Parents Make A Difference: 
How to Improve Your Child’s Academic Performance 
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The importance of parents and family members supporting students' efforts in school is well documented. Research shows a positive connection between parental involvement and student achievement. The earlier in a child’s education parent involvement begins, the more powerful the effects (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001).

Children have two key educators in their lives – their parents and their teachers. Parents are the educators until the child attends an early years setting or starts school. They remain a major influence on their children’s learning throughout school and often into their adulthood. Schools and parents each have crucial roles to play.

Research on the effects of parental involvement consistently shows a positive relationship between parents’ engagement in their children's education and student outcomes. Studies have also shown that parental involvement is associated with other student behaviors such as lower dropout and truancy rates.

Of course, there are many ways parents can assist their children to be better students. Parents who want to help their children succeed in school must strike the appropriate balance. They should be involved—but not overly involved. They should set limits—but allow freedom. They should encourage their kids to excel—but not expect perfection (Parent Institute, 2013).

A few ways that parents can assist their child's academic performance are:

1. **Offer Structure.** Children thrive in structured environments. They need to be on a schedule and have a clear understanding of what is expected of them each day. It is up to parents to schedule their children’s time and communicate that schedule in an easy to follow format. A good schedule should include free time, providing a child the opportunity to develop his or her decision making skills.
2. **Set Expectations.** The most consistent predictors of children’s academic achievement and social adjustment are parent expectations of the child’s academic accomplishments and satisfaction with their child’s education (Reynolds, et.al, 2006).

3. **Engage Daily.** Academic interaction should happen on a daily basis, especially over the summer. Learning must be a part of a child’s daily life.

4. **Provide Adequate Diet and Exercise.** A new review suggests that children who are active perform better at school. Research has shown physical activity may enhance children’s brain function and thinking skills by increasing blood and oxygen flow to the brain. It may also trigger the release of feel-good hormones like endorphins. (WebMD, 2012). The connection between a healthy diet, eating breakfast, and academic performance in children is strong. A 2002 study by Dr. Ronald E. Kleinman found that children who participated in a breakfast program at school experienced "significant improvements" in academic performance.

5. **Communicate.** Each child should have the opportunity to talk about his or her day. Doing so will not only improve the child’s public speaking skills, but, according to recent studies, will also improve his or her chances of bringing home straight A’s by 64%.

Parents can do many things, both big and small, to improve their children’s school performance. Most important is open, two-way communication with the child’s teachers. Those concerned about the child’s wellbeing should know what is expected of the child in school and at home so parents and teachers can support each other in children’s education.

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