

## Staying Connected to Your School-Age Child

Katharine C. Kersey, Ed.D. - University Professor of Early Childhood

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Va. 23529

1. Designate and clear places to do homework. Set aside areas that will have supervision where parents can encourage and help when necessary, but that are quiet and free from distractions.
2. Decide together where lunch boxes, backpacks, and school books will be kept and where important papers that need to be reviewed and/or signed will be placed.
3. Select clothes and pack lunches the night before. (Put a cheery note in the lunchbox.) Arrange to get up early enough to have a relaxed breakfast before school. Avoid unpleasant conversations in the morning. Send your child off to school on a positive note.
4. Help your child to know exactly what to do when and if he needs help. Give him your phone numbers as well as other contacts who can be reached in case of emergency. Role play possible scenarios with him so he will feel prepared.
5. Be specific about expectations for homework. Let child know what he is to do when he gets home from school snacks, TV, homework, etc. Make sure that he is held accountable for his use of time.
6. Get to know your child's teacher and other school personnel and offer to help in the school. Give your contact information and ask for email address or phone numbers so you can stay in touch when you have concerns or questions. Convey to the school your confidence in them and your willingness to be involved.
7. Showing up at school will help you to get to know your child's friends and their parents. If possible, let your home become a gathering place where children feel comfortable and welcomed.
8. Show an interest in your child's work. Share your enthusiasm for what he is learning and give him an opportunity to extend it with books, resources, trips and/or other people are passionate in that area.
9. Let the children help with dinner preparations and clean-up. **Eat together** without any interruptions (TV, cell phones, and other electronic devices.) Refuse to text, answer the telephone or emails while eating together. Let the children know how important this time is for all of you. Keep the conversation pleasant. Ask your children to tell you about their day. Invite them to share one good thing and one not-so-good thing that happened. Encourage them to problem-solve their challenges.

10. Stay connected to your child. Find ways to talk with your child EVERY day.
- a. As soon as you come back together, stop what you are doing and focus on your child. Resist the urge to change your clothes, start dinner, put the groceries away, etc. Children, like animals, want your attention NOW!
  - b. Get on child's eye level and give him your full attention.  
(On a scale from 1-10, how was today?) (Was today a special day or a regular day?)  
(What was the high point/low point of your day?)  
(What happened today that you weren't expecting?) (Is there anything that I can help you with?)
  - c. Set aside 15 minutes EVERY day to be with your child one-on-one.
  - d. Ask him to finish sentences - "I like it when; I don't think it's fair that; I wish that I didn't have to; I wish that my mother would; I wish that my dad would NOT; I am afraid that; When I'm a parent, I will; When I'm a parent, I will NOT; I don't like it when my teacher/ my mother/ my brother . . . ," Listen with an open heart.
  - e. TUNE IN. Be sure to notice any changes in behavior, interest, attitude or enthusiasm. Tackle problems as soon as they arise. Don't assume that they will "blow over." Make it your business to visit with your child in his room. If you have concerns, TALK about them to your child, to his teacher, to others who love him, to guidance counselor or get professional help.
  - f. Keep your child's confidences. Let him/her know that you will not tell others what s/he has shared with you.
  - g. Follow the Golden Rule. Only say or do to your child what you would want him and others to say and/or do to you!

**FOLLOW YOUR HEART AND YOUR INTUITIONS. Your heart will lead you in the right direction. Put yourself in your child's place and think about what would have helped you when you were his age.**

For Information about  
The 101s: A Guide to Positive Discipline  
Contact:  
Katharine C. Kersey, Ed. D  
[Kkersey@odu.edu](mailto:Kkersey@odu.edu)  
[www.the101s.net](http://www.the101s.net)