



Parents with High Expectations

You and Your Elementary School-aged Child

You can make a difference in your child's future by making sure your child starts on the right track to learning and being involved with his or her education. The elementary school years are the foundation for later school success. They are the time when your child will learn the basics of reading, math, and the other subjects on which later learning will depend.

Learn about your child's school

Before the school year begins, visit the school your child will attend. Obtain a copy of the school's parent involvement plan, if available.

Before your child begins school, ask the teacher or the principal:

- What subjects are taught in this grade?
- How much time is spent teaching children reading and math each day?
- What tests do the school use to measure children's progress?
- Can I attend school orientation with my child?
- Is there a family center at the school?
- Is the school meeting the academic and learning goals set by the state?

Ask the principal for a district or school report card to see if students are making progress. You also can visit rc.education.state.mn.us for specific information about your school.

Communicate with school staff

School staff are your partners in helping your child grow. They should be helpful and willing to meet with you.

What to tell teachers and principals:

- Explain your child's needs so staff better understand and are able to help meet them.
- Share any problems at home which may affect your child's school performance, such as divorce or illness.
- If English is not your first language, ask the school to arrange an interpreter to help you and the school communicate when you meet with staff.
- Have the school provide materials in your native language.

It is your responsibility to be actively involved in your child's education; the more you are involved at school, the more likely your child will succeed.

Support your child in elementary school

Here are some ideas of things you can do to support your child's progress.

What you can do at home to help your child learn:

- Read together with your child. Also let your child see you reading for pleasure.

- Use the local library and the Internet (if you have access) as sources for reading activities, homework support, and opportunities to develop outside interests.
- Make sure your child does his or her homework. Give your child the chance to be responsible and to work on his or her own. Encourage those efforts.
- Pay attention to how much your child watches TV, uses the computer, or plays video games. The American Academy of Pediatrics has ideas to help parents do this. AAP.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/Media-and-Children.aspx
- Listen carefully to what your child says and talk with him or her often. Research shows that children who talk with the adults in their lives are not only more successful students, but also healthier, happier people.

What you can do with the school to help your child learn:

- Contact your child’s teachers throughout the school year. Show them you are interested in your child’s education, and set up a way to communicate with them. Teachers will appreciate your interest.
- Find out what goals the teachers have for your child. Goals will change with each grade level.
- Contact the teacher immediately if you notice a negative change in your child’s behavior or school performance.
- Communicate with the teacher if your child has a problem cooperating and playing with other children. This allows you to identify and address problems at school before they become worse.
- Be persistent; if you do not receive an adequate response, you may want to consider meeting with your child’s teachers, the school counselor, and the principal together.
- Contact teachers if your child regularly doesn’t understand homework or needs extra help, or feels uncomfortable with any situation.
- Attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences; be prepared to listen and talk. You may find it helpful to write out questions beforehand. The teachers should be very specific about your child’s work and progress. Think about what the teachers tell you and check back with them to see how things are going as the year progresses.

Questions?.....

Do you have questions about your child’s elementary school? You can talk to your child’s principal or teacher. You also can call PACER Center at (952) 838-9000 and ask to speak with PACER staff who work on the **Parents with High Expectations Project**.

PACER is a Minnesota nonprofit organization. It supports the educational rights of children with and without disabilities. It offers workshops, individual assistance, written information, and more.

This handout was adapted with permission from “You and Your Elementary School-Aged Child,” U.S. Department of Education.