Thoughts on Grandparenting

Grandparents and School Success

By Betty Miller

Whether you live next door, in the next town or thousands of miles away, you can help your grandchild succeed in school. A recent study, sponsored by the national Association of Elementary School Principals and World Book Educational Products, recommends five key ways in which grandparents help children do well in school.

- **Ask grandchildren about events in their lives and at school.** Keep in touch with school activities. Rather than ask how school is going, be specific. Ask what their favorite part of the school day is, what they are studying in a certain subject, or what book they are reading. Consider reading the assigned book so that you can talk about it together. Ask your grandchild’s opinions about current events or issues they are studying in class.

- **Praise your grandchild,** not for their accomplishment but for their effort. Avoid comparisons between siblings or between your adult child and your grandchild. Look beyond school to praise your grandchild on a variety of things---how they played fairly, cheered on their teammates, or learned a new skill. Write a special note or invite your grandchild on a special outing in recognition of their effort to learn.

- **Participate in your grandchild’s school.** If you live far away, try to plan a visit during a special school activity sometime during the year. If you can’t attend a special event, come to school with your grandchild. Meet the teacher, and

- **Encourage your grandchildren in their future plans and goals.** Let your grandchildren know that you believe in them and the importance of trying. Help them explore interests and learn new skills that might lead to a career choice or a hobby that may last a lifetime. Let your grandchildren see you learning new things. Share your enthusiasm for lifelong learning.

If you are a grandparent raising your grandchildren or providing after school care it is especially important to get involved in your grandchild’s school, make school work a priority and set up a quiet, well-lit study area. Set aside time for homework each day, but give your grandchild some time to unwind with active play right after school and provide a healthy snack.
Have books around. Books do not need to be expensive. Go to yard sales and thrift shops to find used books. If the story is good it does not matter if a book is old. Take your grandchildren to the library regularly. If you don’t have library cards, sign everyone up including yourself. Library cards are a free ticket to adventure.

Be sure your grandchild sees you reading. What if you aren’t a confident reader yourself? If you enjoy reading, then you are a good example. Consider working to improve your reading skills—your efforts may be the best example a child can have.

It is all right for children to watch appropriate television programs for an hour or two a day, but more than that is not good for them. When playing with others, children learn important social skills. This doesn’t happen when they spend long hours watching television, playing video games, or at the computer. Promote educational programs on television. Channels such as PBS and Discovery Channel have programs for children to learn things of educational value. Watch programs with your grandchild and talk about what they are seeing. Things seen on television can lead to other reading projects for your grandchild. Remember, most children learn to read, but your help and example can help your grandchild be a good reader and lead to success in school.