

A Parent's Guide to Supporting School Success

This guide was developed to help parents work with schools to encourage all students to do their best.

All parents want their children to succeed.

Whatever their background, all parents want their children to do their best. Schools must motivate students and expect the best from them in all of their subjects, no matter what their back-ground or what is going on at home. The more schools know about children's daily lives, language, and culture, the more they will be able to see their potential.

Teachers know that most students have an ability to “bounce back” after tough times and be motivated to be successful in school. The quality that allows children to be successful in spite of difficulties they may face in their lives is called resilience. When we think of resilience, we often think of someone who is a survivor, who has “stick-to-it-tiveness.” Many students have this resilience. Schools and families can help other students develop it.

How can you help your school build resilience in all of its students?

As a parent or family member, you can talk to your child's teacher or other school worker to find out how the school is working to build resilience in students. Here are some questions that might be helpful to think about and to ask:

- What is the school doing to help my child get along well with others? Is it helping him talk and write in a way so that more people understand him; is it teaching her to show how much she cares for others; is it teaching him the importance of working together in the community?
- How is the school helping my child learn how to solve problems, plan her work, know when to ask for help, and when to form her own opinions?
- What is the school doing to help my child to understand how the world works—even when it works against him?
- How is the school helping my child develop her own sense of who she is, how to act on her own, and make changes in her own situation?
- What is the school doing to help my child set goals that will help him stay interested in learning and in becoming a better person, including how to stay with something until he's done it well and to have hope that he will be successful?

What do schools that build resilience look like?

When schools help students feel supported, respected, and that they belong, students have a stronger desire to learn. There are several things schools can do to help students feel like this:

- **Caring relationships.** For each student, there must be at least one person at school who believes that the student is worthwhile and can be successful. That adult, who might be a teacher, school secretary, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, or teacher aide, will not give up on the student even when she misbehaves or is having problems with her classes.
- **High expectations.** Schools that have high expectations for all students—and give them the support necessary to achieve those expectations—have high rates of academic success. At these schools, students learn to believe in themselves and in their futures, and develop self-esteem, independence, and a positive outlook. Students know that the schools have high expectations for them because the

students are clear about what their teachers want in each class, they learn in a hands-on way, they are given challenging tasks and the help to get them done, and all students can see something familiar to them in the work they are given to do. Students' strengths, interests, and experiences are shown in their schoolwork.

- **Opportunities for participation.** When you walk into a school that is building the students' resilience you will see students working together on learning projects, helping other students with their schoolwork, and offering service to their communities. These schools believe that each student has something to offer and that they learn best by doing.

What can I do as a parent?

Families can help schools be more caring, have higher expectations, and offer chances to participate.

- **Talk to your child's teachers regularly.** Don't wait for a "problem" or a scheduled meeting—check in with teachers as you are picking your child up from school, or through notes and phone calls, just to find out if things are going well or if there is an issue you need to know about.
- **Support your child's teachers** as they work with your child through the school year. Teachers are looking for support for good student behavior and discipline, contact between the home and school, and respect for education, as well as for each other.
- **Be clear and direct in your expectations** of your child's teachers. Let them know that you are looking for teachers who listen and recognize what you have to offer in support of your child's education. As a parent, you deserve to be treated with respect by the adults at your child's school. You have a right to hear about any problems your child is having, and you should be involved in creating the solutions to those problems.
- **Let your child's teacher know about any situations or conditions at home that may affect your child's ability to concentrate on school work or to be successful.** A family health crisis, unemployment, issues may affect how well your child can function in school, so teachers need this information to provide support and assistance to your child—and to you.
- **Let your child know that you have confidence in his ability** to be successful in school. Let him know that his education is important and that you have high expectations for his success.
- **Attend parent-teacher conferences at least once a year.** Conferences let you get to know your child's teacher better, ask questions about your child's progress, keep the lines of communication open, and let your child know you care about her, are proud of her, and think that school is important. Don't be afraid to ask questions and let the teacher know if you don't understand something she is sharing with you.

School is a PARTNERSHIP between teachers, students, parents, and the community.

Let's all work together to make your child successful!

Other brochures in this series:

- *A Parent's Guide to School Involvement*
- *A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child Learn to Read*
- *A Parent's Guide to Raising Readers and Keeping Them That Way*
- *A Parent's Guide to Testing at Your Child's School*
- *A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child with Today's Math*
- *A Parent's Guide to Raising Scientifically Literate Children*
- *How to Help Your Child Get the Most Out of Homework*



Great Public Schools for Every Child