

## Helping Your Kids Love School

by Carol Josel To some, it's a magical place-one of discovery, camaraderie, empowerment. For others it's akin to a lock-up, a holding cell until real life can actually begin-and the wait seems endless. School, to them, is little more than boring lectures, useless facts, teachers' dirty looks-and you've got to wonder why. How come some kids value the importance of a good education, while others see no point to it at all? In "A Letter to the World," the unknown writer speaks: "So world . . . teach him the wonder of books, give him quiet time to ponder the eternal mystery of birds in the sky, bees in the sun, and flowers on a green hill." It all begins at home, always has. We have to stop paying mere lip service to the value of a good education-how it opens doors and is a means to a better end-and start backing it up with our words and deeds. We need to model the behavior and attitudes we want to see in our young, promoting the work of schools and making it our top priority. Homework should be viewed as an opportunity, not a burden, and study, the highest calling. Adulthood demands accountability and self-discipline-and it takes a parent, not a village, to prepare the way. Start by finding out what makes learning easier or harder for your child. Sometimes it's the teacher and/or the pacing of the material; sometimes, it's the subject matter itself; sometimes it's getting needed help and attention-or not. Then, keep building on that foundation:

1. Frequently tell your child how grateful you are to his teachers and how excited you are about what's being taught.
2. Remind her that every teacher has something new and important to share, so to be sure and listen well-and make a note of it.
3. Create an environment that supports and values life-long learning. Visit historical sites, be frequent guests in libraries and museums, be caught reading often, and converse about the day's events-at home, in school, locally, and globally.
4. Keep expectations and standards high, and don't accept 'good enough' as good enough.
5. Encourage him to work even when not in the mood-just like the rest of us- and set up a schoolwork schedule, starting with the hardest subject first.
6. Limit television, video games, and instant messaging.
7. Keep telling her that you believe in her ability to learn; eventually she'll come to believe it, too.
8. Rather than insisting on straight A's, insist on best effort.
9. Emphasize learning, not grades.
10. Help him feel proud of his efforts and celebrate accomplishments.
11. Praise only the praiseworthy. As someone once said, "Not every picture belongs on the fridge door."
12. Commend good grades and improvements; map out strategies to raise disappointing performance together.
13. Encourage friendships with kids who make academics a priority. Bill Gates adds, "Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one."
14. Instead of asking, "How was school today?" ask, "What did you learn today?"

And finally, keep on learning yourself, never losing your fascination with this world of ours, always sharing that wonderment with your child. I mean, did you know that your nose and ears will never stop growing, that women blink twice as much as men, or that Americans eat an average of eighteen acres of pizza every day? Remarkable, don't you think? Now, pass it on.

## About the Author

Carol Josel is a teacher and learning specialist. Her books offer expert advice, activities, and lessons to [help parents and their children both at home and at school](#). Vist CarolJosel.com for free parent resources.

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