

Successful Strategies for Learning at Home

The following suggestions, written by experienced teachers of grades 6 to 8, allow your children to make a smooth transition into middle/junior high school and let them continue to be successful for the duration of their secondary school careers. The activities and advice are designed to help your children learn how they are progressing academically and socially and to assist you in having your children take charge of their own schoolwork.

Suggestions for Getting Your Child to Read

- Set a daily time up for your child to have uninterrupted reading time (20 to 30 minutes daily).
- Allow your child to select appropriate books from the public library or bookstore.
- Share the books that you love with your child.
- Choose appropriate books for your child's ability.
- Establish a set family reading time.
- Read aloud to your child.
- Have your child read to you and discuss main ideas from the reading.
- Read the novels your child is required to read for class so that you can both discuss them.
- Let your child see you read.
- Have your child read regularly to get information from newspapers, magazines, reference books, and online sources.

Suggestions for Getting Your Child to Write

- Encourage your child to keep a journal of personal thoughts.
- Encourage your child to write thank you notes for gifts and to people who have been helpful.
- Write letters to your child so that your child will respond in writing to you.
- Have your child write about what he or she has read.
- Have your child write grocery lists or to-do lists.
- Give your child a special gift to encourage writing, such as a nice pen, colorful or decorated writing paper, a notebook, or a journal.
- For some writing tasks, have your child revise his or her writing to improve the work. Ask your child what he or she can do to make the writing more effective.
- Encourage your child to write letters for different purposes, such as to request information or to share an opinion.

Suggestions for Getting Your Child to Think

- Assign a task and ask your child to create the process for the solution.
- Ask your child open-ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer.
- Ask your child to express his or her opinion on a relevant issue.
- Discuss current events, movies, and music and have your child apply these issues to daily life.
- Don't answer all of your child's questions. Answer their question with a question to encourage their thinking at a higher level.
- Encourage problem solving through games and riddles.
- Question your children regularly regarding how they feel and think about everyday happenings. Afterwards, have them elaborate about these issues.

Suggestions for Getting Your Child to Be Organized

- Establish a simple schedule for your child to follow at home.
- Encourage conversation about your child's day.
- Have your child write assignments for each class in an agenda notebook and check this notebook regularly.
- Establish a place at home for child to do homework and keep supplies.
- Clean out and organize the backpack with your child once a week.
- Label all folders, binders, and other supplies with the subject area and your child's name.
- Get materials and assignments ready the night before school.
- Model organization for your child at home.
- Provide a structural system for increasing responsibility and accountability.
- Recognize and reward good habits.

Suggestions for Getting Your Child to Do Homework

- Establish a "homework first" policy.
- Establish a specific time and place in your home for your child to do homework.
- Use incentives to motivate your child to complete homework before other activities.
- Ask your child to actually show you the completed work before moving on to other activities and discuss the work with him or her.
- Avoid distractions, such as television and computer games, while doing homework.
- Reward positive independent study.
- Encourage your child to ask you for help.
- Use the Austin ISD Homework Helpline.

Suggestions for Getting Your Child to Assume Self-Responsibility

- Set short-term goals with rewards for achievement and consequences for non-achievement of these goals.
- Set realistic attainable goals. Start small and grow.
- Establish a "no excuses" policy; accept only results. Don't give in too easily.
- Model self-responsibility.
- Make a to-do checklist.
- Praise your child for responsible behavior.
- Establish household chores and family responsibilities for each child.
- Don't do the chores or homework for your child.
- Allow your child to experience both positive and negative consequences.
- Discuss with your child what he or she learned in school each day.
- Ask your child to share his or her written agenda and homework assignments with you each day.