps them do better in school.
5. **Relationships** - Children learn better when they feel safe and accepted at home and at school. At home, children benefit when family members treat each other with warmth and respect. In school, students learn best in a climate where staff and students respect each other. In addition, children need to feel safe from emotional and physical bullying and other violence in school as well as on the way to and from school.

6. Modeling - Children learn better when parents and other adults set a good example. When parents read, study, ask questions, talk about education, set goals and get involved they set a positive example. Your children watch you, so strive to be a role model.

Parents should be partners with their child's teacher. Introduce yourself to the teacher and talk about goals, communication preferences, concerns you have about your child, etc. Talk with teachers even when things are going well with your child, not just when problems arise. If there are problems, it is easier to work them out if you already have a relationship with the teacher. You and the teacher can work together in your different roles to help your children succeed in school.

University of Minnesota Extension and the Children, Youth & Family Consortium's Partnering for School Success project provide more information at www.parenting.umn.edu.

Kathleen Olson has spent her career focusing on parenting issues and believes that most issues we face in life go back to parenting. She is an Extension Educator in Family Relations for the University of Minnesota and has two children of her own.