



National
Urban League

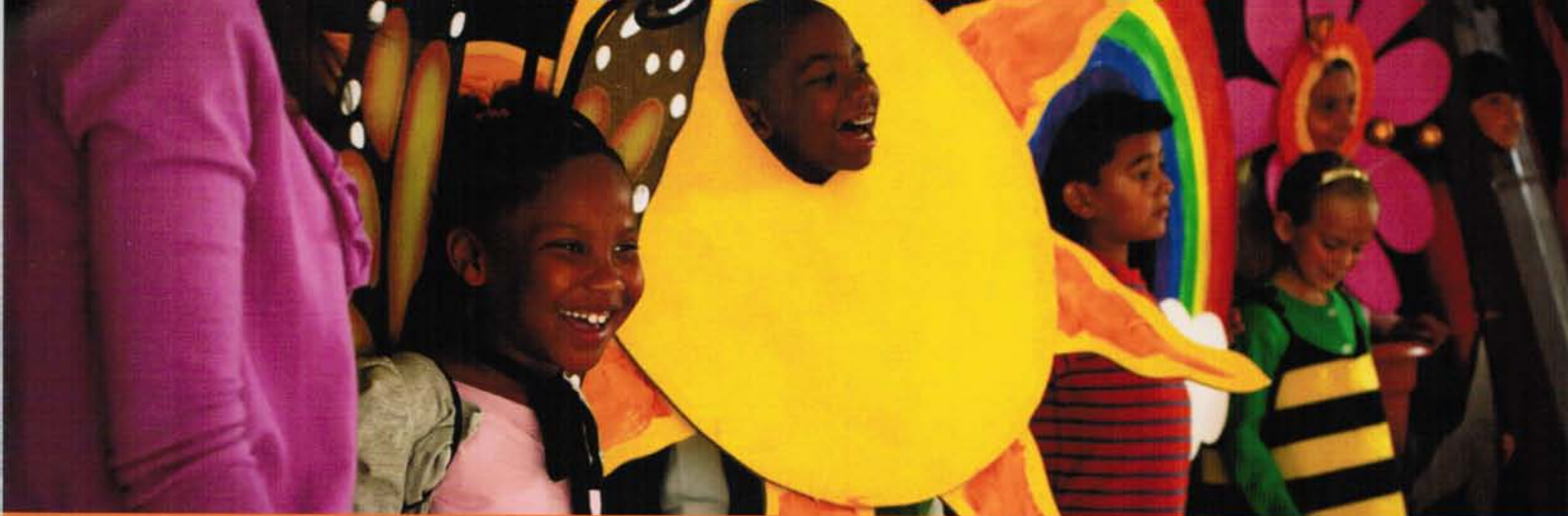
*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

Educational Success Toolkit

For more information
on the Box Tops for
Education® program
see page 10

BROUGHT
TO YOU BY:





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Welcome!

A letter from Marc H. Morial
President and CEO, National Urban League



The National Urban League and General Mills, Inc.'s Box Tops for Education® program are pleased to present the National Urban League & Box Tops Educational Success Toolkit.

This valuable resource will assist parents in taking an active role in their children's educational pursuits. The online toolkit is a must-have for all parents who have a child attending primary school with age-appropriate content as well as key benchmarks that families can work on together.

Our vast education and youth development programs serve nearly 200,000 students across the United States annually and prepare every child we serve for academic success and life beyond high school—whether in the workplace or in an institution of higher education.

The educational toolkit appeals to diverse communities and offers user-friendly techniques on back-to-school preparedness, parent-teacher conferences and other situations that parents and children encounter during the critical primary school years. Through the establishment and development of a supportive learning environment, comprised

of school leaders, community leaders and parents, students will be on the right track to academic achievement.

As a proud partner of Box Tops for Education, the National Urban League supports the Box Tops for Education call-to-action and encourages everyone to get involved by signing the pledge and committing to influencing favorable outcomes in a child's academic performance.

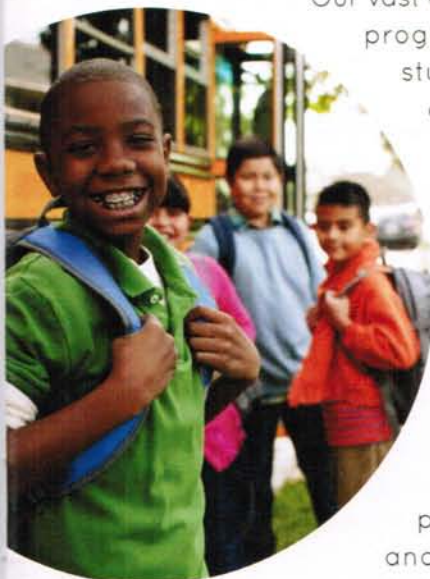
Please visit the National Urban League on www.iamempowered.com and find out which Affiliate is in your community and Get Involved!

Yours in the movement,

Marc H. Morial,
President and CEO



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Pledge Card



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Today, and every day, we, as a family, pledge to be involved in the academic journey of this family and to the commit to working toward achieving a truly independent future by succeeding in school and in life.

PARENT

Therefore, I
as the parent, commit to:

Believe in my child's ability to achieve. My child will graduate from high school and will value the importance of education in their future success.

Take responsibility for my child's education and growth. I will provide an environment that encourages learning. I will help my child with and review my child's homework. I will have my child read daily.

Focus on what is important. My child will attend school, on time, well rested and prepared to learn. I will ensure that my child receives proper nutrition and has activities that stimulate their mind, their talents and their bodies.

Expect the best from my child, myself, their teachers, their school and the community in which we live.

By signing below I pledge my commitment:

.....
Parent Signature

STUDENT

Therefore, I
as the student, commit to:

Believe in myself. I can learn anything, and I can achieve anything!

Take responsibility for my actions, for my education, my development and for my life. If I am to succeed, it starts with me.

Focus on what is important: Get a good education; Act responsibly, thoughtful and compassionately; Help my family and community; Eat right and exercise.

Excel at everything I do. Education is the gateway to my future. The more I learn, the more I will achieve!

By signing below I pledge my commitment:

.....
Student Signature

Family Pledge: Monthly Check List



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20

YEAR

MONTH

PARENT

How many times this month:

Made sure that my child got to bed on time so they went to school on time and prepared to learn.

Helped with, checked and signed off on homework.

Made sure to provide my child with proper nutrition, cutting back or out unhealthy snacks.

Talked with my child about their day at school and their activities.

Attended Parent-Teacher Conference at school.

Attended PTA/PTO Meeting and/or School Board Meeting.

Provided my child with opportunities for activities that stimulate their mind, their talents and their bodies.

Attended my child's sporting/ performance or school/after-school program event.

STUDENT

How many times this month:

Went to bed on time. Made it to school/class on time and prepared to learn.

Participated in class by listening, asking questions, helping others or asked for help completing classwork.

Ate something nutritious. Limited or did not eat something that was not good for me.

Talked to my parents about my day at school and my activities throughout the day.

Completed my homework assignment and had my parents check/review it and sign it.

Participated in activities that I liked and/or got me up, moving, and exercising.

Pursued my interests/hobbies. Built on my strengths and addressed things I struggle with as I develop and grow.

Spent time learning how to be a leader, how to serve my community, and participate in positive activities.

Preparing for Back-to-School



Be involved in your child's academic journey.
Help them succeed in school and in life.

- 1 Buy grade and age-appropriate school supplies early (July/August). At the end of the school year, often teachers and principals will provide parents with a list of necessary supplies based on their plans for the following school year.
- 2 Include a new alarm clock as part of your child's school supplies. Getting on a schedule early is important to helping your child develop structure to their lives and setting a precedent that getting proper rest and waking up on time are important to achieving success. You might encourage the child to choose the alarm clock so that they have a vested interest in the process.
- 3 Check with your child's doctor for an immunization schedule and plan ahead to get them done well before school starts.
- 4 Ask the school for an academic calendar and class list so that you might begin to meet other families in your child's class in the upcoming year.
- 5 Invest in a FAMILY ACADEMIC/SOCIAL PLANNER. Families today seem to be very active and engaged with each family member on a different schedule. To make the best of your family's time and commitment, invest in a FAMILY ACADEMIC/SOCIAL PLANNER. Using a Family Planner allows for your family to see just how busy you are and how best to schedule family activities and when to reserve time for finishing homework, reading and visiting museums, libraries and other educational institutions together. Remember to place the calendar in a place where everyone can see and add to it. If your family is particularly technologically savvy, you can also create and maintain an online calendar using email programs or other digital planning tools.
- 6 Make time to go your child's school and meet with the teacher, principal or other school officials to get a sense of what will be expected of your child for the year.
- 7 Make time with your child to develop a schedule of afterschool and extracurricular activities in which they will participate during the year meet with the staff of each program or activity to get a sense of what will be expected of your child for the year. Ideally some of the activities will be of great interest to your child, while others encourage them to stretch and try something new.



Setting the Tone for a Successful School Year



As your child's first and most important advocate, you should start the school year off right by meeting with your child's teacher and sharing with them your high expectations for your child.

You set the tone for the experience your child has in school and you want it to be a positive one, so they will thrive. Ensure your child has a good experience with teachers or people in authority at the school by helping them get to know your child a little bit better!

You may feel a little intimidated by meeting with your child's teacher. Don't be. Teachers want to meet you and will welcome the opportunity to learn more about your expectations for your child, your child's likes and dislikes, talents and fears. Share how your child likes to learn and what their interests are, and talk together about what to expect during the school year.

Meeting with the teacher to establish a good relationship and share expectations with them is a great way to ensure your child will gain the best from their classroom experience.

Scheduling the visit:

It is best to meet with your child's teacher within the first month of school. There is no need to wait for

the first Parent-Teacher Conference. (Particularly because the Parent-Teacher Conference is usually short and not enough time for an in-depth conversation.)

Call the school office to request a meeting with the teacher. Most often, the teacher will want to meet with you early in the morning, or immediately after school. Schedule a time that is convenient for both of you, and try to allot 20 to 30 minutes.

Many schools hold a "Back to School Night" during the first month of school. This is a good opportunity to meet the teacher, see the classroom (and where your child's desk is), and meet other families from the class. Be sure to make every effort to attend! If you cannot, send in a note letting the teacher know you are interested. Right after the event, call the school to schedule a one-on-one meeting with the teacher.

CON'T ON NEXT PAGE...



It's the Meeting Day...Here are a few suggestions to help set the right tone and ensure a successful school year!



Two of the most important items: 1) Write down your thoughts before the meeting, so you don't forget anything important; and 2) Bring a notepad and take notes during the meeting, so you don't miss anything!

After the introductions:

- 1 Thank the teacher for making the time to meet with you and let them know you are looking forward to your child having a great year and learning a lot!
- 2 Provide the teacher with a sense of your child's educational history, interests, strengths and personality. It will also be important to share your expectations around communication with the teacher, homework, progress reports, etc. so that you might come to a shared understanding on your child's experience.
- 3 Share your child's extracurricular activities, interests, talents and hobbies or the reading you do together at home. It is helpful for the teacher to know those things that capture your child's interest and imagination—maybe it's art, science, reading, music, math, race cars, sports, cooking, singing in the church choir. All of this will go a long way to helping the teacher "see" the child before them and appreciate your child as much as you do.
- 4 Let your teacher know that you see them as a "partner" in your child's education, and ask them to keep you in the loop about your child's progress or challenges. Share with the teacher about the best way you can be reached—calling you at work or home when there is a problem, or, as importantly, when something good happens.
- 5 Provide the teacher with accurate phone numbers, home address and email address so that getting in touch with you is easy.
- 6 Ask the teacher what their preferred method of communication is (email, phone, note sent to school) and ask them to provide you with their contact information as well.

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Get to know the teacher and their expectations by asking the following questions:

- What are your goals for your class this year?
- What will "success" look like for you by the end of the year?
- What is your teaching style?
- Are there any aspects of the curriculum that your students tend to find more challenging? Exciting?
- How much time do you recommend that children read at home each night? Do you have a list of recommended books, or a website that lists books?
- In what ways will you make time to meet one-on-one with the students?
- Are parents encouraged or allowed to drop by the classroom to see the class/student in action?
- How often do you share progress reports and updates on students?
- How will you inform me of the areas that need improvement or areas of particular strength?
- Do you provide extra credit work for students to help improve their grades?
- How are homework assignments communicated? Are they posted online? If so, what is the website address, and how often is the site updated?
- Should we expect homework every night? On the weekends?
- In what ways do you want my (parental) support with homework, behavior and skill development?
- What percent of my child's overall grade is based on their homework performance? Classroom performance and behavior?
- Where is my child's desk? Are desks moved throughout the year?
- Do you keep a portfolio of my child's work during the year?

Thank the teacher again for meeting with you and remember to use the information throughout the school year to ensure your child is getting the best out of their classroom experience. Send a thank you note to the teacher to thank them for their time.

YEAR

MONTH

SUN

[illegible]

Report Card Day:

Box Tops 101

How to earn cash for your child's school
with Box Tops for Education®

Box Tops coupons are found
on products you use every day.
Each Box Top you clip is worth
10¢ to your child's school.



Earn cash for your child's school by
clipping Box Tops coupons from
hundreds of participating products.
Just clip Box Tops from the package
and send them in to your child's
school – it's that easy!

Box Tops for Education® has helped
America's schools earn over \$525
million since 1996 including over \$45
million since March 2012.



When we work together to collect Box
Tops and send them in, the money
adds up fast to get things your school
needs and help children achieve their
dreams. From school supplies to gym
equipment, eligible schools have the
flexibility to buy whatever they need.

How can I become more involved with the
Box Tops program at my child's school?

Volunteer Box Tops Coordinators at each school help promote
the program and turn clipped Box Tops into cash for their
school. There are tools & resources provided on the Box Tops
website to help every step of the way!

If you're interested in volunteering to be your school's Box
Tops Coordinator, talk to your school administrator or visit
btfe.com/aboutcoordinators.

Get great tips
on earning cash
for your school by
joining Box Tops
for Education at
btfe.com

Only Box Tops for Education registered schools can redeem Box Tops.
Each Box Top is worth 10 cents to redeeming school. Limit: \$20,000
per school, per school year for Box Tops redeemed through the Clip
program. See www.btfe.com for program details.

Parent-Teacher Conference Guide

The Parent-Teacher Conference provides an opportunity for parents to meet with their child's teacher.

This meeting develops shared understanding and perspective, plus it helps to find out about areas of progress and areas of challenge for your child. In meeting with your child's teacher, it is important to establish that you are committed to working in partnership to ensure your child's success.

Try to speak with your child daily about their school experiences. Before meeting with the teacher, pause and ask your child a few questions. Are there things they particularly enjoy about their class? What are their concerns or questions for the teacher? Are they having any challenges with peers, teachers or other adults at the school?

During the meeting, here are some good questions to ask:

- Where is my child's desk? Will they be sitting in this area of the classroom all year, or will they change seats?
- What subjects and skills will my child be expected to learn this year? Who will be teaching the subjects? (Sometimes the school has "area" teachers - gym, art, science, technology. Make appointments to meet with those teachers, too!)
- How much time do you expect students to spend on homework assignments each night and week? Is homework graded for completion or for accuracy? Do you assign homework on weekends? Do you send schoolbooks home?



CON'T ON NEXT PAGE...

- What standardized tests will be administered this year? And how much class time will be devoted to preparing students for them?
- Do tests, attendance and homework all count towards grades? Does behavior count towards grades?
- How is academic progress communicated to the parents and is that communication regular? Is there an on-line system on which grades are posted?
- What is the best way to reach you? (By email, phone, written notes, Web site, etc.)? What is your contact information? **It is also important that you provide this information to the teacher.**
- What do you think my child's challenges are?
- What concerns do you have about my child's academic performance?
- What programs or strategies do you recommend to help my child's performance improve?
- Do you know of any summer programs or summer camps in which I can enroll my child? Does the school or the District have free or reduced cost summer programs or summer camps in which I can enroll my child? (This might not be a bad question to ask mid-year, as end of year might be too late to enroll.)



Be an effective advocate for your child

Parents must gather the information they need in order to help their children develop the strategies and skills necessary to support their child's academic success. Given work schedules, lack of child care and other challenges, it can be difficult for parents to attend a Parent-Teacher Conference at the time the school schedules it. If the times offered are not convenient for you, call the school immediately to schedule an alternate date that fits your schedule.

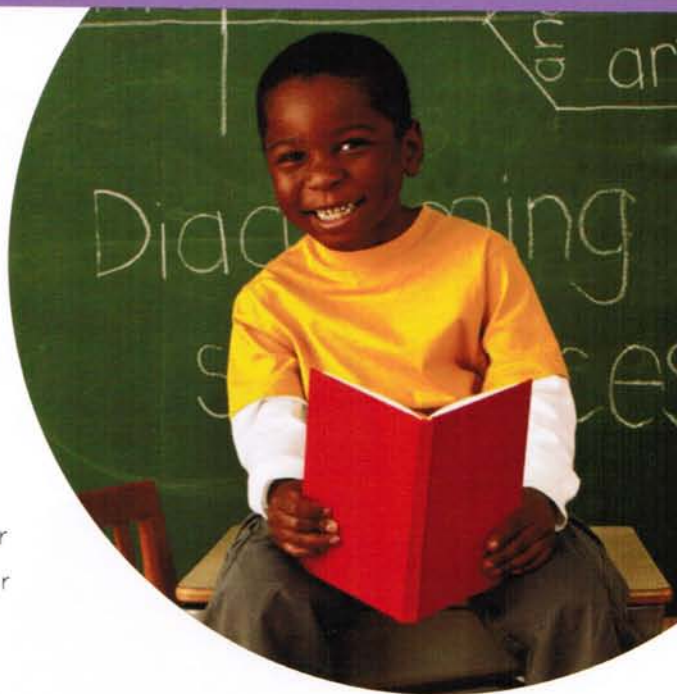
Inspiring Your Child to Read

When you discuss a book together it comes alive and the adventure and discovery starts – improving reading and comprehension



Sometimes children are reluctant to read out loud because of their fear of looking and sounding silly in front of others. That fear can be conquered by reading with them one-on-one in an atmosphere where they feel no judgment but feel only encouragement. As your child becomes more comfortable, you can invite family members to join you and support your child's reading across a larger group.

The first step is to encourage and allow your child to choose a book that they are interested in and start out with a timer for fifteen minutes of reading out loud. Once the timer has stopped, you can demonstrate active listening and your support by asking questions like these about the book:



- What is the title of the book?
- What is the author's name?
- What does the picture of the cover make you think of?
- Who is the main character?
- Where does the character live?
- Does he/she have a favorite place they like to play or go?
- Does the main character have a family?
- What is the character trying to do in the story?
- Are there any challenges?
- Who is helping the characters?
- Does the character have friends?
- What are the names of his/her friends?
- Do they have a best friend or pet?
- What is the story/chapter about?
- If you were the character, would you do anything different or the same?
- Did you like the ending? Why?
- What lesson do you think the author was trying to teach us?
- Would you change anything in the book if you were the author?
- Would you recommend this book to your friends to read?
- Is there something in the book that you want to learn more about?

Give re-enforcement:

You did a wonderful job reading and explaining the story. I am so very proud of you.

Helpful Hint: Let your child set the timer to determine how much longer they would like to read past the first 15 minutes.

Middle School Transition Guide



The transition from elementary to middle school is an important and exciting time for a child.

To transition effectively, it is important for your child to have the right resources and supports in place. Students of color entering middle school must be equipped with not only the academic skills to achieve and thrive, but the emotional and life skills to successfully navigate this new world.

Prepare...

- ☐ Expose your child to the culture and expectations of middle school.
- ☐ Contact your child's future middle school and ask to take a tour. Take your child with you!
- ☐ Meet with the middle school principal and ask questions about the curriculum, extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, music groups, etc.) and after school bus transportation.
- ☐ Contact other parents and children in your community to ask about their experiences at the school - the teachers, the academics, extracurricular...

Contact your child's future middle school and ask to take a tour. Take your child with you!

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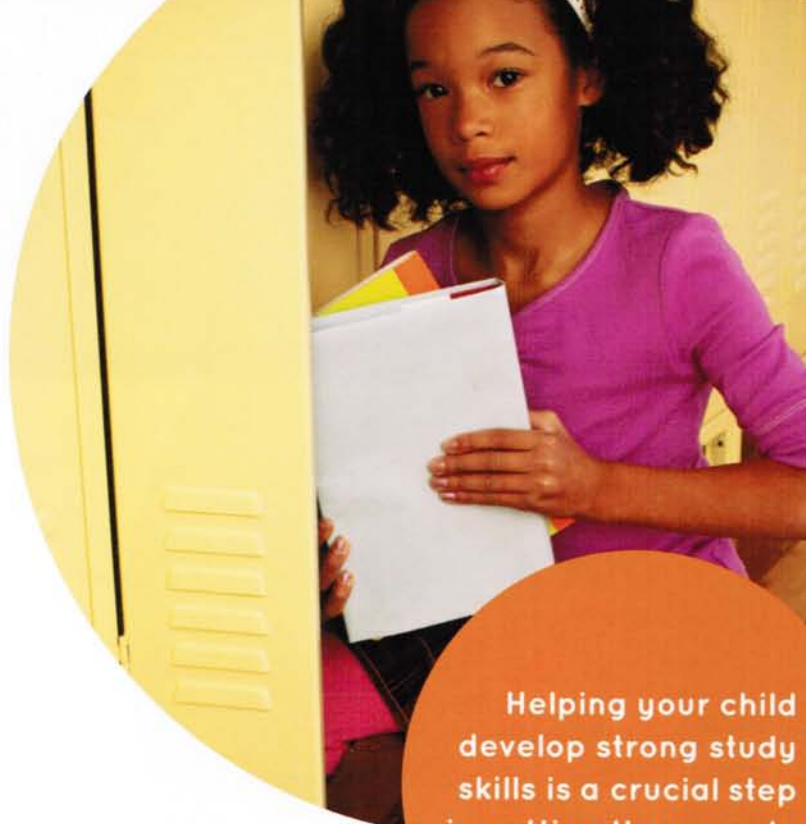


Be organized...

- ☐ Encourage your child to write down all of their assignments, and check them when they get home.
- ☐ Create a chart and work with your child to plan how they will complete all of their work.
- ☐ Ask your child to pack their book bag and lay out their clothes for the next day.

Strengthen study skills...

- ☐ Helping your child develop strong study skills is a crucial step in getting them ready for middle school.
- ☐ Establish a "study zone" in your home - an area where your child can focus.
- ☐ Create a timed-out study schedule, with your child's input, allowing time for snack, study, reading, dinner...
- ☐ Encourage your child to re-read passages in their books, recopy notes from class, or do extra studying on the computer or in the library. It helps them retain more information.



Helping your child develop strong study skills is a crucial step in getting them ready for middle school

- ☐ Did studying for that math test result in a higher grade? Congratulate your child on their accomplishments! (Conversely, if the grade was lower than expected, that's okay. Just use it as an opportunity to discuss how to do better next time.)

Celebrate your child's accomplishments and abilities. You are their best advocate - let them know you're in their corner!

A student's level of academic success is greatly determined by their patterns of social growth and maturation. As they transition to middle school, your child will begin to have a lot of new experiences. They may experience various types of peer pressure. In order to be resilient - to cope effectively and thrive - your child will need to develop critical social and leadership skills. Any approach to developing a student's social resiliency must be individualized, and take into consideration your child's background, gender and life experiences.

College Preparation Checklist



It's never too early to begin emphasizing the importance and value of a college degree

Over their lifetime, college graduates earn over a million dollars more than those with just high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma.



Additionally, attending college can provide essential tools for success – strong networks and relationships, increased research and critical thinking skills, expansion of how one sees the world by meeting new people and studying new topics, and the opportunity to have internships or even travel abroad.

Each stage is important to preparing your child for success and should include activities from the stages that come before it on the checklist.

Kindergarten to 2nd grade

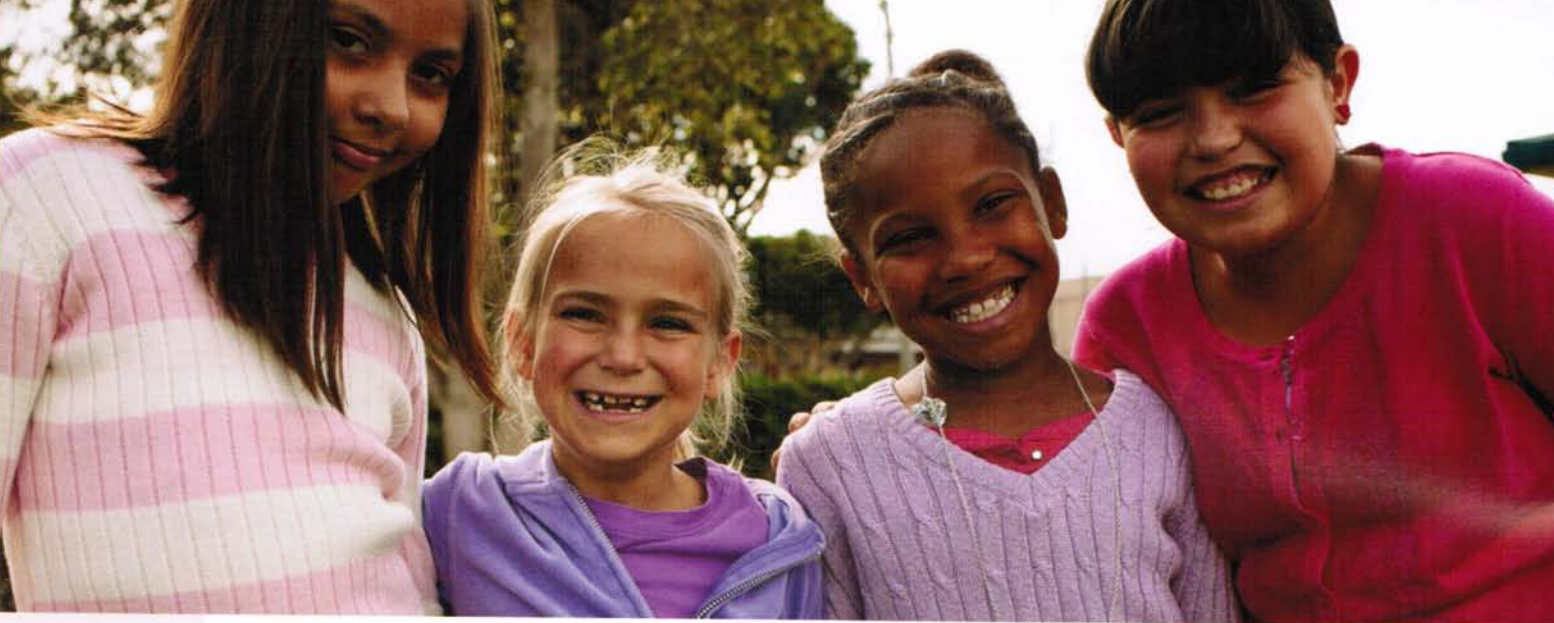
Establish a College Savings Account. Research savings plans, such as 529, that will enable you to begin saving for your child's future.

Talk to your child about success after high school, including college. Ask family members, friends and co-workers to share their college experiences, or ask your child's teacher or coach to share where they went to college.

Take your child to different local colleges or to colleges and universities when you are visiting family or on vacation in other cities. Local colleges and community colleges often hold free or low priced performances or community festivals. Use this as an opportunity to introduce your child to a college setting. Point out the library on campus and where they might live if they attended this school.

Ask family members, friends and co-workers to share their college experiences

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3rd to 5th grade

Ask your child what they would like to be when they grow up. Pay close attention to your child's interests and "map" them to the future. Does your daughter like to build with blocks? Help her dream about being an architect, a construction manager, or an engineer and give her additional information about a tool – college – that can help her achieve her goals.

Create a "college going team." Identify who, in your child's life, attended college and with your child, ask them where they went, what they liked, and what they studied. Talk to your child about your experiences, if any, in college and what you hoped to achieve. Begin talking with your child about the best fit for them—courses of study, majors, location (urban, suburban, rural), etc.

6th to 8th grade

Identify a summer program on a local college or community college campus. Research shows that by participating in a program in a college setting, your child can begin to develop a familiarity and comfort with college and gain a better sense of what it will take to become a college graduate.

Schedule campus tours where and when possible. There might be a college that has the degree program that fits your child's interests, or a really great sports team your child follows. Build on that interest! Call the Admissions Office to request a campus tour. Tours are usually an hour long and led by current college students who are happy to

speak with people of any age about their experiences!

Strengthen your child's academic foundation. Being "college ready," requires good critical thinking skills, having a broad world view, developing strong writing and reading skills among other things. Encourage your child, and find a tutor or enrichment program to continue to support their growth. Ask your child what kinds of things they think they need to accomplish in order to be ready for the opportunities that attending and graduating from college will provide them.

Guide to Time Management



Teaching your child how to manage their time is a crucial step in helping them be successful in school and, ultimately, in life

Students are pulled in many different directions each day. After school, there are the distractions of the television, video games, chatting on the Internet, sports activities or just hanging out with friends and family. So planning for studying and note-taking are often the last things on their minds.

It seems that there are not enough hours in the day to "study hard" or "focus" and still make time for fun.

Teaching your child how to effectively manage their time today will have positive results now and in the future.



Create a Task and Responsibilities List. With all of the responsibilities and activities children have, the idea of getting everything done in the few hours before bedtime can be overwhelming, but you can do it!

Take a minute to think about what your child needs to accomplish in the after-school hours and on weekends (homework, studying for tests, sports and music practice, reading twenty minutes a night, not to mention, dinner!) – and how much time they have to get everything done. Then, create a timeline to help you see what your child needs to accomplish and how long it takes. This can be a list kept on a piece of paper or one that is kept online. In each case, it is a useful tool in helping you both meet your goals.

First things first. Once you develop your timeline together, sit down and discuss it

with your child to get their buy-in. Are they someone who needs a snack before they can settle down to homework? Write that on the schedule too, so they can see it! Needs time to play with friends? Try incorporating that as well. By sitting down together, you can each prioritize their tasks and needs, and then schedule each one at the appropriate time.

Build a routine. While your child doesn't need to schedule every move they make, developing a regular routine helps you both to remember each step that needs to be taken to reach your goal. A routine also models the importance of organization, time management and prioritization to your child.

Be realistic. Don't under or overestimate the time needed. Overestimating time makes it difficult to fit all your tasks into your daily schedule, while underestimating "cuts your

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day short" and makes it impossible to complete your schedule. It's much easier to fit a small task into "extra" time than it is to try to make up for "lost" time.

Start tomorrow tonight!

Help your child get in the habit of preparing for the next day at the end of their day. They can lay out school clothes and shoes, pack their backpack and put it near the door, and get a good night's sleep!

The pause that refreshes. Make sure short breaks are a scheduled part of your child's

day. A small break at the end of a large task or series of small tasks can refresh your child and help them to wind down and focus on "what's next?"

No matter what children did or didn't get done today, they will always have tomorrow to do better!

Be flexible and reflect on your child's accomplishments.

Effective time management will take some time to get used to and neither of you should become frustrated or discouraged. No matter what children did or didn't get done today, they always have tomorrow to do better!

Sample Time Schedule:

Following, is an example of a Time Schedule. It can certainly be adjusted to meet your child's needs. As you create your schedule, remember to take a positive approach! Even choosing a creative title – something better than "My Homework Chart" – or letting your child decorate the sheet, can make a difference!

TIME	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
3-4 P.M.	Snack	Sports Practice	Snack	Snack	Snack
4-5 P.M.	Homework	Snack	Homework	Homework	Read/Play
5-6 P.M.	Reading/ Studying	Reading/ Studying	Reading/ Studying	Reading/ Studying	Play Time
6-7 P.M.	Dinner & Clean Up	Dinner & Clean Up	Dance/ Music Lesson	Dinner & Clean Up	Dinner & Clean Up
7-8 P.M.	Studying/ Prepare for Bed	Studying/ Prepare for Bed	Studying/ Prepare for Bed	Studying/ Prepare for Bed	Family Movie or Game Night
8-9 P.M.	Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime

Each parent should individualize a schedule based on their child's educational needs

Finding After-School Programs



The quality of the after-school program your child participates in is only as good as the staff that supports the programs, and the opportunities provided to the children and youth who attend the program.



You should expect a high-quality program to:	What you should look for or ask:
Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and practices of child and youth development, and the ability to use this knowledge to achieve the goals of the program.	Look at what is on the walls of the program site. Are there goals or affirmations on the wall, that state the desired behavior and attitude they want program participants' to have in order to participate in the program?
Create and maintain an inclusive, welcoming and respectful environment that embraces cultural and social diversity.	In addition to the indicators listed above, what are the rules and values that they want young people to model?
Foster an effective learning and developmental environment that helps build academic and non-academic skills.	How do they demonstrate that youth have learned what they have been taught? Do they have an end of program event? Certificate? Do they give a pre- and post-test?
Offer age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate activities for the youth.	Ask for a sample of their activities. (For instance, make sure that your 11 year old isn't asked to participate in activities that you may feel are too old or too young for her.)

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You should expect a high-quality program to:	What you should look for or ask:
Introduce participants to cultural, educational and/or technological resources to help them explore content & opportunities that will enrich their lives.	What type of resources do they have at their disposal? Do they support what the program says it offers? If it is a computer program, do they have computers, video equipment, etc?
Use positive reinforcement techniques and create a safe environment for exploration, development and inquiry.	What types of rewards or acknowledgements will youth that participate on a regular basis be able to earn? How do they define progress and success?
Promote responsible and healthy decision-making among all participants.	In addition to the indicators listed above, how is this demonstrated? Can young people work towards positions of leadership?
Help participants develop leadership, teamwork, self-advocacy and community service skills and outlooks.	Are young people given a chance to lead projects or have roles in planning and executing activities?
Maintain a professional staff that sets and maintains appropriate and culturally sensitive physical, emotional and sexual boundaries in interactions with program participants and staff.	Ask about how staff members were selected and where they were trained. Is the staff required to go through a state or nationwide background check?
Model key elements of positive relationships, including: responsiveness, respect, willingness to listen, sharing, and being supportive and collaborative.	How does the staff interact with the children? Each other? Do the children seem to like them? Do they treat you and other parents with respect?
Connect participants to other local community resources where appropriate: for example, helping a participant obtain a library card.	What other community based programs do they work? Do they provide referrals? Ask, how do they supplement services they don't provide?
Comply with all applicable safety and emergency requirements.	Check for safety stickers on doors and that there is a visual escape plan on or near exits, bathrooms etc.