

You and Your Elementary School-Aged Child



“It’s crucial
that we start
our children
off on the
right foot in
school. The
stakes are
high in these
first years
and what we
do really
matters.”


—Secretary of Education
Margaret Spellings

The **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001** helps to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education and holds schools responsible for making sure that all children are learning. The information below is consistent with this important law.

The early school years are the foundation for school success—the time when your child will learn the basics of reading, math and the other subjects on which later learning will depend. To make sure your child gets on the right track to learning, it is important that you be involved with your child’s education. Before the elementary school years start, there are many things you can do.

Your Child’s Path to Success

Before the school year begins, find out about the school your child will attend. Visit the school. Get a copy of the school’s parent involvement plan, if available. Ask the principal for a district or school report card to see if students are making progress. The report can even tell you specifically if Hispanic students are making progress.



“We all know that mothers and fathers are the most important people in a child’s life. Children whose parents show them love and support have an enormous advantage growing up.”

Important Questions to Ask

Before your child begins school, ask:

- ★ What is taught in the kindergarten program?
- ★ How much time is spent teaching children English, reading and math?
- ★ What tests does the school use to measure your children’s progress?
- ★ How do parents know if the teachers are highly qualified to teach?
- ★ Can you attend kindergarten orientation with your child?
- ★ Is there a family center at the school?
- ★ Is the school meeting the academic goals set by the state?

If the school your child would normally be assigned to is not meeting the state’s academic goals, your child may qualify to transfer to another public school, including a public charter school. Also, if the school is not meeting the state’s goals, your child may be eligible to receive free tutoring and other supportive services. Contact your school district to find out more about these opportunities.

Communication Is Key

In school, teachers are your partners in helping your child grow. They should be helpful and willing to meet with you. It is important to tell teachers and principals about your child’s needs. If English is your second language, you may want to arrange for someone who is bilingual to help you when you meet with your child’s teacher. The school can also provide materials in Spanish. It is your responsibility to be actively involved in your child’s education; the more presence you have in it and in the school, the more likely his or her success.



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—Laura Bush

Supporting Your Child in Elementary School

There are several things you can do to support your child's progress in the elementary grades. Read together with your child, use the local library and the Internet, and make sure your child does his homework. Pay attention to how much your child watches TV, uses the computer or plays video games. Also give your child the chance to be responsible and to work on her own. Most importantly, listen carefully to what your child says, and talk to him every chance you get. Research shows that children who talk with the adults in their lives are not only more successful students, but also healthier, happier people.

Being an Advocate for Your Child

Contact your child's teachers at the beginning of and throughout the school year. Show them you are interested, and set up a way to communicate with them. Ask the principal or parent coordinator for bilingual tools to help with this. Find out what goals your teachers have for your child. At each grade level, the goals you and the teachers have for your child will change.

If you notice a change in your child's behavior or school performance, contact the teachers immediately. If your child is having a problem getting along with other children, give the school a call. This allows you to find out if there is a problem in school and to address it before it gets worse. Be persistent; if you are not getting an adequate response, you should consider meeting with the teachers, the counselor and the principal together.

You should also call the teachers if your child doesn't understand an assignment, needs extra help or feels uncomfortable with any situation.

In parent-teacher conferences, be prepared to listen and talk. It can help to write out questions beforehand. The teachers should be very specific about your child's work and progress. Think about what the teachers told you, and follow up. Check back with the teachers to see how things are going as the year progresses.

Examples of Resources

U.S. Department of Education:

<http://www.ed.gov> or

<http://www.ed.gov/espanol/bienvenidos/es/index.html?src=gu>

or call 1-800-USA-LEARN

U.S. Department of Education. (2005).

Helping Your Child With Homework.

Washington, D.C. (available online at

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/homework/index.html> and

<http://www.ed.gov/espanol/parents/academic/tareaescolar/index.html>)

U.S. Department of Education. (2005).

Helping Your Child Succeed in School.

Washington, D.C. (available online at

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/succeed/index.html> and

<http://www.ed.gov/espanol/parents/academic/escuela/index.html>)

U.S. Department of Education. (2005).

Choosing a School for Your Child.

Washington, D.C. (available online at

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/schools/find/choose/index.html> and

<http://www.ed.gov/espanol/parents/schools/choose/index.html>)

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