



Parents are Powerful

Everyday Tips for Supporting School Success

- **Start at Home:** School success starts at home. Create a homework center, a specific area in the house (such as an office desk or the kitchen table) where your child can do homework each evening. Make sure that it's stocked with enough supplies, such as pencils, erasers, paper, a folder or two, and a calculator.

- **Do:** Sit with your kids when they're doing homework. If you have work you need to do for your job, bills to pay, or some other project, do it while your child is doing her homework, and let her know that even adults have homework. Model what it takes for school success by staying focused and not leaving until you've accomplished what you set out to do.

- **Encourage Critical Thinking:** Help your child with his homework, but

make sure that you're not doing it for him. Your role is to help him succeed in school by asking questions, giving examples, and assisting him in learning concepts, not giving him the answers. Critical thinking skills are crucial for doing well in school at every age.

- **Stay Involved:** Work with high school counselors, teachers that know your child well, and your teenager to create an academic schedule from ninth to twelfth grade that challenges her and deepens her school success skills. **Do:** Keep your teenager growing (without boring or placing too much pressure on her) so that she gradually masters skills that will be useful for doing well in school and beyond. After each semester, talk with your teen and make necessary adjustments to the schedule to make sure

that it is still appropriate.

- **Interests are Important:** Encourage your kids to find books that excite them. Don't overlook graphic novels, comic books, magazines, or other types of reading that may not interest you, but interests them. The point is to keep them reading, which promotes school success. Talk to them about what they're reading on their own and in class, and ask which books they like and what they're learning.

Give the Gift of Reading: Books make great gifts, and young teenagers often enjoy advice-about-life books such as [*It's Our World, Too: Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference*](#) by Phillip Hoose or [*Growing Up Feeling Good*](#) by Ellen Rosenberg.

Inside this issue:

3 Tips to Ease Stress 2

Pop Quiz 2

Is multitasking working for your child? 2

Managing Multi-tasking 3

School Problems 3

School Involvement 3

Asset #6

Parents Involvement in Schooling.

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when their parents are involved in their education and school. Find more information on parenting tips and the developmental assets at parentfurther.com

3 Tips to Ease Back to School Stress

- 1. Stay Positive**—Parents have a strong influence on how children view the beginning of school. Don't minimize their feelings, but do normalize them. "Lots of kids feel nervous about going back to school, but I really think you're going to be fine." Or, emphasize that anxiety doesn't have to be a stop signal. It's our bodies way of getting us pumped for a new situation.
- 2. Create Routines**—The school day is full of routines. Help your child by showing them, not telling them. A checklist might be helpful for getting out the door stress free. An early bedtime will also help your child perform better during the school day. Kids between the ages of 5 and 12 need 10-11 hours of sleep a night!
- 3. Establish Fun Traditions**—Attitude matters. If you're excited about the new school year your child will be too. For instance, on the night before the first day of school sit around a fire pit roasting marshmallows and talk about the joys and concerns for the new year. Or let your child choose the meal for breakfast or dinner on their first day and celebrate.

Pop Quiz:

Is being able to do 2 or 3 things at once:

- a) good preparation for the future?
- b) a guarantee that homework won't be absorbed completely or completed on time?
- c) a bit of both?

Answer: C

Is multitasking working for your child?

How do you know when multitasking may be a problem for your kids? Here are some warning signs to look for:

Distraction from school work. Can your child remember what she read last night? Does her book report thesis make a consistent argument? If not, her divided attention has hurt her ability to recall and retain information.

The average 8- to 18-year-old crams more than 10 hours of media use into 7 1/2 hours of media time every day (Kaiser, 2010).

Grades start dropping. Homework isn't finished on time, and reflection and analysis suffer. Experts say that the brain is programmed to respond more readily to a habitual task — like texting a friend back or IMing a response — than to perform the deeper tasks of analyzing information.

Situational attention deficit disorder. Is your child disorganized? Slow to get things done? Irritable? It's not just his age — it could be his multitasking.

Social costs. Studies show that multitasking doesn't do much for intimate family relationships. We all know that kids' friends trump their parents. So if you were counting on a lovely family dinner, the moment a text comes in from a boyfriend, the connection with the family takes a back seat.

Taking too long to complete an activity. Kids take longer to finish things when they're doing many things at once, and they simply absorb less information.

Experts disagree on some aspects, but all agree multitasking prolongs the time it takes to complete individual tasks like homework.

Managing Multitasking

- **Encourage your kids to read more.** It turns out that the brain is like a muscle. Reading actually builds the muscles that counteract the impact of multitasking. The more people read, the better they become at reflection and analysis.
- **Start good habits early.** Establish boundaries. Start when your kids are young. Turn the phone off during homework. IM, too.
- **Model what you preach.** This means no checking the BlackBerry while asking your kids how their days were.
- **Keep distractions to a minimum.** Try to help your kids do one thing at a time. Granted, this is easier with younger kids. But having the computer in the same room as the TV? Not going to help. For older kids, make sure social networks and chatting happen after homework is completed — or at timed intervals.
- **Pay attention and connect the dots.** If you see your kids' grades slipping, make the connection between listening to a favorite band and doing algebra home-work. If your children begin handing in work

late or if they are staying up too late to complete homework, consider turning off the Internet, the cell phone, and the TV, and see if the situation reverses itself. The grades will tell if multitasking is taking its toll.

80% of adults say that encouraging young people to do well in school is the most important thing adults can do for kids.

School Problems

School expectations have proven to be challenging and overwhelming for students. It can be tough learning that your child is having difficulties in middle school, whether they're social, educational, or behavioral. It can also be very difficult to take the first steps in helping your child address the underlying issues that are causing those difficulties. But as a responsible, caring parent, it's your job to help your kids get past their troubles at school and make it a place for effective learning.

Easy Ways to Stay Involved

- Maintain ongoing communication with your child's teacher(s). Call to check in every other month, before trouble appears. See if teachers have email.
- Join a parent-teacher organization. If you can't volunteer a lot of time, say so.
- Volunteer to help out in small ways. Check with the teacher or the school's volunteer coordinator.
- Help seniors fill out college applications.
- Volunteer to speak on career day.
- Attend all conferences. If you can't make it on the designated date, arrange to meet at another time.
- Read the same book your child is assigned in English class, and talk about it together.

