

# Tips for Parents: What Parents Can Do To Help Their Children In School

Volume 4, Issue 1  
February 8, 2010

*Psychology Month, Dufferin-Peel C.D.S.B.*

Parents often ask psychology staff and educators what they can do at home to help their child “do better in school”. While most parents are referring to the basic core skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, a wide range of emotional, social, behavioral as well as intellectual skills are needed for students to learn, work and function successfully in school.

Building on this normal parental concern, the media bombards parents with information about games, tutoring programs, educational computer software, etc. which are all described as being essential for student success. As a result, parents are understandably worried about how to best support their child at home.

While many developmental and educational products on the market are excellent, the following are some suggestions for parents of younger elementary school children, which substantially help with their child’s skill development yet do not require the purchase of expensive materials.

- Talk to your child, engage them in conversation, encourage and answer questions from your child. This can be done while driving to

activities, preparing dinner, shopping, etc.

- Encourage your child to talk, e.g. relate their experiences, retell a story or film, tell a joke, describe a situation at school, etc. Actively listen to their message and through an occasional question, encourage them to develop their ideas logically and sequentially.



- Provide books and reading materials. A regular excursion to the community public library allows access to a large variety of books, magazines as well as books on tape. Try to read to your child daily, even if for 5-10 minutes.

- Give your child plenty of materials to draw and write. Encourage writing through informal activities, e.g. making a shopping list, writing out an address,

copying a recipe, etc. Remember that writing is writing, whether with paper and pencil, or on the computer.

- Play word, board or card games. Try to set aside some time each week to play a game with your child or encourage them to play with their friends. Such games involve many skills such as learning to take turns, losing or winning

graciously, reading, counting, thinking of strategies, etc.

- Make music a daily part of your child’s activities. Listen to music and encourage them to dance, move or sing.

- Research has consistently shown that children who sit down with their family for regular meals are more engaged in school, and have less social or be-

haviour problems. While most families have very busy evening schedules, try to set aside a couple of nights each week for the whole family to sit together for a meal. Meal time is a perfect occasion for your child to share experiences, talk about school, friends, and activities.

- Provide the opportunity to develop social skills. Make sure your child has lots of interactions with other children either through participation in group activities (Scouts, sports, dance, etc.) or by encouraging play with neighborhood friends.

- To help your child develop responsibility and a sense of competence, give them chores and responsibilities at home, e.g. putting away toys, cleaning up after dinner, etc.

Remember that every child is different and variability exists in the various skill levels of each child. Learning is an ongoing process, so parents should look for ways to encourage their children to experience new things and keep on learning.

For further information contact your school psychology staff or Dr. Debra Lean, Chief Psychologist.

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