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Reinforcing Your Child's Education at Home

by Summer Stanley



As much time as children spend in school, it can be easy to assume that they get all the education they need inside those walls. But the truth is that kids are so overloaded with information at school that much of what they learn can slip through the cracks if not reinforced at home and in the community. As a parent, you have the unique opportunity to help your child retain what they learn in their classes in fun ways and in environments where they feel comfortable and safe.

Children are motivated to please their parents, and when they feel that they have succeeded in that regard, they develop self-confidence, curiosity about the world they live in, the enjoyment of learning new things, and other healthy attitudes that contribute to successful learning throughout life.

Often, parents lack confidence in their own teaching skills, or they feel as if they are “terrible at math” or “never did well in English classes,” so they are intimidated by helping their kids with homework.

While it is important to help your kids with their homework when necessary and possible, the good news is that often just spending more quality time with them and taking advantage of learning opportunities as they come along can be just as helpful.

HealthyChildren.org offers some great suggestions for easy ways to reinforce your child's learning at home:



- Let your child see you reading, read aloud to them, and encourage them to read aloud to you.



- Set aside time to have a conversation with your child about your respective days and ask about what they learned in school that day.



- Keep paper, crayons, markers, and other art supplies on hand and encourage your child to express himself or herself through writing, drawing, or painting.



- Plan regular one-on-one time with your child to do something together, like a craft project, and put away phones and tablets during that time.



- Make time every weekend for a fun, physical activity the whole family can enjoy.



- Put up a map and use it to talk about history, world events, and to give your child a better understanding of their physical place in the world.

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To encourage development of your child's cognitive skills, mix in learning opportunities with everyday activities. For example, have your child count the items in your shopping cart at the store or help you measure ingredients when cooking. This will get them in the habit of thinking numerically in and outside of school.

When you are out in the community with your child, point out people like police officers, mail carriers, delivery drivers, etc., and discuss what these workers do for their jobs. This gives your child a good understanding of how your community works and a better sense of his or her surroundings.

Talk openly about subjects like diversity and the importance of accepting differences in people. Often, starting school is the first time a child is around people of different ethnicities and abilities, and they are likely to have questions. Answering these questions in simple, sensible ways that reflect character will help your child learn empathy.



According to Education.com, rewards are great motivational tools to reinforce learning. Here are a few ways to reward your child for good behavior and good grades:



- Extra screen time, like one episode of a TV show
- Playdates with friends
- Weekend outings to the zoo, the arcade, or a movie
- Special privileges, like staying up later
- Money for a trip to the dollar store, or to save up for a bigger reward later

Of course, the flip side of that is to discourage bad behavior. Here are a few tips from Education.com on how to address misbehavior at school:



- Make the punishment mean something. An activity or privilege must be important to the child in order for its loss to be effective.
- The punishment should fit the crime. For example, a child who talks back to the teacher might be expected to write a letter of apology to her. Also, the consequences for talking in line should not be as severe as those for bullying a classmate.
- Consistency is key. Children should know exactly what to expect when they follow the rules and when they do not.

Resources:

"How to Help Reinforce Your Child's Early Learning at Home," accessed October 15, 2018, from www.phillymag.com/sponsor-content/reinforce-child-early-learning/#FArhTJwjszchl0wB.99

"How to Reinforce Your Child's Learning," accessed October 15, 2018, from <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/How-to-Reinforce-Your-Childs-Learning.aspx>

"Reinforcing School Expectations at Home," accessed October 15, 2018, from <https://www.education.com/magazine/article/reinforcing-classroom-expectations-home/>

"Connecting Home and School," accessed October 15, 2018, from <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/school-success/school-involvement/connecting-home-and-school.html>

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