

SIX TIPS TO GET YOUR CHILD MOTIVATED

Inspired ideas that will spark a lifetime love of learning
By Diane O'Connell

Each morning, eight-year-old Rachel goes off to school, eager about the day ahead, and each afternoon she returns, full of excitement. She completes her homework and her projects cheerfully and on time.

The secret behind this kind of enthusiasm lies in one word: motivation. "Kids who are motivated want to succeed," points out Cathy Belter, vice president for legislative activity for the National PTA.

Following are six ways to help your student keep that motivation high:

- **Check Your Attitude.** Attitude is infectious. If you loved school, your kids will pick up on that. Even if you had a difficult time in school, you can still help

your kids feel good about education. "Parents have opportunities every day to show their kids the value of what school is teaching them," points out Kenneth Shore, Psy.D., educator and author of *The Parent's Public School Handbook* (Simon & Schuster). Just some of these ways, notes Shore, include having your kids see you reading, balancing your checkbook, and following recipes.

- **Give A's for Effort.** "Kids need to know that parents appreciate how much they're trying," says Belter. Speak up! Tell your child, "Wow, you put a lot of work into that project,"

your children's interests is an excellent way to help them learn. "Find what your children 'bubble' about enthusiastically—a sport, music, art—and link it to areas of study," she advises.

- **Encourage Kids to Enjoy Learning for Its Own Sake.**

One of the aims of school is for children to discover the world and their place in it. Allow them the freedom to explore what interests them without a preset agenda—such as going to a particular college or into a certain profession. The reward will be kids who are more relaxed about learning.

- **Think Like a Child.** Imagine this scene: You've come home to a big stack of bills you need to pay, but the weather is gorgeous and your neighbor's invited you over for a cool drink on her deck. Now, do you really want to pass

Kids who are enthusiastic about school have one important thing in common—motivation

that up to do paperwork inside? Kids aren't any different.

- **Build on Your Child's Interests.** Sharon's 10-year-old son, a baseball fan, was having a tough time understanding decimals in his math class. So Sharon sat down with him and discussed how decimals are used in batting averages. "He saw the connection right away," she says. Susan's boy, Arthur, loved apple pie. "I made a pie with him and had him measure the ingredients. Suddenly fractions became meaningful for him as he poured the ingredients in one-half and one-third cup measures," Susan says.

Belter feels tapping into

that up to do paperwork inside?

Kids aren't any different. After a full day of school, it's equally hard for them to give up a warm afternoon and beckoning friends. "Acknowledge that you understand how your child feels and allow him some latitude," suggests Belter.

- **Give Time to Daydream.**

Children need time off to let their minds wander and their imaginations soar. "Unstructured play is a vital source of learning and helps create zest for education," notes Belter. "Be sure your child has plenty of time for it."

With the right motivation, kids begin to see education for the real pleasure it is. ★

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