



Tips for School Success: Common Questions for Grandparents

Human Development and Family Studies Extension

What do I need in order to enroll my grandchild in school?

Schools generally require proof that your grandchild is a resident in the school district. Residency requires that your grandchild does not live in a district for the sole purpose of attending a particular school (although this is difficult to enforce). You will also need to provide the school with your grandchild's immunization records, birth certificate and social security number. Contact your school district's administrative office for further information.

How can I help my grandchildren do well in school?

The first day of school can be difficult for students. You can help ease your grandchildren's anxiety by explaining to them what to expect at school. For example, tell them when school begins and ends and what type of behavior the teacher expects. You might also want to acknowledge that it is okay to feel sad and want to come home from school early. Be honest, but encouraging. Tell your grandchildren that they may feel uncomfortable at first, but



it's a normal feeling and they will adjust.

Support your grandchildren in school by expressing a genuine interest in their daily activities. Ask to see class work and homework and ask specific questions such as:

- What did you learn while at school today?
- What did you especially like while at school today?
- What did you find difficult or what did you not understand while at school today?
- What books are you reading?
- What is your favorite subject?
- What is your favorite part of the day?

Praise your grandchildren's effort rather than their accomplishments. Children thrive on praise, so be generous with praise for effort, even if their grades need improvement. This

will help your grandchildren foster a love for learning. And remember to praise your grandchildren's efforts in a variety of areas, from basketball to geography.

How can I help my grandchildren with homework?

Students need a quiet place to do homework. Create a space that is not near the television, video games or other distractions. Check in while your grandchildren are working and review their homework. Encourage them to take breaks between homework assignments. The amount and length of breaks will depend on your grandchildren's age and the intensity and amount of homework.

When your grandchildren get older, you may all feel overwhelmed with homework assignments. Don't be afraid to ask for help — a tutor can be a tremendous asset. School districts have tutor lists available upon request, or you can contact your local Boys and Girls Club.

You can also help with homework by sharing your own life stories that are associated with subjects your grandchildren are learning in school. And, be a role model for a lifelong

love for learning. Make sure your grandchildren observe you reading or solving problems in everyday life. Plan visits to museums, special events or the library. Also read to your grandchildren! This special time together will foster a love for learning and build a stronger bond between you and your grandchildren.

Ask your grandchildren about their experiences with their teachers. If there is a problem, do not take sides with the teacher or child. Instead, tell your grandchild that you appreciate hearing about the experience and then speak with the teacher if appropriate. Never criticize the teacher or school in your grandchild's presence. Instead, show your grandchild how to solve problems while respecting others, including the teacher.

What kind of help can my grandchild's teacher provide?

Your grandchild's teacher can be an incredible resource to you. Introduce yourself and get to know the teacher early in the school year. If you're comfortable, you can share some of your grandchild's experiences with the teacher (you do not have to share all of the details). Understanding students' circumstances helps teachers be more sensitive to their needs.

Whether or not you choose to share some details of your grandchild's life, the teacher can suggest how to help your grandchild adjust to school, do well in class and have an overall positive experience. The teacher can also recommend tutors, after-school programs and, if needed, testing and counseling services offered by the school.

I don't know anything about computers. What should I do?

Computers can be intimidating, but don't be afraid to learn how to use one. Many libraries, churches and stores offer free or low-cost classes on using the computer and Internet. Your grandchildren may also be a good source of information, and the opportunity to teach you will make them feel good about their skills. In no time, you will be able to write letters, send e-mails, browse the Internet, share pictures with family members and access and monitor your grandchild's school progress and online activities.

Computers are now widely available in public places. Check your local library, churches and senior centers. It's also possible to have a computer at home — they have become more affordable the past few years. You can purchase a computer system for under \$500. Consider asking for advice from friends, neighbors, teachers and even your grandchild on what kind of computer is best for your needs. Or, stop by your local computer store for help.

The computer and the Internet can provide positive learning experiences, but you also need to be aware of risks of allowing your grandchildren to use the Internet without any supervision. Set firm rules for online use. For example, tell your grandchildren to never give personal information over the computer. This includes name, age, address or telephone number. Sometimes, this information is solicited in chat rooms and on other sites.

Keep the lines of communication open between yourself and your grandchildren. Let them know they can always talk to you (without being disciplined) if they are uncomfortable with something they have experienced on the Internet.

How can I tell if my grandchild has a disability or special needs?

There are many types of disabilities, all of which can affect your grandchild's development and behavior in different ways. If your grandchild behaves much differently than other children his or her age or has an exceptionally difficult time in school, he or she may have a disability.

A school counselor can help determine if your grandchild has a learning disability or other special needs. Through testing, counselors can help identify various disabilities, including developmental delays, learning disabilities, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and autism. The public school system has special education programs to help meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Children with disabilities are at an increased risk for behavioral problems, low self-esteem, dropping out of high school, alcohol and drug use, and getting into trouble with the law. A strong support system can ensure the best possible developmental and social outcomes.

My grandchild has a disability. How can I make sure my grandchild gets the proper support in school?

You are your grandchild's greatest advocate in obtaining services and support. Many schools have Title I funds (Federal funds) to provide additional academic support and learning opportunities to children who need help meeting state standards in core academic subjects. As part of Title I, school professionals will also develop an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) to support your grandchild in school. Grandparents who are their grandchild's caregivers have the right to be included in the development of an IEP.

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What are some common disabilities?

If your grandchild is diagnosed with a disability, it is important to learn as much as possible. Call MU Extension's ParentLink WarmLine (see page 4 for contact information) for free information and help in finding resources.

Disabilities can include:

- **Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD):** *Children with ADHD have trouble concentrating, sitting still and paying attention. Counseling, behavior therapy, medication or a combination of these treatments is usually successful in treating ADHD.*
- **Learning disabilities:** *Learning disabilities are varied and can include difficulty listening, reading, speaking, understanding math, spelling or writing. There are different therapies to help your grandchild learn to live and cope with a learning disability.*
- **Autism Spectrum Disorders:** *Autistic children have difficulties with social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication, and exhibit repetitive behaviors or narrow interests. These behaviors can range from mild to disabling. Early diagnosis is essential for good long-term outcomes.*
- **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS):** *Drinking alcohol during pregnancy may cause the baby to be born with FAS, a lifelong condition that causes physical and mental disabilities and is characterized by abnormal facial features, growth deficiencies and central nervous system problems. Children with FAS may have problems with learning, memory, attention span, communication, vision, hearing or a combination of these.*
- **Down Syndrome:** *Down Syndrome is marked by mild to moderate mental disabilities and developmental delays. Children with Down Syndrome may also suffer heart conditions and hearing issues.*

References

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Call MU Extension's **ParentLink** WarmLine for free information on ANY parenting, relationship or nutrition question. Call about specific situations, developmental stages, or services you are looking for.

Toll-free: 1-800-552-8522
En Espanol: 1-888-460-0008

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To learn more, please visit the MU Extension Web site at:
extension.missouri.edu/