



Motivation: The Key to School Success

James A. Sebben, EdD, LPC

Your children are bombarded daily with the influences of television and the media, other children, other families, and the community. Research has found that the most lasting influence is that of the parents and that this applies particularly to the school setting. Motivation is the key to learning. So the question is: How do I motivate my child to be a successful student? Linda Jones ([Fastbook #315](#), Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Bloomington, Indiana) suggests the following ways in which parents can help to motivate their children.

- Show interest in your children's learning. Ask about what they are learning in school; ask to see their papers, projects, homework, etc.
- Work with your children in setting specific daily goals that are achievable. Write out the goals and post them in a prominent place and have the children check off each goal when completed. (For example, if the goal is to finish homework by 7 pm, post this goal on the refrigerator and then, if achieved, determine an appropriate reward for your child like an extra half hour of television, or having a friend over on the weekend, or special time with one of the parents)
- Help your children envision and formulate long-term goals. (For example, if your child has a project due in October, help them to set up a schedule for completing the project on time and post it in an obvious place).
- Instill in your children the attitude that achievements are usually the result of persistence and hard work, not luck and ability.
- Show caring and love if your children make mistakes or fail, and help them see mistakes as opportunities to grow.
- Demonstrate through your words and actions faith in your children's ability to learn and achieve.
- Look for successes in your children's efforts and acknowledge them.
- Model for your children language that conveys positive expectations, such as I can, I will, I want to, I understand, my goal is, etc.
- Stress frequently to your children the importance of learning and education.

Remember, what you do with your children far greater impact than what you say to them!