

Parents are Teachers, Too!

From the day children are born until they graduate from high school, they spend just 15 percent of their waking hours in school. The other 85 percent is spent outside school...and most of that time is spent at home.

Parents are their children's most influential teachers. Fortunately, children are naturally curious and love to learn. Here are some of the best ideas parents can use at home to make the most of the important educational influence they have.

1. Encourage Reading: Experts say that encouraging children to read is very important. It may be the most important thing parents can do to help their children succeed in school.
 - a. Get the whole family involved in reading books. Try reading favorite parts of books aloud to each other.
 - b. Be a reading role model. Make sure your children see you reading. Have lots of reading materials around (newspapers, magazines, books, catalogs).
 - c. Go to the library often. It's free, and it has a selection better than any bookstore.
2. Play learning games: Family time is a great time for learning. Try these activities with your middle schooler:
 - a. The thesaurus game: Choose a page at random in the thesaurus. Announce a word. See who can list the most synonyms.
 - b. See who can make the most accurate estimates. Have each family member guess exactly how wide the room is, the height of a picture from the floor, the number of jelly beans in a small jar, etc. See what other estimating contests you can invent.
 - c. Have a translation contest. See who can translate the number "four" into the most languages by tomorrow. Any source is fair—the library, friends, teachers, books, etc.

Show Children That You Care

1. Find ways to say "I love you" every day.
2. Make time to talk with your children and really listen to what they say. Being listened to builds children's self-esteem and helps them learn.
3. Monitor your children's schoolwork. Talk about their progress and make sure they know that you are proud of their accomplishments.