

Bob Weyhmuller is author of *Beyond the Bus Stop: 180 Ways to Help Your Child Succeed in School*. This handy book contains no educational jargon, just practical, hands-on suggestions that every parent can put into immediate practice. *Beyond the Bus Stop* is winner of the National Parenting Center's Seal of Approval and endorsed by the New Jersey Learning Disabilities Association.

Ten Tips for School Success **Robert E. Weyhmuller, Jr.**

Success in school doesn't happen without parental support. Whether your son happily skips off to kindergarten or your daughter trudges down the hall to seventh-grade science class, your child needs your help to succeed in school. Author Robert E. Weyhmuller, Jr. offers 180 tips "one for each day of the school year" in a gem of a book that no parent should be without. Here are a few of his tips:

- * Read to your child every day. It sounds like such a simple thing. But will reading to your child every day really help her succeed in school? The answer is emphatically, YES! It's a fact. There's no better way to instill a love for reading in your child than by reading aloud to her. Children who are read to fall in love with books. They also develop good reading abilities earlier, become better listeners, and develop a stronger command of written language. But reading to your child every day does more than just feed the mind. It gives you and your child something special - it gives you together time.

- * Establish a homework routine. Decide with your child on a time each night to do homework and stick to it. Kids like knowing when things will happen, rather than being caught off guard. If you suddenly call your child in from his outside play to start homework, chances are you will meet more resistance than the allied forces on D-day. But if you establish a routine, such as homework begins at 5:00 p.m., arguments will be greatly reduced.

- * Monitor homework even when you're not home. Until corporate America gets in sync with the school calendar and businesses close their doors at 3:00 p.m., your older child may be on her own to start homework while you're at work. But don't fret. All you need is access to a telephone to keep your child on task. Here's what to do. Establish a specific time for your child to begin homework. Call her fifteen minutes after the scheduled time to check that she has started her work. Review what assignments need to be done and approximate how long homework will take. Call again later to see if she is finished. Before hanging up, tell her you love her (even if she isn't finished, yet.)

- * Always be your child's advocate, but never become the teacher's adversary. If you feel your child has been wronged, defend her. Call the teacher, have a conference, work things out the best you can, but don't make the teacher the enemy. When parents and teachers are openly hostile toward each other, the child almost always becomes the loser.

- * Be your child's Show 'n Tell. What better way is there for your child to show how proud she is of Mom or Dad? What better way is there for your child's teacher to get to know you? What better way is there for you to get to meet your child's schoolmates?

* Make your child a better thinker by asking "Why". Remember when your child drove you crazy by asking "Why?" Now you can make her a better thinker by asking the same question. "Why is there a stop sign on that corner? Why is it wrong to cheat? Why were racial tensions so high in the 1960s? Why did we fight in Vietnam? Why aren't you allowed to stay out past midnight?"

* Honor your child's opinions. Provide your child with a safe environment where he can express opinions without fear of reprisal. Encourage him to respectfully express his opinions in school, too. Do your hackles rise when your child expresses an opinion contrary to yours? "I think it's silly that we go to Grandpop's every Sunday. I'd rather stay home and play with my friends." Instead of blasting him with a guilt trip, try acknowledging his feelings: "I understand. Sometimes I'd rather play tennis, but your grandfather looks forward to our visit." Your child's independent thinking will blossom when he is permitted to express his opinions without retaliation.

* Ask your child to teach you something she learned in school today. People remember 10 percent of what they read, 20 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see, 50 percent of what they see and hear, 70 percent of what they say as they talk aloud and 90 percent of what they say as they perform a task. Teaching is talking and performing. When your child teaches you a concept introduced in school, she has mastered it.

* Provide the teacher with ten stamped, self-addressed postcards to promote regular communication. The number one complaint of both parents and teachers is lack of communication. This tip provides a simple solution. Ask the teacher to drop you a note whenever she feels it necessary. Because postcards are small, your child's teacher can quickly write one or two lines without feeling obligated to send a lengthy letter. Comments like "failed to turn in two math assignments this week" or "Spelling is much improved" are all it takes to keep lines of communication open. your child's teacher will also appreciate that the cards are preaddressed, so all he need do is drop them in the school's outgoing mailbox.

* Let your teenager balance your checkbook. Stock market crash. Inflation. the Great Depression. Global economy. Wall Street. These are difficult concepts for junior and senior high school students to understand. Your child will gain a better understanding of economics by balancing the family checkbook. He might also learn not to ask, "Why can't we afford a new...?"

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