

Help Your Child Be a More Successful Student

There are some simple yet highly effective actions you can take to help your child have a more successful day at school.

Hydrate. Encourage your child to drink at least 8 oz of water every morning before leaving for school. Hydration significantly increases learning retention. Send them to school with a fresh bottle of water each and every day.

Feed their brains. After fasting all night long, the brain needs fuel to get going again. What they eat first in the morning impacts their learning ability for up to 10 hours. Students with low glucose have difficulty understanding new information, have problems with visual and spatial understanding, and they don't remember things as well. Find breakfast foods they will eat that contain lean proteins and complex carbohydrates. Try low-sugar yogurts, lean meats, eggs, whole grain toast with low-sugar jam, nuts, and old-fashioned, whole-grain oatmeal (not instant). Avoid sugared cereals and refined, white or processed foods, which actually diminish thinking brain functions and lower immune systems.

Set the tone. You have instant impact! How you say good morning and greet them impacts their brain function and stress levels for 6-8 hours, either positively or negatively. Create a genuine, upbeat, enthusiastic atmosphere in the morning. Be their role model – engage a great attitude towards your own day! Tell your child what you are looking forward to. Steer clear of expressing your stress, anger or anxiety with kids – it negatively impacts their breathing and brain function. Remember, children downshift to their survival brain under duress – it's how they create a sense of safety - and that downshifting inhibits their learning.

Say it's so. Teach your children how to empower themselves using their internal dialogue. Help them practice by saying it out loud – I'm a great learner, I can learn math, I know I'll figure out the answer, etc. You can play with muscle-testing to show them how their body is strengthened through affirmative 'I can learn' self-talk and weakened when they engage 'I'm stupid' or 'I'm no good' negative self-talk.

Breathe. If you're hurried, worried or tense, chances are huge that you're not breathing deeply enough. Children model your patterns – so if you hold your breath or have shallow breathing (upper chest only), your child follows suit. Shallow breathing turns off the thinking and learning functions in the brain. Shift yourself (and your kids) with a few good breaths. Practice belly breathing with your kids – send the oxygen deep into the lower lungs (the belly moves way out), then release with a long, slow exhalation. The slower you breathe, the calmer you'll become.

Enjoy helping your children prepare to learn.