

Help Children Succeed: An A-Z Guide
(Reprinted from FCAT Explorer.com)

This A to Z Guide offers general tips for helping children succeed.

Attend school-related and extracurricular events, such as science and math fairs, field trips, open house events, parent/teacher conferences, and the like. Even a very simple gesture, such as visiting your child's school to share lunch, communicates your interest. Children react positively when you show support for their education and special interests.

Build confidence by encouraging children to do their best. It is also important to let a child know that all you expect is his or her best effort.

Communicate with the child's teacher. There is no better way to monitor your child's progress, whether the child is in elementary school or high school. Teachers appreciate your involvement, and talking with them regularly shows them that you care about your child's education.

Discuss daily events, the school day, community, and world events with your child. Daily discussions with children allow them to ask questions about things they may find confusing, while building their confidence that you value their opinions. You can discuss television shows, newspaper articles, books, or what the child is studying in school.

Encourage your child to eat nutritious meals and snacks. Remember that fuel is needed for both the brain and the body.

Focus on learning at home. Simple activities such as cooking together, gardening, fixing a bicycle, or easy building projects can reinforce math, science, and reading skills. Activities like these also help children explore activities that might later become hobbies for them.

Ask for **Guidance** from teachers and school administrators when you have questions or concerns about a child's progress.

Review **Homework** assignments each evening. You may want to encourage children to keep an assignment book, or planner, for tracking work. This will keep you in tune with what the child is learning, and the child will benefit from the extra review time.

Be **Involved** in your child's education. Studies show that when adults take part in a child's education, the child does better in school. Single parents and working parents have the added challenge of balancing family, work, and school involvement. But there are many ways to stay involved that don't require spending a lot of time away from work. Establish a line of communication with your child's teacher by telephone. Some teachers even use e-mail regularly. Find out what events the school has scheduled during the year that are in the evening.

Judge a child's progress based on his or her ability.

Know what is expected of a child at each grade level and in each subject area, then ask the child's teacher for suggestions to help you help him or her. A good place to start is by reading about Florida's Sunshine State Standards.

Listen to your child. Your attentiveness will demonstrate valuable listening skills—and it will keep the lines of communication open. A good way to start a conversation with your child is to ask a specific question about what was studied that day. Questions such as "What did you study about in science (math, social studies, history) class today?" will probably give you more information than asking a more general question such as, "How was school today?"

Monitor your child's activities and direct him or her toward activities that are constructive and meaningful. Many experts recommend supervising and setting limits on the content of television programs and limiting television time, even for teenagers.

Note your child's strengths and build upon them. Talk with your child's teacher about his or her areas of strength and weakness. Having confidence in one skill helps children master other skills.

Offer lots of praise and encouragement. Your positive attitude will increase the child's self esteem and build confidence in his or her abilities.

Practice makes perfect. Ask the child's teacher to identify areas in which he or she may need help, then spend time reading and working through practice activities in these areas. For younger children, flash cards can help keep math facts or vocabulary words fresh. For older children, supervised study groups with peers can help.

Ask **Questions** about the child's school day. This will keep you up-to-date on what he or she is doing in school and will show the child that you are interested in what he or she is learning.

Read with your child. Even older children and young adults benefit from family time set aside for reading. Reading aloud to each other is a great way to open topics for discussion and to open lines of communication.

Create an after-school **Schedule**, building in time for the child to finish homework assignments. This emphasizes the importance of homework and makes sure that a child completes his or her work.

Talk to your child. Keeping an open line of communication shows your child that you care and provides him or her with a way to talk about problems and concerns.

Use materials other than your child's schoolbooks to encourage reading and learning. Educational television programs, films, travel, Internet articles, and even music can be used as tools for learning and discussion.

Visit libraries and museums with your children. Attending cultural events such as plays, musical performances, and fairs with children can provide opportunities to learn about the world in which they live. Children will benefit from becoming familiar with how to use these kinds of resources.

Write letters and notes to children and encourage them to write to you. Even elementary school-aged children can be asked to write grocery lists and holiday wish lists. Writing often and for different purposes helps children feel more confident about their writing and ability to communicate effectively.

Teach by **example**. When you show that you value learning, children will learn to value it too.

Practice what **You** preach. When children see adults reading, whether it is newspapers, magazines, how-to-manuals, or books, they will view reading as an everyday activity rather than a difficult task.

Zzzz. Make sure children, including high school students, get plenty of rest each school night. Establish age-appropriate bedtimes and enforce them.