

# tips FOR ..... parents



**Setting the foundation for student achievement**  
BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE MISSOURI STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION, THE  
MISSOURI STATE TEACHERS FOUNDATION AND EDin'08



407 S. Sixth St. • P.O. Box 458  
Columbia, MO 65205  
(800) 392-0532  
[www.msta.org](http://www.msta.org)

The **Missouri State Teachers Association** is the largest education organization in Missouri, with 44,000 members. Since 1856, MSTA has been leading the way for Missouri's educators with services and benefits. MSTA is an independent teacher organization with no national affiliation — its focus is on education in Missouri. Missouri has many dedicated, caring teachers, whose foremost concern is educating students.



(800) 392-0532  
[fuller@msta.org](mailto:fuller@msta.org)

Since 1991, the **Missouri State Teachers Foundation** has been working toward the goal of attracting quality teachers into the profession and retaining experienced teachers. MSTF focuses not only on educators already in the classroom but also on those in college who are interested in the teaching profession as a career. In addition, the organization reaches out to the state's business leaders to get their feedback and input in shaping the future of education in Missouri.





## EASING BACK-TO-SCHOOL

# jitters

It's hard to believe that the summer is coming to an end, and stores are advertising back-to-school specials. Soon it will be time for you and your children to get back into the school routine. To help you prepare for the transition, the Missouri State Teachers Association offers the following suggestions:

- **Talk about school in a positive way** to encourage excitement for the new school year.
- **Check newspapers for a list of supplies** your children will need for school. Mark your children's belongings so they can read their names.
- **Make young children aware that teachers are friends** who offer help and encouragement.
- **Find out who your child's teacher is ahead of time**, then walk with your child through the school to help make the building more familiar and comfortable.
- **Children should go to school dressed in comfortable clothes** and shoes appropriate for the weather.
- **Let children take part in school preparations** by having them help choose their supplies, allowing them to decide what to wear and reviewing their schedule with them so they know what to expect on the first day.
- **School days seem very long to small children.** Prepare your children for it, and reassure them that you will see them after the school day is over.
- **Make sure your children know what to do after school.** Are they riding the bus home? Do they know their bus number and bus driver? Are you picking them up at school? Will they go to a child-care provider?
- **Encourage children to do their personal best at school.** Let them know that mistakes are OK.

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT



The tips that follow will show you **how to get involved** — even if you have little time to spare.

# a key to student success

- **Communicate high expectations.**
- **Read to your child at an early age.** Children benefit most from reading aloud when they discuss stories, talk about the meanings of words and learn to identify letters and words.
- **Ask questions** about your child's school work and relate it to everyday events.
- **Take your child to the library.**
- **Make homework a priority.** Student achievement rises substantially when teachers assign homework regularly and students do it conscientiously. Encourage your child to work independently, but offer assistance when necessary.
- **Turn off the television, and turn on family activities.** With the TV off, you'll be surprised how much more time you have to do things together that will benefit your child physically, intellectually and socially.

- **Give your child responsibility** both at home and in the community. Encourage volunteerism, and model good citizenship for your child.
- **Teach writing as a process** of brainstorming, composing, revising and editing. Quick feedback is essential for student writers. Encourage your child to keep a journal and to participate in school publications.

### Getting involved with your child

---

- **Take time each day to listen to what is important in your child's world.** Share in your child's joys and accomplishments, even though you may be tired at the end of the day.
- **Talk about what your child is learning** while eating dinner together. Pass around any papers your child has brought home.
- **Focus on the information and skills your child has learned** as a result of recent tests or reports. Take the emphasis off grades.
- **Teach your children to learn from their mistakes** instead of being discouraged by them. Share your own errors, and then talk about solutions.
- **Encourage participation** in extracurricular activities, such as sports, school publications, debate teams and drama. Involved students usually have a more positive attitude toward school.

### Getting involved with teachers

---

- **Attend parent-teacher conferences.**
- **Ask for advice.** Teachers can help you

reinforce at home what your child has learned in school.

- **Call teachers between formal conferences to catch up on your child's progress.**
- **Respond to report cards** and other communications.
- **Pitch in when teachers call for help** with school projects.
- **If your children experience difficulties in school, join forces with the teacher** to help them find success. Ask for suggestions about what you can do to help your child.

### Getting involved with the school community

---

- **Take part in PTA meetings** to keep informed about the school community.
- **Organize monthly brown-bag lunches at work** with planned programs to help everyone keep up with the latest education trends.
- **Go to back-to-school night.** It shows your child that you care about education, and it is a chance to talk to teachers in an informal setting.
- **Read school newsletters and local newspapers** for information on your community and on developments in education across the state and the nation.
- **Don't stop being involved after elementary school.** Junior high and high school students do appreciate parental involvement — even if they don't admit it.



Math and science can be difficult subjects for some students.

Here are some suggestions to help.

# Science

## MATH

- **If you were weak in math, don't pass along your fears to your child.**
- **Common toys and games can help children become familiar with numbers.** Try clocks, play money, bingo, Monopoly, dominoes and cards.
- **Let children measure the ingredients for your cooking.**
- **Let children manage their allowances.** Encourage them to keep written records of their savings and spending.
- **Encourage older children to keep the household budget books,** double-check the math on grocery receipts and credit card bills — even balance your checkbook.
- **Take advantage of any interest your child has in statistic-intensive sports,** such as baseball. Encourage any tendency in your child to become a walking encyclopedia of statistics on any subject.

## SCIENCE

- **Try not to show distaste for a child's interest in insects,** "scummy" water and other aspects of nature.
- **Encourage children to start a vegetable or flower garden.**
- **Foster an interest in scientific observation** with binoculars, an aquarium, a microscope, telescope or magnifying glass.
- **Science-related outings** could include nature preserves; vacations to the mountains, seashores or forests; zoos; aquariums; and tours of laboratories or manufacturing plants.
- **Encourage any interest in collecting** rocks, leaves, shells, flowers or other natural objects. Provide a place to display these collections.



## PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

# Helping the child together

The parent-teacher conference is an important element in establishing a partnership with your child's teacher. Nothing beats a face-to-face meeting to discuss your child's progress and needs.

The conference is a chance for parents to ask questions and tell teachers what they need to know to understand their children better. It's also an opportunity for the teacher to explain the curriculum and to use children's own work to demonstrate their progress.

Because conferences are so important, it pays for parents to come prepared. Try to arrange a time when you and your spouse or other family member can be at the conference together. Ask your children ahead of time if there is anything they would like you to discuss with the teacher. Ask your children what they like and dislike about school. Review any work your children have brought home. Jot down questions you want to ask the teacher; then ask the most important questions first in case you're pressed for time.

When you return home, your child will be curious about the conference. Share the details of the conference. Praise strengths before discussing any changes or new plans. Let children know that they have your support.

### Some questions you may want to ask

---

- How well does my child get along with classmates?
- What are my child's best and worst subjects? How can I help my child improve?
- Does my child attend class regularly? Complete assignments regularly?
- Does my child willingly participate in class activities?
- Does my child follow directions?
- What tests has my child had or will my child have? What do the scores indicate? How does my child handle taking tests?
- Does my child need help in any academic area or need to be referred to school specialists?

## 1 Show you think education and homework are important.

- **Set a regular time every day** for homework.
- **Make sure your child has** the papers, books, pencils and other things needed to do assignments.
- **Provide a quiet, well-lighted place** for your child to study.
- **Set a good example** by reading and writing yourself.
- **Stay in touch** with your child's teachers.

## 2 Monitor assignments.

- **Know what your child's homework assignments are** and how long they should take.
- **See that assignments are started** and completed.
- **Read the teacher's comments** on returned assignments.
- **Make sure TV viewing doesn't cut into** your child's homework time.

## 3 Provide guidance.

- **Understand and respect your child's style of learning.** Does he work better alone or with someone else? Does she learn best when she can see things, hear them or handle them?
- **Help your child get organized.** Does your child need a calendar or assignment book? A bag for books and a folder for papers?
- **Talk with your child about homework assignments.** Does she understand them?

## 4 Share concerns with the teacher.

You may want to contact the teacher if:

- Your child refuses to do her assignments, even though you've tried hard to get her to do them.
- Instructions are unclear.
- You can't seem to help your child get organized to finish the assignments.
- You can't provide needed supplies.
- Your child has missed school and needs to make up assignments.

**OVER THE  
HOMEWORK**

# hurdle

**AFTER  
SCHOOL**

# What should

Learning doesn't end when the final school bell rings. What happens outside the classroom affects a child's success in school. Children can spend after-school hours doing activities that can enhance learning and creativity. With a parent's help, any child can build vocabulary, improve thought processes and reinforce facts learned at school.

Here are some suggestions for what children can do, with parents or on their own, during those hours:

- **Create a diary or scrapbook** about their lives and their dreams for the future.
- **Prepare a snack** that parents have approved.
- **Read** a book, magazine or newspaper, and discuss it later with parents, or read to parents while they fix dinner.
- **Begin their homework** and be prepared to share or review it later with their parents. Be sure your child has a quiet, well-lit study area that is free of distractions.



- **Complete a list of chores** appropriate to their age.
- **Develop a hobby.** Parents can help by supplying necessary materials.
- **Visit interesting places** with parents on the weekends, such as museums, zoos, libraries, historical sites and parks.

# parents know



- **Participate in projects with other children.** Such activities improve children's social skills and teach them to cooperate.
- **Play games,** especially those with educational value, such as number games, guessing games and word games.

## After-school jobs

When older children work after school, it's important for parents to ensure that the job does not interfere with school work. The following are tips for making school a top priority:

- **Establish rules for work** before your child accepts the job.
- **Help your child develop a schedule** that focuses on school.
- **Limit the hours your child may work** based on grades, sufficient rest and recreation.
- **Continue to discuss and monitor your child's progress** in school. Students must understand that any decline in grades or attendance means giving up the job.
- **Expect your child to participate** in extracurricular activities at school.
- **Talk to your child about the stress** of work and school. Also, maintain open communication with your child's teachers, counselors and principal.
- **Get to know your child's employer.**

## Tips for Parents is sponsored by the Missouri State Teachers Association, the Missouri State Teachers Foundation and EDin'08.

Strong American Schools, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, is a nonpartisan campaign supported by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that promotes sound education policies for all Americans. SAS does not support or oppose any candidate for public office and does not take positions on legislation. The **EDin'08** campaign will be in your communities to make sure that whoever is elected focuses on education.

(636) 225-7595

[www.EDin08.com](http://www.EDin08.com)

