



MEET YOUR CHILD'S MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER

DEAR PARENT:

Who is your child's most important teacher? You, of course. No matter how experienced, gifted and hard working your child's classroom teachers are, their influence over your child is small compared to your's — even during the school day.

In any given classroom, some children have greater success than others. Part of the reason, certainly, is ability, but there's much more to it than that. Studies have clearly shown that children of low and average intelligence can consistently outperform brighter children.

Most children who succeed, do so because they come to school every day with advantages other than natural ability: They are more eager to learn, they're willing to work harder and they're less likely to give up at the first sign of trouble than their lower achieving classmates. These are advantages that they've gained at home and that all parents can give to their children.

You Are Being Watched

Much of what children learn at home comes to them simply by watching their parents

respond in different situations. It pays, then, to think of the time you spend with your child as teaching time. Not in the formal sense, where you are lecturing and directing and asking questions and testing your child. But in a relaxed, casual sense, where you are setting examples, modeling behavior and sharing experiences with your child.

When you start a project, for example, keep in mind that your child is watching and learning. Perhaps you can talk to him or her about how you read the directions all the way through first so you know how the entire job is supposed to go and can plan for the time, material and tools needed.

Even projects that are botched can teach good lessons. You could, for example, think out loud as you try to analyze

what went wrong and what you could do differently to succeed next time. The attitude you demonstrate can help your child learn how to bounce back after falling short.

Also, draw your child's attention to the times you use skills that he or she is learning in school — proofreading a letter that you wrote, for example, or adding fractions for a remodeling project. For a youngster, the best reason for learning is to know how to do what Mom or Dad does.

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