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How to ensure academic success

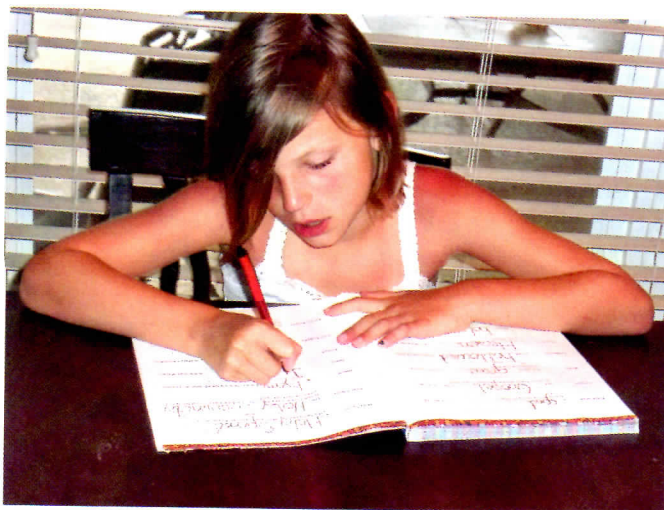
Set high expectations — and communicate with your student

As the academic year begins, it's important to let your children know what you expect of them during the school year. While the school sets the pace for learning, it's important that parents reinforce positive behavior, as well as the learning that takes place during the day. Your child will be much more successful if you and the teacher work together toward a common goal.

After attending the open house at your child's school, spend some time with your child explaining what your expectations are. You might share some things you heard at the open house and how you would like to be involved in school life.

Let your child know you can be a resource when they don't understand something in school. This may sound silly, but young children need this reinforcement. Children do not always make the connection between not understanding something at school and coming home and having someone else explain it.

Parents need to establish healthy routines for children, too. As a parent, do you expect them to do their homework when they come home or do you let them have a snack and play first? There is no right or wrong answer here, so long as your child knows what you expect.



Maggie Harrel does homework in a designated place.

Photo special to SW FL Parent & Child

If you do not establish routines early, it may become problematic during the midyear slump. Homework may be as simple as going over concepts your child learned in school that day. For young children, it can be a game you play. Allow your child to be the teacher and teach you how to do the homework.

Let your child know where she will sit to do homework. Be sure to have a school-supply box within reach. Once your child knows what your expectations are, doing homework and studying should become as routine as brushing teeth.

Establishing high expectations and healthy academic habits during a child's elementary years will yield great results during the tough middle- and high-school years.

Middle school is quite an adjustment for most children. Students go from one primary teacher to five or

six teachers. A lack of organization and structure can be detrimental during these years.

Successful students use planners and strategies to keep themselves organized and on task. These are skills that do not come easily for many students, especially boys. Building a foundation during the primary years will set up future success.

If your child is too young for a planner, teach him to use a weekly calendar for different activities.

For example, if he read a book at night or someone read to him, have him put a star sticker on a chart. It is the routine you are establishing, not just the reward of using stickers to reinforce reading.

As your student gets older, she will learn to document her progress. In middle school, many teachers require the use of a planner. However, parents need to check the planner frequently throughout the year to ensure adolescents are writing down test dates and important projects. Encourage your child to think ahead of the game when supplies for projects are needed or when significant tests are scheduled. This not only alleviates "parent panic" but fosters accountability in children.

While creating a positive learning environment at home may be a bit of work at first, it will yield great results for years to come. 