

September, 2000

## Ten Hallmarks of School Success

Another school year has begun. As parents, we all want this year to be a successful one for our children. Recent studies indicate that there are some characteristics - or hallmarks - common to children who succeed in school. These hallmarks are not limited to intelligence or temperament, but are factors that can be positively influenced by parents. According to *“Going to School: How to Help Your Child Succeed”* by Sharon L. Ramey, Ph.D. and Craig T. Ramey, Ph. D., they are:

**1. They are Eager to Learn.** Kids who do best in school are curious and have been encouraged to explore. They feel learning is fun. To encourage your child’s curiosity, allow them to discover how things work, look, sound, and feel. Explore together with “Let’s go find out about that.”

**2. They Ask Questions and Ask for Help.** Teachers perceive children who ask questions as interested. Kids who are taught never to question authority at home often interpret this to mean they should not question the teacher. To encourage questioning, respond positively to questions at home and provide help as needed. Don’t be overly helpful, but don’t let kids get too frustrated either. Kids who get good help at home will assume teachers also provide good information.

**3. They work hard and know their efforts matter.** They believe that success depends on their own work and skill - not on luck or how much the teacher likes them. Kids who have seen the results of their work know that their efforts count. The ability to stay focused on a task is one of the most important skills teachers want children to have. Parents can encourage this trait by working with children on tasks that require patience.

**4. They have well developed social and emotional skills.** Children who do well in school usually like their teachers and classmates and these feelings are returned. Qualities such as consideration, sharing, empathy, and being cooperative count for a lot. To encourage this trait, model good social behavior at home. It’s hard to teach your child self control when you constantly “lose it” yourself.

**5. They are good at assessing their skills.** They are realistic about their abilities. To encourage this trait, praise your child for specific achievements rather than giving general praise. Instead of

### Inside This Issue . . . .

- ✓ More hallmarks of successful students
- ✓ Get your kids to eat breakfast
- ✓ Conquer that morning rush
- ✓ Are your kids doing too much?

saying “You’re great” say, for example “Good job! You learned all your spelling words this week.” Help your child  
*(Continued on Page 3)*

## Boost Learning Power - Start Your Day With Breakfast

A well-nourished child is ready to learn. Teachers indicate it is obvious when children routinely skip breakfast. Studies show that breakfast eaters tend to have higher school attendance, less tardiness, and few hunger-induced stomachaches in the morning. Children who eat breakfast have better overall test scores, solve problems more easily, and have better muscle coordination. Skipping breakfast on a

regular basis can lead to mild undernutrition that isn't easily recognized. The overall impact of undernutrition can have a lasting negative effect on a child's achievement and performance in school.

Breakfast skippers may say, "I'm not hungry in the morning". In actuality, you probably have conditioned your body over time not to be hungry. Start slowly to build up your morning appetite again with a glass of milk or juice, then in a week add a piece of toast or fruit, later add some cereal.

Breakfast "on the run"- grab a small bag of cereal and a piece of fruit to eat on your way.

Working Moms can raise responsible kids by teaching them to make their own breakfast. Breakfast doesn't have to be the traditional fare. Try these "make on your own" kid pleasers:

- \* Cheese slices melted on toast in the microwave
- \* Peanut butter, banana & jelly sandwich
- \* Leftover spaghetti, macaroni & cheese, or pizza
- \* Ham slice & cheese rolled inside a tortilla
- \* Yogurt topped with cereal

*Balancing Act is published monthly by University Extension and area Extension Specialists to help busy people balance their many responsibilities. It is provided by your local extension council.*

  
Lynda Johnson  
Nutrition Specialist  
16 E. 19th St.  
Higginsville, MO 64037  
(660) 584-3658  
johnsonl@ext.missouri.edu

  
Lisa Wallace  
Human Development Specialist  
100 West Franklin  
Clinton, MO 64735  
(660) 885-5556  
wallacel@ext.missouri.edu

  
Georgia Stuart-Simmons  
4-H Youth Specialist  
135 W. Market St.  
Warrensburg, MO 64093  
(660)747-3193  
stuart-g@ext.missouri.edu

*Disclaimer: No special endorsement is intended of products mentioned, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.*

## Three Steps to Tame the Morning Madness

During this back-to-school season, many of us are getting back into a more stable routine. With that structure comes chaos in some households.

Follow these three steps to tame the morning madness.

1. Get up earlier. If you are a night person like me, this doesn't seem fair. However, some peace and quiet before everyone else is hovering and buzzing is a good motivator!
2. Lay things out the night before. Even preschool age children are capable of laying out backpacks and clothes for the next day. Sign notes, write checks for lunch money, and pay bills for the mail the night before and lay them out or put them in appropriate back packs.
3. Go to bed on time. A good night's rest is essential for children and adults.

Great ideas, what if they don't work? Like any responsibilities, if they don't do them, you must have consequences. Don't shout because they aren't done, simply give the consequence, such as, "Since you weren't ready on time this morning, you will not watch t.v. tonight." Of course, you can come up with appropriate consequences, such as going to bed earlier, no phone calls, etc. You know your children best.

& fresh fruit  
\* Apple & cheese slices with  
wheat crackers

*(Continued from front page)*

understand that we all are really good at some things and not so good at others. This allows them to see their skills in relation to others without feeling superior or inferior.

**6. Their parents are role models for learning.**

Parents read, learn new skills and take on challenges. Share your interest in a new hobby or a new fact you learned with your child.

**7. Their parents promote learning by “natural” teaching at home.** Parents include teaching as a part of everyday life - explaining the meaning of words, telling stories, and asking questions. Early successes in learning give children confidence to learn more in school. Kids who have many early failures are more wary of new learning situations and less interested in trying to learn.

**8. Their family routines support doing well in school.** Routines provide children with order, minimizing stress in children’s lives. For example a regular bedtime that follows a routine - putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, getting a drink - helps children get to sleep so they can learn in school.

**9. Their parents are effective at setting and maintaining appropriate limits.** Children of parents who are overly strict are likely to become distrustful and withdrawn. On the other extreme, children of parents who are too permissive are less likely to learn self control. Both of these traits carry into the classroom. In the middle are parents who are warm but firm in their discipline, telling children the reason why something must be done. Children of these parents tend to be more inquisitive, self controlled and content - all qualities that are helpful in the classroom.

**10. Their schools have high expectations for student achievement, support teacher development, and communicate frequently with parents about their children.** Teachers treat students with respect and encouraging them to strive toward accomplishments. To support this, keep in touch with teachers and other parents. Go to meetings and participate in as many school activities as possible.

These ten “hallmarks” give us important checkpoints to consider as we think about helping our own children succeed in school. But keep in mind that there are different paths to academic success. Even children who do well in

school go through ups and downs, and many children, especially boys, are “late bloomers.”

*Adapted from “Work and Family Life” newsletter, September/October 1999*

**Q&A Q&A Q&A Q&A Q&A Q&A Q&A  
Q&A**

**Q:** My third grade daughter comes home crying from school with stories of how the other children treat her unfairly in class. I don’t want the other children picking on her; it’s to the point she doesn’t want to go to school! Should I call the principal?

**A:** Start by asking your child the right questions. Where does it happen, when, who is involved? Then, call the teacher to schedule a face-to-face meeting. Let him/her know that you are excited about your daughter being in third grade and you want to be involved in her schooling. This sets a positive stage. Ask how she/he feels your child is doing socially in class. Obviously, if the teacher doesn’t bring up the stories, he/she may not know about the occurrences. Share specific information with the teacher, asking for assistance to help your daughter.

## Over-scheduled Kids?

What do these have in common?  
Ballet, volleyball, karate, 4-H, piano lessons, boy scouts, church youth group, cheerleading, gymnastics, dance, football, soccer, math club, Science Olympiad...and the list goes on? Of course, they are extra-curricular activities for our children.

Our children are more “over-scheduled” than ever before. Some researchers reason that the extra activities are a part of the working parent phenomenon, explaining that working

parents are competitive, and want the best for their children and have the money to enroll them.

Others believe sports and program providers are seeing an untapped audience and are supplying the classes/groups with great success. No matter the reason, if we allow them, our children could easily have a class or sport nearly every night of the week!

What does this “over-scheduling” do to our children and families? Having too much to do and not enough time makes children and adults stressed.

Even if we enjoy the sport or group, too much scheduled time doesn’t allow “down” time to do nothing. Time for ourselves, whether children or adults, is very important; it allows time to simply sleep, watch TV, wonder, and think.

Families suffer when children are over-scheduled. With multiple children, parents are torn to go to each performance or game. And, family time literally disappears when everyone is over-scheduled in multiple activities. Consider limiting your child to one or two activities, for the sake of your family.