



SUCCESS IN SCHOOL **BEGINS AT HOME**

SELF RELIANCE

Message from the Area Presidency

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The family is the most lasting and important organisation in all of eternity. Because this is true, “Our most important and powerful assignments are in the family.”¹ Heavenly Father has given parents the solemn obligation of setting their children securely on the path leading to eternal life.

Because we want our children to have more opportunities than we had, as parents we naturally seek to learn everything we can about becoming an effective, loving parent and creating a strong family. As parents, we are strengthened by staying close to the Lord, listening to those He has called to help us, and observing the way those we admire raise their children. We never stop learning how to be good parents.

Parents are the child’s first and most important teachers. The home is where children learn to grow in both spiritual and secular education. The purpose of this manual is to help you discuss with other parents how to help your children be as successful as possible in their schooling.

We invite you to prayerfully consider the ideas and suggestions in this manual, and decide how they can be used in your home. We know the Lord will bless you as you strive to become the best parents you can.

Sincerely yours,
The Pacific Area Presidency

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1. Learning Starts in the Home

Main Idea: Parents have a divinely appointed role in helping their children succeed in school.

1. Learning starts in the home.

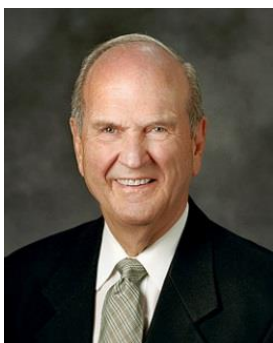
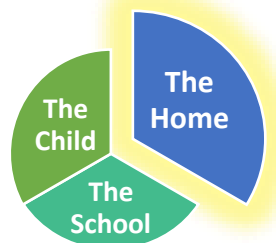
“Perhaps the teacher you and I remember best is the one who influenced us most. She may have used no chalkboard nor possessed a college degree, but her lessons were everlasting and her concern genuine. Yes, I speak of mother. And in the same breath, I also include father. In reality, every parent is a teacher” (Thomas S. Monson, “Only a Teacher: A Personal Observation,” *Ensign*, May 1973).

“Primetime for teaching is fleeting. Opportunities are perishable. The parent who procrastinates the pursuit of his responsibility as a teacher may, in years to come, gain bitter insight to Whittier’s expression “Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: ‘It might have been!’” (Thomas S. Monson, *Pathways to Perfection: Discourses of Thomas S. Monson*, 2011).

Parents are a child’s first and most important teachers. A parent’s influence on a child is eternal. It is impossible to measure. This includes the influence a parent has on a child’s success in school.

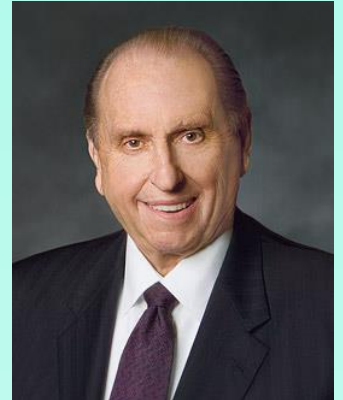
Children are most likely to be successful in school when the child, the school, and the home all work together and each do their part.

The purpose of this manual is to help parents create a *home* environment that will help children succeed in school. It contains ideas and suggestions based on gospel principles and educational evidence.



Elder Russell M. Nelson taught the following about the role of the family in a child’s growth. “Individual progression is fostered in the family, which is ‘central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children’” (Russell M. Nelson, “Salvation and Exaltation,” *Ensign*, May 2008).

The Lord will bless and inspire you as you seek to become the best parent you can. He will guide you as you prayerfully seek to help each child to follow the admonition of prophets to “get all the education you can” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, June 1999).



“Many parents say that it seems like yesterday that their children were born. Now those children are grown, perhaps with children of their own. ‘Where did the years go?’ they ask.”

THOMAS S. MONSON,
“Dedication Day,” *Ensign*,
November 2000

2. Every home is different.

Every child has a different personality. Every child has unique skills and abilities. Likewise, every parent is different. No two people are the same, and no two families are the same.

Because this is true, parents are encouraged to pray about each of the principles and ideas in this manual. Through the Holy Ghost, the Lord will tell you how to use and adapt each of them to the unique people and needs in your home.

Read and discuss the quotes from President Monson, Elder Nelson, and Elder Eyring.

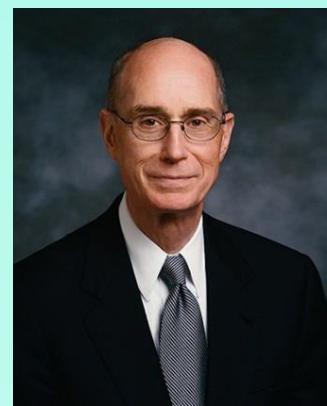
What can parents and families do to help children be successful in school *that the school cannot do*?

How can the same idea be adapted for different families?

3. How do I use this manual?

1. **This manual contains twelve lessons, each with a different topic.** Discussion of these topics will help parents create a home environment where children can be successful in school. They can be scheduled at whatever time is convenient for the group members.
2. **The course usually runs for 12 weeks.** Plan on about 1½ hours for each session.
3. **The lessons are intended to be discussion guides.** Powerful learning can happen when a group of parents talk, share, and learn with each other. The ideal group size is eight to ten—perhaps four to five couples. Throughout the manual, “parents” also refers to any caregiver, such as aunties, grandparents, etc.
4. **Each lesson is led by a facilitator.** This person does not act as a traditional teacher. Rather, the facilitator leads a discussion in which everyone has a responsibility to participate. It can be the same person each week, or group members can take turns. At the end of each discussion, the group may choose a facilitator to lead the next lesson.
5. **Questions and discussion-starters are in red print.** Throughout the manual there are questions and discussion starters in red print. When you come to them, you are invited to stop and talk as a group. This is often when the best learning happens. You can stop and talk about something whenever there is interest.
6. **Note the two boxes on the last page of each lesson:**

Summary. The first box is a short summary of the important ideas in the section. Use this box as you finish up your discussion of the section.



“Our most important and powerful assignments are in the family. They are important because the family has the opportunity at the start of a child’s life to put feet firmly on the path home.”

HENRY B. EYRING, “Help Them on Their Way Home,” *Ensign*, May 2010

Personal Plans and Commitments: What Do I Need to Do in My Home? Write ideas in this box about what you want to do in your family. You are encouraged to make commitments and write them down.

7. **Start each lesson with a *Return and Report* discussion.** Start each lesson by reviewing ideas from the previous lesson and talking about what you tried in your home the past week (from the “Personal Plans and Commitments” box on the last page of each lesson). Laugh and have fun while you learn together!
8. **There is some specialised “school” language in some lessons.** It is necessary because of the subject being discussed. If you find words you don’t know, slow down and learn them. Help each other.
9. **The group decides on the topic of the final lesson** (Lesson 12). The last lesson is set aside for the group to talk about any topic they would like to know more about.

Take a few minutes to look through the manual.

How would you complete this sentence?

“Something I would like to know more about is...”

4. Secular education and spiritual education should be developed together, never one without the other.

Secular education is the kind of learning we receive in school, usually separated from religious education. Spiritual education is the kind of learning we receive at home, in church, and in the Seminary and Institute programs of the Church. Both spiritual and secular learning are important, and each one supports and strengthens the other.

While this manual is written to give parents ideas and suggestions that will help their children be successful in school, the Lord has charged parents with the solemn responsibility of teaching their children why they are here on earth, what the Lord expects of them, and how the Saviour will help them.

“To be learned is good, if they hearken unto the counsels of God.” 2 Nephi 9:29

“The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one.” D&C 93:36-37

How can spiritual education strengthen secular learning?

How can secular education strengthen spiritual learning?



“O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.”
2 Nephi 9:28

5. Education will strengthen your family for generations.

What level of education and opportunity do you want for your children?
For your grandchildren?

Do you think it is possible?

Every family experiences challenges as they follow the Lord in faith and obedience. Most people—most families—face challenging circumstances as they work to get as much education as they can. Read the selection below by Elder Joseph W. Sitati.

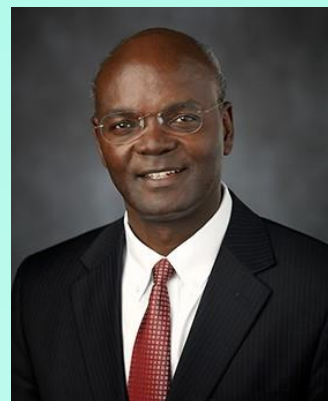
“Developing the ability to subdue the things of the earth begins with humility to recognize our human weakness and the power available to us through Christ and His Atonement. For “Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.” This power becomes available to us as we choose to act in obedience to His commandments. We increase our ability by seeking the gifts of the Spirit and by developing our talents.

“I was born and raised in humble circumstances typical to many families in Africa. I gained the ability to lift myself from those circumstances by seeking and obtaining, with the caring help of my parents, a good education. Developing a vision of what I could become was essential to my progress. Later, as a young couple, my wife, Gladys, and I found the restored gospel, which continues to bless our lives with spiritual direction. Like every family, we have our trials and challenges. But as we look to the Lord for help, we have found answers that bring peace and comfort, and we do not feel overwhelmed by these things” (Joseph W. Sitati, “Be Fruitful, Multiply, and Subdue the Earth,” *Ensign*, May 2015).

Why did Elder Sitati and his family “not feel overwhelmed” by the challenges they faced?

What does his story teach us about what is possible in our own families?

Note: In this manual, children are referred to as “he” or “him,” “she” or “her” alternately. The pronouns, while gender-specific, refer to all children.



“I was born and raised in humble circumstances typical to many families in Africa. I gained the ability to lift myself from those circumstances by seeking and obtaining, with the caring help of my parents, a good education.”

JOSEPH W. SITATI, “Be Fruitful, Multiply, and Subdue the Earth,”
***Ensign*, May 2015**

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 1. Learning Starts in the Home

Summary

1. “Our most important and powerful assignments are in the family” (Henry B. Eyring).
2. Parents and children should help each other be successful in school.
3. Every child, every parent, and every home is different. The Holy Ghost will guide you in deciding how these principles and practices will work best in your home.
4. A discussion group is formed in which a group of parents meet together each week for 12 weeks for about 1 ½ hours each week. A facilitator guides the discussion. The group can appoint a different facilitator each week, or it can always be the same person.
5. Group members make commitments each week about what they will try to do in their homes that week. Each lesson begins with a review of those commitments and a discussion about what they tried that week, what worked, and what didn’t work as well.
6. Spiritual learning will strengthen secular learning.
7. Families can reach their educational goals by working hard and exercising faith and obedience.

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

2. Teach the Doctrine of Education

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: Deep, long-term commitment to learning comes from understanding our divine heritage and why we are here on earth.

Children, youth, and adults will work harder to succeed in school when they understand their divine nature and unlimited potential, and that our Heavenly Father wants His children to have the same complete joy that He does.

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught that understanding doctrine is a very powerful motivator. “True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior” (“Do Not Fear,” *Ensign*, May 2004).

Why do we teach doctrine first, even when we are talking about education? How does doctrine change behaviour? Can you think of a doctrine that has changed your behaviour?

Teach the following five doctrines in Family Home Evening. It may take more than one lesson. Refer back to these doctrines many times.

1. You are a child of God.
2. He wants you to be like He is.
3. He will help you.
4. However, He will not do it for you!
5. He wants you to get started. Now.

1. You are a child of God.

Understanding our divine identity, knowing that “we are the offspring of God” (Acts 17:29) is a life-altering perspective. It changes everything else.

“We are sons and daughters of a living God. We cannot sincerely hold this conviction without experiencing a profound new sense of strength and power” (Thomas S. Monson, “Canaries with Gray on Their Wings,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, June 2010).

See Acts 17:28-29, Romans 8:16-17, Moses 1:13, Psalm 82:6, and D&C 76:24.

Read and discuss the quote by Elder Hallstrom on the right. How does knowing we are a child of God give us added strength?



We are sons and daughters of God.

“This doctrine is so basic, so oft stated, and so instinctively simple, that it can seem to be ordinary, when in reality it is among the most extraordinary knowledge we can obtain.”

DONALD L. HALLSTROM,
“I Am a Child of God,”
Ensign, May 2016

2. He wants you to be like He is.

Our Father in Heaven's plan for His children is for them to eventually become like He is. That is the purpose of the plan of salvation.

Moses 1:39 He wants us to have "eternal life," which is life like God lives.
3 Nephi 27:27 What kind of person should we be? Like He is.
Matthew 5:48 Become perfect, like He is.

Part of believing *in* Christ is to *believe him*.² When He says we can become like He is, we need to believe Him! It will take time, and it will take effort, but because He says we can do it, *we can do it!*

How will it strengthen our children when they come to understand that their purpose is to become like their heavenly parents?

3. He will help you.

Many blessings of the restored gospel will aid us in our journey to become like our Heavenly Father. This includes helping us to succeed in school. Some of these are:

- knowledge of who you are,
- the Gift of the Holy Ghost,
- the power of faith,
- power in relying on the atonement of Jesus Christ,
- power of the priesthood and priesthood blessings,
- the power of prayer,
- the Word of Wisdom,
- blessings of keeping the Sabbath Day holy,
- the law of the fast,
- the strength of the family, and
- the organisation of the Church.

How can each of the principles and blessings above support learning and school success?

How else might the Lord help us succeed in school?



"My advice...to each one of you young people...is that you should study and prepare for your life's work in a field that you enjoy, because you are going to spend a good share of your life in that field. ... Have discipline in your preparations. Have checkpoints where you can determine if you're on course.

"I hope that you are not afraid of tough classes. ... I hope that you are not afraid of lengthy periods of preparation. Burn the midnight oil. Don't procrastinate ... You simply have to apply yourself. I hope that you

want to be so well equipped that you can compete in this competitive world. I hope that you will learn to take responsibility for your decisions, whether they be in your courses of study which you elect to take, or whether they be in the direction of the academic attainments which you strive to achieve.

"Should you become discouraged or feel burdened down, remember that others have passed this same way; they have endured and then have achieved. When we have done all that we are able to do, we can then rely on God's promised help" (Thomas S. Monson, *Life's Greatest Decisions*, CES Fireside for Young Adults, September 7, 2003).

"And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness.

I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."

ETHER 12:27

"And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day, that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks—"

1 NEPHI 14:1

Read and discuss the quote from President Monson and 1 Nephi 14:1 (previous page). What “stumbling blocks” might your family have? How can you begin to overcome yours?

Share an experience you have had when the Lord has helped you, after you had done all you could do (2 Nephi 25:23).

4. However, He will not do it for you!

While our Heavenly Father wants to help us, He will not do it for us. We will get out of our learning exactly what we put into it. Our choices will determine our path. These choices include wanting to succeed, making a plan, and doing the work that will be necessary.

In mortality we have become agents unto ourselves; we have to choose. The war in heaven was fought to protect our right to choose. Read and discuss the following scriptures:

- 2 Nephi 2:16, 26 “to act for themselves, and not to be acted upon ...”
D&C 58:27-28 “For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves.”
D&C 104:17 “given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.”
Moses 6:56 “wherefore they are agents unto themselves ...”

Education requires *effort* and *time*. The path to learning (or anything else that matters) is not meant to be easy or fast.

How does gaining education help us “to act [for ourselves], and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2: 16; 26)?

5. He wants you to get started. Now.

The time to begin applying these doctrines in your life is now. Not later. Not someday. The time to begin walking the path of learning is now, no matter what age you are—child, youth, or adult.

“Whatever level of spirituality we now enjoy in our lives; whatever degree of faith in Jesus Christ we now have; whatever strength of commitment and consecration, whatever degree of obedience or hope or charity is ours; whatever level of professional skill and ability we may have obtained, *it will not be sufficient for the work that lies ahead*” (Elder Kim B. Clark, Commissioner of Church Education, in a talk to Seminary and Institute teachers, August 4, 2015—emphasis added).

“Someday...” or “next year...” or “when I can ...” almost always means never.

What does your family need to get started on now?

Much has been said about “the hastening” in the last few years. In what ways is “the hastening” personal? In what ways is it about what we should be doing?

Read the quote on the right by Elder Holland. Why do you think there is such urgency for more learning in the kingdom right now?

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

GALATIONS 6:7

“...God Himself can’t make us grow against our will and without our full participation.”

BRUCE C. HAFEN, “The Atonement: All for All,” Ensign, May 2004



“Brethren, the spirit of this work is urgency, ... We are not waiting for natural slow growth. We must move more rapidly. We must take things up a notch. If we have to call down miracles or angels, then call them down. ... I feel such a sense of urgency in my chest. I can hardly breathe. ... We must live up to our potential. God will bless us with whatever we need.”

JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 2. Teach the Doctrine of Education

Summary

Understanding doctrine is the most powerful motivator of all. The core doctrines that support the importance of education are:

1. **You are a child of God.** You have more ability and potential than you realize.
2. **He wants you to become like He is.** This is the purpose of the Lord's plan for us.
An important part of becoming like Him is to get all the education you can. The Lord, the prophets and apostles have taught this doctrine very clearly.
3. **He will help you.** Prayer, the Gift of the Holy Ghost, priesthood power—there are many ways He can help you if you but ask.
4. **However, He won't do it for you!** Heavenly Father expects us to make our own choices and give our own effort. Without personal effort, we will not grow and we cannot become like He is.
5. **Get started. Now.** A great urgency exists in the kingdom right now. "Someday" almost always means "never."

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

3. “Get All the Education You Can”

(Gordon B. Hinckley, “Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, June 1999, 4)

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: Part of becoming like our Heavenly Father is to get all the education we can.

1. Scriptures and prophets teach about the importance of education.

Learning, including earning degrees, certificates, and completing other kinds of formal training, is an essential part of becoming like our Heavenly Father.

“For members of the Church, education is not merely a good idea—it’s a commandment” (President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Two Principles for Any Economy,” *Ensign*, November 2009).

“We want and we must excel in scholarship and craftsmanship. I commend you for striving diligently to gain an education and become an expert in your field. I invite you to also become experts in the doctrines of the gospel...” (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Your Potential, Your Privilege,” *Ensign*, May 2011).

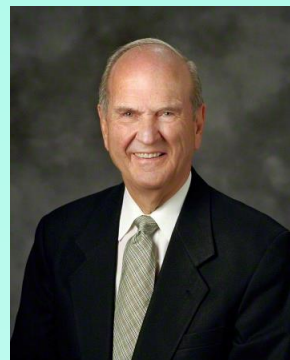
“Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come” (D&C 130:18-19).

“Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—

“That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you” (D&C 88:79-80).

Does the Lord expect everyone to get a university degree? (No. He expects us to strive to develop expert skills in whatever we do.)

How is developing a love for learning an eternal principle?



“For us as Latter-day Saints, gaining an education is not just a privilege; it is a religious responsibility.”

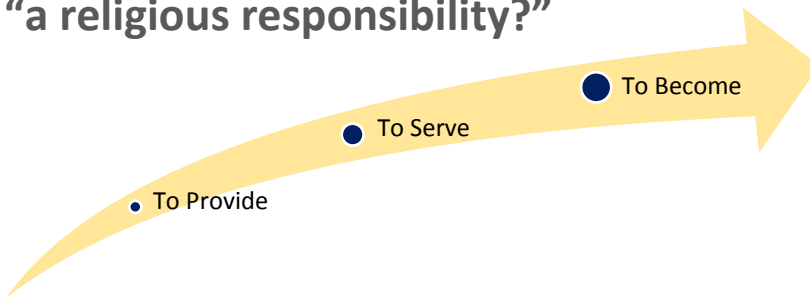
RUSSELL M. NELSON,
“What Will You Choose?”
Ensign, January 2015



“Learning to love learning is central to the gospel of Jesus Christ, is vital to our ongoing spiritual and personal development, and is an absolute necessity in the world in which we do now and will yet live, serve, and work.”

DAVID A. BEDNAR,
“Learning to Love Learning,” *Ensign*,
February 2010

2. Why is getting all the education you can “a religious responsibility?”



Gaining education is not simply preparation for earning a larger income. Education sets us on a path that expands our lives and increases our ability to serve and to become like Our Heavenly Father.

To Provide: The “world will in large measure pay you what it thinks you are worth.”

“You are moving into the most competitive age the world has ever known. All around you is competition. You need all the education you can get. ... [S]acrifice anything that is needed to be sacrificed to qualify yourselves to do the work of the world. That world will in large measure pay you what it thinks you are worth, and your worth will increase as you gain education and proficiency in your chosen field” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 8).

The more education you achieve, the more income you are likely to earn. For example, Table 1 shows data collected by the government of New Zealand.³ It shows the average earnings for university graduates compared to those who completed upper secondary or a post-secondary non-tertiary qualification. In the United Kingdom earnings are 68% higher for those with a tertiary qualification. In Australia earnings are 35% higher for university graduates; in New Zealand earnings are 24% higher.

Table 2 shows income trends for workers with different levels of schooling in the U.S.⁴ Exact percentages will be different in every country, but the pattern is always the same: more education = more earning power.



Table 1. Earnings Premium for Tertiary Qualification

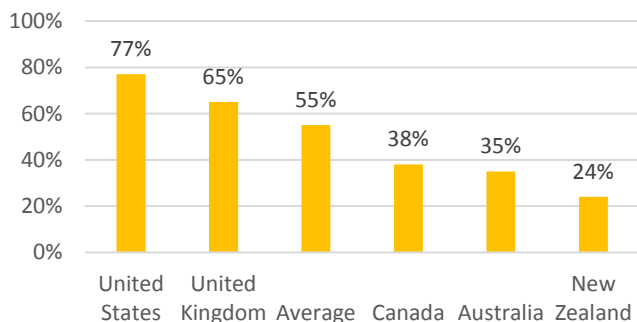
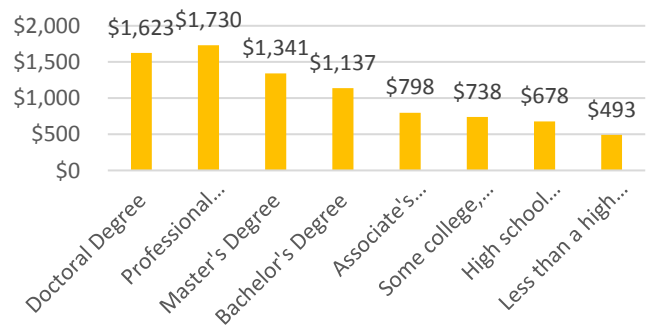


Table 2. Weekly Earnings



To Serve: Education prepares us to serve others, including our families, service in the Church, and helping in our villages and countries.

“We have a responsibility and a challenge to take our places in the world of business, science, government, medicine, education, and every other worthwhile and constructive vocation. We have an obligation to train our hands and minds to excel in the work of the world for the blessing of all mankind” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “A City upon a Hill,” *Ensign*, July 1990).

“Train yourselves to make a contribution to the society in which you will live. There is an essence of the divine in the improvement of the mind... Furthermore, whether it is applied to earning a living or not, education is an investment that never ceases to pay dividends of one kind or another” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rise to the Stature of the Divine Within You,” October 1989 Women’s Conference).

“It is important to understand that self-reliance is a means to an end. Our ultimate goal is to become like the Saviour, and that goal is enhanced by our unselfish service to others. Our ability to serve is increased or diminished by the level of our self-reliance” (Robert D. Hales, “A Gospel Vision of Welfare: Faith in Action,” 2009, 1-3).

**Choose a phrase from the quotes above that is meaningful to you.
Share your thoughts with the group.**

To Become: Education helps us to become what Heavenly Father wants us to become.

“It behooves each of us to remember who he or she is and what God expects him or her to become. ... Our responsibility is to rise from mediocrity to competence, from failure to achievement. Our task is to become our best selves” (Thomas S. Monson, “The Will Within,” *Ensign*, May 1987).

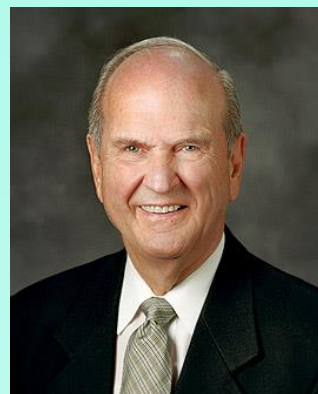
3. Stay in school. Plan to earn some kind of tertiary qualification.

The Pacific Area Presidency has written, “We desire that every young man and woman in the Pacific Area successfully complete primary and secondary school, with a meaningful qualification, and every young adult in the Pacific Area pursue and complete vocational or tertiary schooling.”⁵

It is not enough simply to be in school. You need to learn. Students need to study, learn what is being taught, and earn qualifications by receiving good grades and test scores as needed.

It is not enough to go to school until age 16, and then drop out and get a job. Rather, a family should sacrifice whatever is needed so that children can stay in school until they have earned a vocational or tertiary qualification of some kind. With this kind of qualification, they will be better able to support their own family and to assist others for the rest of their lives.

Make a plan. Around Year 7 parents should begin talking with children about their long term educational plans so they are prepared as the opportunities come.



“Education is the difference between wishing you could help other people and being able to help them.”

**RUSSELL M. NELSON,
“What Will You Choose?”
Ensign, January 2015**



“Education ... puts you in a better position to serve and to bless those around you. ... As Joseph Smith taught: ‘Knowledge does away with darkness, suspense and doubt; for these cannot exist where knowledge is. ... In knowledge there is power.’”

**ROBERT D. HALES,
“Meeting the Challenges
of Today’s World,” *Ensign*,
November 2015**

4. Maintain good attendance in school.

Educational evidence consistently shows that the more days children are absent from school, the more they fall behind. Sometimes they do not ever recover. In fact, missing three days a month may cause a child to fall behind and never catch up.⁶

If a student is sick, he should stay home, try to get better, and not take a chance on getting others ill. However, many students miss school when they are not sick. This is the kind of absence that must be eliminated.

The first weeks of a school year or different semester or term are particularly critical. This is when the routines, assignments, and expectations are taught. Missing school during these beginning times should be avoided.

What happens to students' learning when they are absent a lot?⁷

- Students who miss more school than others in their class score lower on end of year tests and all major assessments. This is true at every age, and in every racial and ethnic group.
- In many cases, the students with more absences have skill levels one to two years below others in their class.
- As early as Year 6, absenteeism becomes an indicator that a student will drop out.
- A student who is absent a lot in any of their high school years is 7.4 times more likely to drop out.
- Students with high rates of absence in high school not only finish less often, but are less likely to graduate from university.
- Poor attendance affects achievement even in Year 1. Students who are absent more in Year 1 score lower on tests of reading in Year 2.

If a child is struggling in school to begin with, missing school causes even more problems.

How can parents encourage good school attendance?

What is the potential cost to a child's future if they miss a lot of school?

What are some reasons other than sickness that children may miss a lot of school? How can the family support the child's learning by avoiding or eliminating these events and traditions?



Students who missed three or more days of school in the prior month had lower average scores in reading and math than students with fewer absences.

In Year 5, students missing three or more days of school the previous month scored an average 12 points lower on the reading assessment than those with no absences — more than a full grade level on the ... achievement scale.

In Year 9, students who were absent a lot scored an average 18 points lower on the math assessment.⁸

Note: Lesson 4 introduces the practice of using family routines. Strong family routines will help children eat properly, get enough sleep, stay healthy, stay prepared—and stay in school.

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 3. “Get All the Education You Can”

Summary

1. It is the Lord’s will that we get all the education we can. We learn this in scripture and the teachings of prophets.
2. The more education you achieve, the better income you are likely to have.
3. In addition to earning an income, education prepares us to serve others and grow in many ways. It will help us raise our children well.
4. Do not allow children to leave school at age 16 to get a job.
5. Encourage children to stay in school until they earn some kind of post-secondary or tertiary degree or diploma.
6. Students who miss more school score lower on all measures of learning.
7. Sometimes students who miss a lot of school never recover—they never catch up with other students.
8. The negative consequences of missing school begin in the first year of school and continue through university.

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

4. Use Family Routines

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: Using strong routines in your home will help your family be more calm and productive.

Family routines are the schedules and expectations you follow in your home. *Schedules* become *routines* when everyone in the family knows about them, agrees with them, and agrees to do their part. Routines make life more predictable, and this helps children feel more secure.

Take turns reading these items aloud and then discuss them together.

1. Seven benefits of using routines in your family.⁹

Routines eliminate power struggles. Routines eliminate power struggles between family members. When the whole family is involved in establishing the routines, there will be less conflict and fewer arguments.

Routines help family members cooperate. With set routines, everyone knows what comes next or what should be happening, and no one feels pushed around.

Routines help children learn to take charge of their own activities. Over time, children learn to brush their teeth, pack their backpacks, etc., without constant reminders. Everyone loves being in charge of their own lives—including children. Children who feel more in charge of themselves have less need to resist parents and responsibilities.

Routines help children learn the idea of "looking forward" to things they enjoy. A child may want to go to the playground now, but as he follows a routine, he learns that we go to the playground (for example) after we clean up breakfast, start a batch of laundry, and get ourselves ready for the day (our routine). Or, it may be that your routine is for the children to play in the afternoon. Either way, the child learns that he can look forward to it at a certain time.

Routines help children get on a schedule. Regular routines help children get on a schedule. For a younger child this will likely mean that they will fall asleep more easily at night. Parent *and* child will use their time better.

Here are some things to think about as you build family routines.

Morning Routine

- *What time do we get up?*
- *How do we do that? Alarm clocks? Mum?*
- *Family prayer and family scripture reading.*
- *Breakfast (be specific about how much and what).*
- *Wash face and do hair.*
- *Out the door at what time?*

After-school Routine

- *Can children stop anywhere on the way home from school?*
- *How much and what can they eat?*
- *Is any "free time" allowed? How much?*
- *Are there any chores that have to be done?*

Routines help parents to have important one-on-one moments. We know we need to spend quality time with our children every day, but our busy schedules and changing moods may cause us to miss out on those opportunities. If we build little traditions into our routines, they become habits. For example, a “high-five” when coming in the door after school, a family hug every night after family prayer.

Routines help parents maintain consistency in expectations. Without routines, parents and children frequently disagree about what tasks need to be done and when. With routines, everyone has common expectations, because “that’s just the way we do things in our home.” The result is a family with healthy habits and happy relationships, and a home where everything (usually!) runs more smoothly.

2. Start by holding a Family Council.

Read and discuss the following example of a Family Council.

Opening Prayer

Discuss the Purpose of a Family Council. Using the talk by Elder Ballard, explain to your family that “councils are the Lord’s way” of accomplishing His work and that a Family Council is “the most basic and fundamental—and perhaps the most important—of all councils. . . . Family councils are different from family home evening held on Mondays. Home evenings focus primarily on gospel instruction and family activities. Family councils, on the other hand, can be held on any day of the week, and they are primarily a meeting at which parents listen—to each other and to their children.”

Agenda. Explain to your children that the subject of your Family Council today is to talk about the routines in your home that will help children to be more successful in school. Express your desire to have a calm and productive home, where everyone can learn to be what Heavenly Father wants them to be.

Participation. Invite all family members, children and parents, to express their needs and desires. Children of different ages and experience may need some encouragement and help. Begin making a list of the routines and needs described by family members.

Decision Making. It is important that routines be discussed and decided upon *as a family*. Everyone should understand, agree, and commit to making the routines effective. Remember, routines will be different for children of different ages. You may want to write them down and post them in your home when you first start. Tell your family that you will talk about your routines in future Family Councils and make changes as needed.

What benefits do you see if you use better routines in your home?

What challenges do you see as you start using more routines?

How might routines be different for children of different ages?

Can you have too many routines?

How might good routines decrease the need for rules?



“Family councils can help a family work, play, and grow together. They help family members become more sensitive to the needs of others, set goals, and evaluate progress. They can create an atmosphere of respect, understanding, order, and harmony. Children can be more committed to family plans and goals because they have helped to formulate them. All family members can grow in spirituality, unity, and love for one another.”

“When parents are prepared and children listen and participate in the discussion, the family council is truly working!”

M. RUSSELL BALLARD,
“Family Councils,” April 2016 General Conference

3. TV and computer “screen time”

(This section may not apply to some families).

It is easy to spend a lot of time watching TV, using phones, surfing the internet, being on social networking sites, playing computer/video games, and so on. These are amazing tools. Parents need to be guardians, managers, and monitors of the time their children spend on these kinds of devices. Discuss the rules and routines you use for “screen time” in Family Council, and make changes as needed.

Here are some general guidelines regarding television:¹⁰

Under two years of age. The amount of TV a child under two years of age should watch is close to zero. Limit TV time. Children need to hear *your* voice and see *your* face as you react to them. Language coming from a TV or other device does not accomplish in a child’s brain what face-to-face language accomplishes.

Ages 2-5. Help your children choose a few shows. Search for shows that encourage interaction. Watch the shows with your child as often as possible, constantly interacting and talking with each other about what you are seeing. When watching TV and movies children need to hear and respond to *your* thoughts and observations, and express *their own* thoughts and observations. This helps them separate what is real from what is not real, and learn to discern right from wrong.

Ages 6 and above. Help your children choose shows, games, and other applications. Discuss the content with them. Limit total time. Put your home computer in the busiest room in the house, and always monitor its use.

Never put a TV or computer in a child’s room!

How do you set family standards for watching TV and playing on the computer or other devices?

How can you monitor how the family computer is used?

Evening Routine

- *Is there a regular schedule for dinner?*
- *What responsibilities do children have regarding dinner?*
- *When and where should homework be done?*
- *How much TV/video game time is allowed, and under what circumstances?*

Going-to-Bed Routine

- *Check the backpack for completed homework, papers requiring a parent signature, etc.*
- *Put the backpack in the same place every night before you go to bed.*
- *Get the clothes ready that are to be worn the next day.*
- *Put pajamas on.*
- *Have family prayer.*
- *Read out loud for 15 minutes.*
- *Brush teeth.*
- *Say personal prayers.*
- *Song, kiss, hug.*
- *Lights out!*

Websites that provide information and examples of family routines:

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/family_routines_how_and_why_they_work.html/context/312

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/The-Importance-of-Family-Routines.aspx>

<http://www.setonbabytalk.com/resource-center/articles/the-importance-of-family-routines>

<http://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/family-life/structure-routines>

<http://www.education.com/magazine/article/importance-routines-preschool-children/>

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 4. Use Family Routines

Summary

Routines are the schedules you follow in your home. Routines will help everyone in the family be happier and more calm—and get more done at the same time.

Routines eliminate power struggles.

Routines help family members cooperate.

Routines help children learn to take charge of their own activities.

Routines help children learn the concept of "looking forward" to things they enjoy.

Routines help children get on a schedule.

Routines help parents build in important one-on-one moments.

Routines help parents maintain consistency in expectations.

Learn to hold productive Family Councils. Routines should be decided on after discussion. Everyone, including children, should have a chance to talk about their needs and wants. Talk about family routines on a regular basis to make sure they are fair and are accomplishing what you want them to. They should make your family more productive. They should not feel like a burden.

An important routine is television watching and “screen time” on other electronic devices. When? How many hours? What kinds of shows or games?

Another important routine is homework. Where? When? How do we reduce distractions?

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

5. Improve Reading and Writing Skills in English

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: Reading and writing academic English is critical to school success.

Academic English is the level of English proficiency needed to be successful in secondary school and university. The relationship of reading ability to academic success in all other subjects is well documented.¹¹

This is important whether you are learning English as a foreign language or if English is your native language.

Parents should “preserve unto ... children the language of [their] fathers” (1 Nephi 3:19). It is important to be fluent in speaking, reading, and writing your first language.¹² English does not replace that language, but adds to it. English opens the door to many opportunities. It is the language of secondary and tertiary schooling, the language of business, industry, and technology, and the most common language of international opportunity.

Here are three suggestions for helping to build language proficiency in your home. There are many other things you can do, but these will be a good start.

Do these things in your native language if you are not able to do them in English.

1. Speak to your child a lot.

Use positive, encouraging talk with a lot of new words and ideas.

From the time your child is born they need to hear a lot of language. Use encouraging, positive language, and language rich in vocabulary and variety. This is a *critical* part of being your child’s first and most important teacher. If possible, do this in both your native language and English.

Look carefully at the information in Tables 1 and 2 on the following page. It is taken from a famous study about the lasting importance of speaking in the home.¹³ Speaking patterns were tracked in 42 families over almost three years.

Table 1 shows the amount of speaking in three kinds of homes. In homes of The children in High Performing Families hear about 2,100 words per hour, while children in the Low Performing Families hear only about 600 words per hour (less than a third as much).

“The limits of my language means the limits of my world.”

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN,
1889-1951

“Speak to your children as often as you can. It is one of the most well-established findings in all of the developmental literature. ... The number and variety of words you use when talking to your baby boost both his vocabulary and his IQ. But the words have to come from you—a real, live human being.”⁸

Table 2 shows that it is not simply the number of words that is the problem, however. Children in Low Performing Families are hearing twice as many negatives (“Stop it!” “Don’t do that.” “Get out of here.”) as positives (“Great job!” “I love how you did that.” “I can tell you really worked hard on your project.” “I felt the Spirit during your talk Sunday.”). Children in the High Performing Family group heard *six times more positives* than children in the Low Performing Families group.

Table 1	Number of words heard per hour	Number of words heard by the time children start school
Low Performing Families	616	13 million
Average Performing Families	1,251	26 million
High Performing Families	2,153	45 million

← The
“30 Million
Word Gap”
←

Table 2	Encouragements or positive statements heard per hour	Discouragements or negative statements heard per hour	Encouragements or positive statements heard per year	Discouragements or negative statements heard per year
Low Performing Families	5	11	26,000	57,000
Average Performing Families	12	7	62,000	36,000
High Performing Families	32	5	166,000	26,000

Researchers found that the number and quality of words a child heard by age three predicted IQ and school performance six years later, including reading comprehension. This same kind of study has been done many times in many countries. All have come to the same conclusions.

Why do you think hearing and speaking a lot of words and more positive words leads to higher school achievement?

2. Read with your child 15 minutes every day.

The reading needs to be out loud. Make it a comfortable, fun time.

Read to your child every day. Start when they are very young. Children understand language well before they can talk. As your child learns to read, take turns reading. When you read aloud your child will:

- learn new words and new information,
- gain a love of learning and reading, and
- develop a strong, loving bond with you.

Reading to your child regularly will improve her reading ability.¹⁴

Reading aloud is also a time you can model good thinking processes with your child. You teach her how to think and understand as you talk about what you are reading together.

Reading with your child at least 15 minutes each day will help him learn to love reading and gain critical early language skills. More than anything else, your child will learn that reading is enjoyable and worthwhile. Make it a part of your evening or go-to-bed routine that your child looks forward to and loves.

Use the scriptures, Church magazines, and other Church materials. Find exciting books that children will look forward to every night. Many websites provide lists of good books to read aloud. The following website has lists by age group: <http://www.readaloudamerica.org/booklist.htm>.



“Children learn to love the sound of language before they even notice the existence of printed words on a page. Reading books aloud to children stimulates their imagination and expands their understanding of the world. It helps them develop language and listening skills and prepares them to understand the written word. When the rhythm and melody of language become part of a child’s life, learning to read will be as natural as learning to walk and talk.”¹⁵

Nothing takes the place of reading with your child every day.

Even with excellent instruction, the school cannot accomplish what you can by reading with your child 15 minutes every day.

How can you build this reading time into your daily routine?

3. Encourage independent reading.

This is reading done simply for enjoyment and personal interest.

Programs all over the world are encouraging families to help their children read at least a million words a year in independent reading,¹⁶ about the same number of words as reading The Book of Mormon four times. A person must learn more words and acquire more knowledge than can be learned in school. Extra reading will be helpful if it is done either in the home language or English.

Find ways to encourage your child to read novels and other longer books outside of school. This encouragement or reward should not be money. It can be privileges, such as time doing their favourite activity, and so on.

"... [S]eek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."

D&C 88:118

Why Independent Reading?

"Quite simply, reading can and does transform lives. Numerous studies have shown that increasing students' volume of reading is one of the most important levers in increasing their achievement. And reading is so much more than an academic skill. Reading informs us, transports us, empowers us, and brings us joy. It is through reading that we learn about ourselves and the world around us. Every child deserves to be a reader.

"Over the past several decades, researchers have consistently found a strong relationship between the volume of students' reading and their reading achievement. ... The amount of time students spent in independent reading was the best predictor of reading achievement and also the best predictor of the amount of gain in reading achievement made by students between second and fifth grade. ...

"The best predictor of reading achievement is the amount of time children spend reading books on their own".¹⁷

Children need to see their parents reading. This includes both mother and father. Most parents tell their children how important it is to learn to read, and to read well. Children are much more likely to believe it when they actually see their mother and father reading.

If you have access to a library, make regular visits. Find as many ways as you can to get good reading material into your home. Find your children things to read that support their individual, unique interests. This may include magazines and other formats in addition to books.

How can you incorporate more independent reading into your home?

How can you find reading material to support your child's interests?

"Are you and I helping our children become agents who act and seek learning by study and by faith, or have we trained our children to wait to be taught and acted upon?"

DAVID A. BEDNAR,
"Watching with All Perseverance," Ensign, May 2010

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 5. Improve Reading and Writing Skills in English

Summary

Children who can read well will most likely succeed in school. Children who cannot read well will most likely NOT succeed in school. Three things you can do in your home are:

First, speak to your child a lot. Around 2,100 words per hour seems to be what it takes. Start at birth. Encourage the same amount of speech from your child. Be sure your children are hearing a lot more positive, encouraging talk than they are critical, negative talk.

Second, read with your child for 15 minutes every day. Take turns reading when possible. Have fun with it. Find exciting, entertaining books. Even a great school cannot accomplish what you can by reading with your child every day.

Third, encourage independent reading. “The best predictor of reading achievement is the amount of time children spend reading books on their own.”⁸ Make a plan to keep good books and other quality reading material in your home. Use a local library or a school library if they are available. Make sure your children see you read.

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

6. Be an Expert on Your Child's Progress in School

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: Parent involvement in schooling leads to higher student achievement.

You don't have to be an expert in reading, maths, or science to help your child do well in school.

You *do* have to be an expert in one thing: your child.

You need to know their moods and emotions. You need to know how they are doing in school on a regular basis.

1. Two ways you can be involved in your child's schooling.

Volunteer. In most schools you can get involved in the school by volunteering. You can help in the classroom, serve on a school council or committee, or help the school collaborate with the community.

Parent involvement in the home. Volunteering is a great way to participate in your child's schooling. However, it is the things you do at home that lead to higher achievement for your children. This includes things like setting high expectations; providing a schedule, location, and support for homework to be done well; helping solve any problems at school; and staying in close communication with teachers.

Both volunteering at school and strong parenting at home are valuable and important. However, it is parent involvement *at home* that leads to higher school achievement for children. "Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement."¹⁸

Below is one organisation's short summary of 51 studies on the effect of parental involvement on a child's school success:

"[S]tudents with involved parents, no matter their income or background, are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs
- Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school
- Graduate and go on to post-secondary education."¹⁹



Parent involvement in schooling is related to higher school achievement, from preschool through university.

"[T]he research clearly shows that the intact family structure and strong parental involvement are significantly correlated with educational outcomes, from school readiness to college [university] completion."²⁰

2. Tips for talking with teachers.

Read and discuss the following suggestions.

1. Be respectful of their time. Teachers are busy people; school schedules leave little free time. If you would like to sit down and talk, make an appointment.
2. Before you talk with a teacher, be sure to carefully review your child's school work, assignments, grades, and progress reports. Talk with your child about his progress and any school-related issues before you go to the appointment.
3. It may help if you go to the meeting with questions or concerns written down to help guide your discussions and get specific questions answered.
4. Consider having your child attend the meeting with you. As children get older, this is almost always helpful.
5. Ask to see examples of your child's work. You may want to bring some of your child's work to the meeting so the teacher can discuss it with you.
6. Ask how the teacher evaluates student work and gives grades so you can help your child more effectively.
7. Share things about your child that you think will help the teacher in the classroom.
8. Sometimes a child has very real problems at school. If you are visiting the school to help solve a specific problem, tell teachers and principals that you are not there to criticize or find fault, but to work *with* the school to give your child the best experience possible.
9. Ask what you can do at home to help your child be successful in school.
10. Always begin and end the meeting by thanking them for what they do for your child.
11. If you make plans or agreements with the teacher, be sure to write them down. Share them with your child.



"HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. 'Children are an heritage of the Lord' (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations."

**The Family:
A Proclamation to the
World**

3. Some things to remember.

Read and discuss the following suggestions.

Know what classes your child attends, and ask questions about each of the classes. Your child needs to know you are aware of and extremely interested in how she is doing in school—every class.

Talk to your child about school—every day.²¹ Studies show that childrens' academic achievement is directly influenced by their parents' involvement in their education. Get a sense of your child's life at school by asking questions that will result in more than a one-word response. Here are some example conversation starters:

- Tell me about the best part of your day.
- What was the hardest thing you had to do today?
- Tell me about what you read in class.
- Who did you play with/hang out with today? What did you do?
- What's the biggest difference between this year and last year?
- Who did you sit with at lunch?

Know about your child's homework. Just looking at report cards at the end of terms or semesters is not often enough. Learn to pick up difficulties early enough to provide help *before* there is a big problem. Stay as aware of daily assignments as you can. If you have to, go to the school and visit with the teacher.

Learn to use the computer-based student record system and the school's web site. Many schools have computer-based student information systems that allow parents to get online and view their child's assignments and grades. Learn how to use these systems, even if you do not have good computer skills.

Know the basic policies of the school. Try to understand policies with regard to grading, advancement, testing, and behaviour. If any of these seem confusing to you, ask questions until you understand. You have the right to know, and you can support your children better if you do.

Don't let your child be the only person that tells you how they are doing in school. Your child may not tell you everything you need to know, especially if a problem exists. Learn to communicate with and get information directly from the school. Your child needs to know you do.

How can you stay closer to the school when it comes to your child's learning, including their assignments and grades?

You have been asking your son how he is doing in math. Each time he says something like, "Everything is good." What is a better question to ask that will lead to more specific information?



Express appreciation often to those who work with your child at school.

Teaching is a difficult job. Let teachers, principals, and other school personnel know that you are supporting them at home. This will build a foundation of trust and create a healthy working relationship between home and school.

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 6. Be an Expert on Your Child's Progress in School

Summary

The effect of parent involvement on school success is clear: Greater parent involvement leads to higher student achievement. Parents can do things at home to help their child perform better in school. Parents need to be experts in knowing their child.

Talking with teachers

1. Be respectful of their time. Make an appointment.
2. Be prepared for the appointment. Review your child's work before you go.
3. Be open and honest, but not challenging or disrespectful.
4. Make sure they know you support them, and you want to work *with* them.

Things to remember

1. Know what classes your child attends. Ask your child regularly about each one.
2. Talk with your child about school. Every day.
3. Know about your child's homework.
4. Learn to use the computer student record system.
5. Know the basic policies of the school.
6. Express appreciation to those who work with your child.
7. Don't let your child be the only person that tells you how they are doing in school.

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

7. Learn to Use Study Groups

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: As students get older, they should be taught how to work in study groups.

A professor was asked by the president of Harvard University to identify the single best predictor of success in university. Surprisingly, he discovered that the best predictor is “the ability of a student to either create a study group or join a study group. *Nothing else began to approach the power of that single variable in explaining success in college*” (italics added).²²

1. What is a study group?

A study group is 3-5 students taking the same course who meet together regularly to help each other understand and complete assignments and talk about what they are learning. Study groups are very effective as a strategy for test preparation.

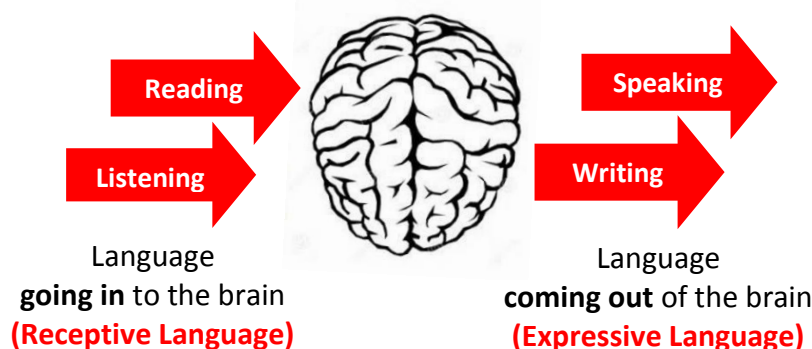


2. Three reasons to get in a study group:

Two (or three, or four!) heads are better than one. Group study allows each student to expand his/her lecture notes, reading notes, understanding of concepts, perspectives on the concepts, and study materials. Group members learn new study techniques from others taking the same class.

Deeper learning. The process of teaching and explaining ideas to others, which is what happens in a study group, forces group members to deepen their own understanding of the material. Group study provides opportunities to talk through ideas with others and, consequently, everyone learns the material better.

Early in the learning process, people usually get information into their brains by reading or listening. Reading and listening are called *receptive language* because this is how the brain *receives* language.



“Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all...”
D&C 88:122

Help each other!

“Those who live only for themselves eventually shrivel up and figuratively lose their lives, while those who lose themselves in service to others grow and flourish—and in effect save their lives.”

THOMAS S. MONSON,
“What Have I Done for Someone Today?”
Ensign, Nov. 2009

Talking or writing about the things being learned causes the brain to take the new learning out of short term memory and organise it into information already learned so it can be used. When we use our *own* language (*expressive language*) to explain something, we find out if we have learned it.

Personal support. Sitting down by yourself and studying for hours can be difficult. Study groups provide structure and accountability, helping you with the self-discipline needed to study adequately. Being a member of an organised study group will help motivate you to study and learn. You will learn more as you listen to other group members, ask questions, and give answers.²³



3. Tips for making study groups work.

1. **Choose the right people.** The best group size is three to five. Get to know your classmates well. Choose to study with people who are motivated to learn, usually understand the subject, are dependable, and pleasant to be around. DO NOT simply choose your best friends!
2. **Decide on and follow a schedule.** Meet about twice each week *on a set schedule*. Choose a place all group members (and their parents) are comfortable with and where distractions are limited. Choose a person's home, the school library, etc. Most study groups last for 60 to 90 minutes.
3. **Decide on a group leader.** The group leader helps set the agendas for the study group meetings. You can have the same group leader all the time or you can schedule it so that all members of the group take a turn.
4. **Always work from an agenda.** In each study group, decide what you will do at the next study group meeting. Be specific. For example:
 - Compare notes and discuss key ideas.
 - Assign each person to teach a section of the assigned reading.
 - Have each person write three questions they think will be on the test.
 - Read each others' essays and give feedback.

If you have an agenda with specific tasks, you will get more done. At the end of each meeting set the agenda for the next time you meet.

5. **Make sure the group works properly.** Monitor your effectiveness. Talk about how the group is doing. Are we meeting our goals (for example, good review of our writing or effective test preparation)? Is everyone doing their part and coming prepared? Are all group members participating, rather than one or two people dominating? Is everyone on time? Do we stay on task (this is not a social group; it is a work group)? Remember, you can work hard and still have fun!

At what age do you think your children can start working with other students in study groups?

Using study groups helps a person learn to take responsibility for their own learning. How can parents help?

We learn effectively in small study groups because:

1. *Our study partners bring different ways of thinking and understanding that may help us.*
2. *We learn better if we have to discuss, explain, and teach what we are learning to others.*
3. *Meeting with others helps us to stay prepared and to stay motivated.*

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 7. Learn to Use Study Groups

Summary

A Harvard researcher found that “nothing else began to approach the power” of study groups “in explaining success in college.”¹⁵

Three reasons study groups work:

1. You pick up things from others that you may have missed, and learn new ways of studying or thinking about the subject.
2. You will talk and write about the content more and will, therefore, learn it better.
3. Having a specific time and place to study in a group with others in the same class will help you be more disciplined in your study.

Tips for planning and organizing study groups:

1. Choose the right people: those who want to get a good grade, not necessarily your friends!
2. Decide on and follow a schedule.
3. Decide on a group leader. Different group members can facilitate. Make a schedule.
4. Always work from an agenda. Do not just show up and hope you think of something to do.
5. Make sure the group works properly. Monitor your effectiveness.

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

8. Teach Children to Plan, Organise, and Prioritise

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: It is often not how “smart” you are, but how well you plan, organise, and prioritise that leads to success. These are called “executive function” skills.

1. What are executive function skills?

It is common to hear a parent say, “I know my son is a bright and capable child, so why isn’t he doing better in school?” The answer often lies in executive function. No matter what your child’s strengths or weaknesses are, he will benefit from working on executive function skills. Here are some examples of these skills:²⁴

1. **Impulse control.** This is a child’s ability to stop and think before acting. A child who has trouble with impulse control may blurt things out. They’re likely to rush through homework without checking it. He may stop working on a task before it is done to go hang out with friends.
2. **Emotional control.** This is a child’s ability to manage his feelings by focusing on the end result or goal. A child who struggles with emotional control often has trouble accepting feedback. He may also overreact to little things he doesn’t like. He may struggle to finish a task when something upsets him.
3. **Flexibility.** This is a child’s ability to come up with new approaches when a plan fails. He may find it difficult to see other options or solutions. He finds it difficult to change, even when it may seem easy and obvious to others.
4. **Working memory.** A child with weak working memory skills has trouble with multi-step tasks. He may have a hard time remembering directions, taking notes, or understanding something just explained to him. A parent may get frustrated, thinking, “I just explained this!”
5. **Self-monitoring.** This is a child’s ability to keep track of and evaluate his performance on regular tasks. A child who struggles with self-monitoring cannot tell if what he is doing is working. It may not even occur to him to check his progress or the quality of his work.

What is “executive function?”

“Executive functions are the essential self-regulating skills that we all use every day to accomplish just about everything. They help us plan, organise, make decisions, shift between situations or thoughts, control our emotions and impulsivity, and learn from past mistakes. Children rely on their executive functions for everything from taking a shower to packing a backpack and picking priorities.”²⁵



6. **Planning and prioritizing.** This is a child's ability to identify the steps needed to reach a goal, and to decide the order in which those steps should be done. He may not know how to start planning a project; he may be easily overwhelmed when it is necessary to break tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces.
7. **Task initiation.** This is a child's ability to get started on something. A child who struggles with this skill has a difficult time seeing what needs to be done first. He often has difficulty planning and prioritizing. To others he may seem lazy or procrastinating, but he may be so overwhelmed that he freezes and simply does nothing.
8. **Organisation.** This is a child's ability to keep track of information and responsibilities. A child with organisational issues may constantly lose or misplace things (like assignments). He cannot seem to find a way to stay organised.

2. Simple ways to help your child develop the skills they need to plan, organise, and prioritise.

For younger children. Play games such as... "How do I start?" or "What should I do next?" as you do normal, household tasks. Decide on something you can do together. Have the child talk about how to get started and what to do next. For example, say "Let's clean your room. What should we do first? And then what?" "Now we're going to do the laundry. What should we do first? And then what?" Teach impulse control by saying "Here is a treat. We can eat it as soon as we..."

For older children. Have older children write out the steps in accomplishing more complex tasks. For example, have youth work in pairs to plan an activity. Then have them compare lists with others working on the same task.

Try these time-tested ways of helping children learn to plan, organise, and prioritise their school work:

Checklists. The different steps necessary to complete a task are not obvious to many children. Teach them to make lists of steps and follow checklists. Using checklists will help them learn what it takes to complete a task, and in what order the steps should be done.

Use a planner. Children should learn to write down important information like assignments, due dates, grading criteria, and so on.

Set time limits. Help children predict how long specific tasks should normally take to complete. Build this time into your checklists.

Make sure children know why a task has to be done. Knowing why you need to do something helps in getting it done.

Use routines in your home. Routines help children practice planning, organising, and keeping things in order.

Explain "executive function" to another group member. Tell them why it is so important to school success.

Share what you have done in your home to help children stay organised.

*"Children who have poor executive functioning, ... are more disorganised than other children. ... Schoolwork can become a nightmare because they regularly lose papers or start weeklong assignments the night before they are due."*²⁶

Remember...

- Executive function can be taught. Don't give up!
- Your child will develop more skill with executive functions as a natural part of growing up.
- Be patient but persistent as you teach children to plan, organise, and prioritise.

Tip:

Teach children to relate past experience to current tasks. This helps them to learn from past experience and not make the same mistakes over and over. For example, "The last time we did this we learned that ..."

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 8. Teach Children to Plan, Organise, and Prioritise

Summary

A person can be “smart” and yet have trouble keeping organised, planning, and knowing what the most important things to do are in any situation. These skills are called “executive function” skills. The good news is that they can be taught.

You can help your child by patiently teaching them to:

- make lists,
- write out plans for what needs to be done,
- keep track of dates and times using a planner, and
- other habits that help them stay organised.

Talk a lot about what he or she has learned in the past and how it applies to the present task.

Help them learn to do important things first and do the fun things or get the reward after.

Remember, you will need patience and persistence to teach these things!

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

9. Help Children Learn “to act for themselves”

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: Teach children the great doctrine that it is our choices that lead to success.

1. The precious gift of choice.

Success is not due to intelligence, luck, money, or what family we are born into. Success follows from the choices we make and the effort we are willing to give. “Ultimately, our own actions determine our blessings or lack of them. It is a direct consequence of both agency and accountability” (Marion G. Romney, The Basic Principles of Church Welfare, Ensign, April 1981).

The war in heaven was fought so we would be free to choose the path our Heavenly Father prepared for us or the way of Satan, which is captivity and death (Revelations 12:7; Abraham 3:22-28; 2 Nephi 2:27). Our Heavenly Father knew His great plan of happiness could not work unless His children were free “to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:26).

This spark of divinity—the power to choose—is a priceless gift to each of us, given by Jesus the Christ through His infinite atonement.

Read the four scriptures on the right. Take turns explaining the doctrine to other members of the group.

What is the difference between “free agency” and “moral agency?”
(See <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2009/06/moral-agency?lang=eng>)

How can understanding this doctrine help us be successful in school?

Below are three ways that understanding the doctrine of being free to choose can help our children be more successful in school. Some unfamiliar words and ideas may be introduced.

1. Locus of control

“I am responsible for my own problems and successes.”

2. Growth mindset (rather than fixed mindset)

“I can get better. I’m just not there yet!”

3. Praising effort, not ability

“The amount of effort I give is the most important thing I need my parents to recognize. I don’t have control over how smart I am, but I do have control over how hard I try.”

“Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. ...to act for themselves and not to be acted upon,”

2 NEPHI 2:16, 26

“For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.”

(D&C 104:17; see also MOSES 6:56; D&C 58:28; D&C 29:39)

“That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment.”

D&C 101:78

“Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh ... And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil;”

2 NEPHI 2:27

1. Locus of control

Close to 70 percent of the influence on our success in school is in our attitudes. Only 30 percent of what influences grades is how “smart” we are or our previous success.²⁷ By far the biggest influence on how successful we are in school is our habits, attitudes, feelings, and thoughts.

“There’s one [attitude] in particular that has a higher predictor of academic achievement than [test] scores and high school grades combined, and that’s called “locus of control.”²⁷ *Locus* is a Latin word that means *place*.

Some people tend to believe this “place” of control is inside of them. They have an *internal locus of control*. Some people tend to believe this “place” of control is outside of them. They have an *external locus of control*.

“To act for themselves...”

A student with an *internal locus of control* believes that the grades and other outcomes they get in school are a result of their own effort. If they get a low score on a test they are likely to say, “I must not have studied enough.” or “I studied the wrong things.” They know that the low score is a function of their choices. They know they must do something different for their grade to improve. They will likely say something like, “I need to prepare better. Maybe I should spend some time with the instructor.” They look inside themselves for explanations and solutions. *I decide. I have the control.*

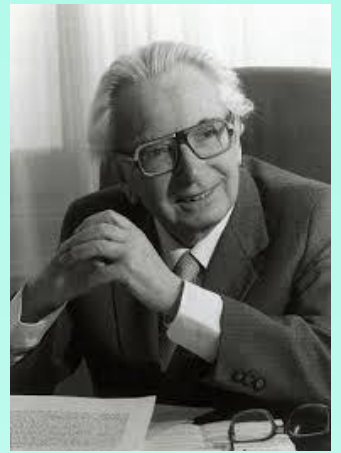
“...and not to be acted upon (2 Nephi 2:26).”

A student with an *external locus of control*, however, believes that the grades and other outcomes they get in school are a result of things *outside* themselves, things they cannot control, for example, luck, chance, a teacher, or their parents. If they get a low score on a test, they are likely to say, “That teacher is so hard,” or “That test was just ridiculous.” They believe the low score they received was caused by the test or the teacher rather than their personal effort or preparation. Although sometimes bad tests or deficient teachers have an influence, you can still make the choice to learn and succeed. Students with an external locus of control are likely to say things like, “I hope the teacher explains things better before the next test,” or “My parents just make me do too many things. I don’t have time to study.” They constantly look outside themselves for explanations and excuses. *Other people or circumstances decide. I do not have the control.*

Two boys get in a fight at school. Both go home that day and explain to their parents what happened. The first boy says, “I was teasing him and he pushed me. I had to hit him.” The second tells his parents, “He was saying some pretty mean things to me. It made me angry. I lost my temper and pushed him.” Which boy has an internal locus of control, and which boy has an external locus of control? How can you tell?

How is “locus of control” an expression of 2 Nephi 2:26?

Your child comes home with a low test score and is angry at the teacher. How can you teach her to look inside herself for solutions (internal locus of control) rather than blaming outside people and circumstances (external locus of control)?



“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

VIKTOR FRANKL, *Man’s Search for Meaning*

“The choices we make determine our destiny. When we left our premortal existence and entered mortality, we brought with us the gift of agency. Our goal is to obtain celestial glory, and the choices we make will, in large part, determine whether or not we reach our goal.”

THOMAS S. MONSON, Choices, April 2016 General Conference

2. Fixed mindset vs. growth mindset

After more than 30 years studying factors that lead to achievement and success, one researcher found that people tend to have one of two “mindsets” about their capabilities—a fixed mindset or a growth mindset.²⁸ A person’s mindset is critical to how he views and responds to his efforts, successes, and failures. *It makes all the difference.*

“In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits that cannot be changed. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort. They’re wrong.

*“In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. Virtually all great people have had these qualities” (italics added).*²⁹

Teach your children to have a growth mindset. Teach them that the brain is a muscle that can be strengthened with exercise. Heavenly Father has promised us eternal life—life like His—if we stay on the path He has laid out for us (D&C 14:7). **This means that we have an infinite capacity to grow. Continuous growth is the plan.**

Listen for the kind of language in black print (underlined) in this chart. The red print tells what may really be going on in the person’s mind.

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
<u>“I’m just not a math person.”</u> I won’t do any better no matter how much I study—so why study at all?	<u>“I don’t understand this yet.”</u> I obviously need to get some help and study more. I can still succeed..
<u>“I passed the test. I’m so smart!”</u> I guess I don’t have to work hard to be successful.	<u>“I passed the test. I’m sure glad I studied this week!”</u> I expected myself to do well because I worked at it.
<u>“That’s just the way I am.”</u> ...and there’s nothing I can do about it. It’s not my fault if I am bad-tempered.	<u>“I lost my patience. I need to work on that.”</u> I can and should gain greater and greater control of myself.
<u>“I’m not smart enough.”</u> “I only have so much intelligence and talent, and there is nothing I can do about that. I just have to learn to live with it.”	<u>“I didn’t work hard enough.”</u> “I know my intelligence and talent can grow and develop if I work hard and stay with it.”

Have you ever said, “That’s just the way I am?” How is that a fixed mindset? How can we change our reaction to a growth mindset?

Fixed mindsets lead to feelings like “I can’t do it, and it won’t matter how hard I try.” How can we change fixed mindsets to growth mindsets in our children?

Success in school is, in fact, not so much about how smart you are.

It is more about how tough you are, how much effort you are willing to give, how much sacrifice you are willing to make.

*“What separates high performers from low performers is not some divine spark. It is, the most recent research findings suggest, a much more boring—but ultimately controllable—factor. **All other things being equal, it is effort.** Good old fashioned neural elbow grease. Deliberate practice (bold print added).”³⁰*

“Studies have shown that despite the high correlation between IQ and grades, the correlation between IQ and success or even achievement is much lower—20%!³¹

Capture the power of the word “yet.”

Fixed mindset:

“I just can’t do this.”

Growth mindset”

*“I can’t do this **yet.**”*

3. Praise effort, not ability

It makes sense to praise our children.

As parents, we believe that if a child knows we notice and approve of what she is doing, she will be more likely to keep doing it! It seems clear to us that, over time, praise will help a child learn the right lessons and develop in positive and productive ways. Parents naturally look at praise as a way to teach a child what is right and wrong, good and bad, effective and not effective.

However, praise may do more harm than good. Be careful *what* you praise, and be specific.

"Contrary to popular belief, praising children's intelligence did not give them confidence and did not make them learn better. ... [C]hildrens' performance worsens if they always hear how smart they are. Children who get too much praise are less likely to take risks, are highly sensitive to failure and are more likely to give up when faced with a challenge."³²

Learn to praise things the child has control over, especially effort. A child has control over how hard they try, how much effort they give, the strategies they choose, and so on. *They do not have control over how smart or handsome or talented they are.*

Tips for parents

Avoid labelling your children. Praising effort sends the message that your child has the power to improve and change, but labelling him "smart" gives him little control over changing how he is perceived. Labelling him "average" or "not good at math" is equally damaging and stops effort.

Teach children from an early age to think of their brain as a muscle that can be strengthened with practice. This sends the message that, "You can increase your abilities with practice and effort." This understanding empowers learners.

Give honest and specific feedback. Help children learn that you are not disappointed in failure, but you are concerned when you see a lack of effort.

Effort. One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is an understanding that it is effort that leads to success—more surely than intelligence, talent, luck, family, or anything else.

"It is not enough to want to make the effort and to say we'll make the effort. We must actually make the effort. It's in the doing, not just the thinking, that we accomplish our goals. ...

"[W]e may find that there are times in our lives when we falter, when we become weary or fatigued, or when we suffer a disappointment or a heartache. When that happens, I would hope that we will persevere with even greater effort..."

THOMAS S. MONSON,
October 2007 General Conference

"Continuous effort—not strength or intelligence—is the key to unlocking our potential."

WINSTON CHURCHILL

"Hard work beats talent when talent won't work hard."

TIM NOTKE

"Satisfaction lies in full effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory."

MAHATMA GHANDI

NO!! "Good for you! You are so smart!"

YES!! "Nice job! I'm proud of you for working so hard!"

Your daughter gets an A on a test. How do you praise her?

Your son's team wins a rugby game. How do you praise him?

Your daughter works all afternoon on a project that doesn't turn out very well. How do you praise her?

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 9. Help Children Learn “to Act for Themselves”

Summary

Children need to learn that their ability to choose their own way is a key doctrine of the plan of salvation. They *always* have the ability to choose their reaction to any circumstance, to anything that happens to them. Children need to learn that their success is about their choices. It is helpful to understand the following ideas:

Locus of Control

- A student with an *internal locus of control* believes that the grades and other outcomes they get in school are a result of their own effort.
- A student with an *external locus of control*, however, believes that the grades and other outcomes they get in school are a result of things *outside* themselves—luck, chance, a teacher, or their parents.

Fixed mindset vs. growth mindset

- *In a fixed mindset*, people believe that their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits that cannot be changed.
- *In a growth mindset*, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point.
- Teach children that the brain is a muscle that can be strengthened with practice.

Praise for effort, not ability.

Learn to praise children for things they have control over, especially effort. Praise creativity, choices, good planning and execution. Be careful about praising for things they do *not* have control over, like being “smart” or “pretty.” Children need to learn that their success is about how hard they work, not about how smart, pretty, or lucky they are.

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

10. Establish Good Homework Habits

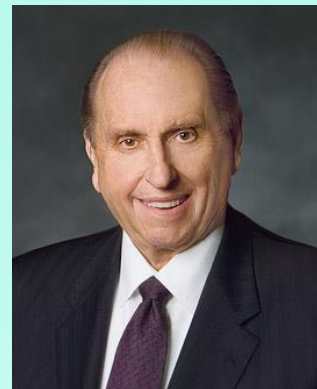
Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: Helping children get homework done must be a family priority. All family members have a part.

Read and discuss these ideas and suggestions.

1. **Maintain consistently high expectations.** Children need to know that their parents expect them to be successful in school, to learn what they are taught, and to do a good job on their homework. Every time.
2. **Establish routines.** Make sure all children have routines for the place and time they do their homework. These routines may be different for each child, depending on ages and outside obligations (work, music, sports, etc.). People learn better and work more quickly when doing homework in the same place as often as possible.
3. **Reduce distractions.** The brain can process exactly one thing at a time.³³ Teach children to study without listening to music and without TV or other distractions in the background. No matter what they say! This will take the cooperation of other family members, as the TV or music must be turned off. Make sure the lighting is adequate.
4. **Control schedules.** Protect the child's time. Do not let your child's life get so cluttered with other activities that there is not enough time for homework, and enough time for relaxing. There are many positive, fun things to get involved with, and most of them are good. But being involved in too many good things can become a problem.
5. **Support teachers.** Sometimes there is an assignment that the child (and maybe even the parent!) doesn't agree with or think is necessary. Do not criticize or belittle a teacher's assignments. If you see a problem with an assignment, talk to the teacher.
6. **Don't take over.** Do not do your child's homework for him! Some children need more help from you than others, and some assignments will require more of your help than others. Work with your child, but do not do it for him.
7. **Allow breaks.** Don't be afraid to allow breaks every 15-20 minutes—not long enough to get distracted and off-task, but long enough to “re-set” the brain.



“On occasion we need to make a second effort - and a third effort, and a fourth effort, and as many degrees of effort as may be required to accomplish what we strive to achieve.”

THOMAS S. MONSON,
CES Fireside, Sept. 2003

8. **Plan for difficult assignments.** What is going to happen when your child doesn't know how to do their homework? It cannot always be, "Have Mum or dad help me." Sometimes, especially as children get older, parents cannot do the homework. For example, you may need to find a person who can help with math, or someone who can help with English and writing. Advance planning on difficult assignments is important. Working in a good study group will help with completing challenging assignments.
9. **Have your child explain problems or tasks in their own words.** It often helps to have your child tell you in their own words exactly how to do the problem or task. If they can do this there is a better chance they understand it. It is also easier to identify a breakdown in understanding.
10. **Plan and organise.** School assignments are a perfect time to teach and strengthen executive function. Make lists and plans for the longer, more time-consuming assignments. Help your child budget time, prioritise, and be successful in small steps.
11. **Monitor neatness.** Teachers tend to score neat homework higher than sloppy homework, even when the answers are the very same. They are only human. You can help your child make a habit of doing neat and tidy work, even if you don't know how to do the work!
12. **Pay special attention to writing.** It matters a lot. Every subject requires writing. We cannot learn any subject without language. Try to constantly improve the use of language as you monitor homework. Pay particular attention to writing. Help them learn to write multiple drafts. *Improving writing increases achievement in every subject.* Be sure you are continually reacting to the quality of their *thoughts* and *vocabulary*, and not so much to their spelling and grammar.
13. **Remember, repetition is at the heart of learning.** Most things that seem hard to learn can be learned with repetition.



"To young men, recognizing the role you will have as provider and protector, we say, prepare now by being diligent in school and planning for postsecondary training. Education, whether in a university, technical school, apprenticeship, or similar program, is key to developing the skills and capabilities you will need."

D. TODD CHRISTOPHERSON,
Fathers, April 2016
General Conference

Keep it Calm!

When the brain stops feeling safe, it stops learning.²⁷

Anger and criticism are poisonous to learning. Be encouraging. Be persistent when necessary, but always be gentle emotionally. Do not criticize, yell, or get angry.

Find reasons to laugh and have fun together while doing homework!

As a parent, your goal is to be the Homework Helper, not the Homework Police. You want your children to feel comfortable knowing you are *with* them, not *against* them.

Reminder: Lesson 12 is set aside for group members to discuss a topic of their choice. Before finishing this lesson, group members may want to discuss various topics and ideas for that last session.

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 10. Establish Good Homework Habits

Summary

Everyone's job. Getting homework done on a daily basis is a responsibility of the entire family—even if only one person has homework!

Have consistent expectations. Homework should be done well, every time.

Establish routines. There should be no questions about when and where the child does homework.

Reduce distractions. No TV or loud music. Other family members have to cooperate!

Control schedules. Do not let the child get so busy that they do not have time to do homework.

Support teachers. If you do not like or agree with an assignment, do not criticize the teacher in front of your child. Speak to the teacher if it is a consistent problem.

Do not take over! Homework can get frustrating! Do not take over and do the homework yourself when the going gets rough!

Allow breaks. Allow the child to stop every 15-20 minutes if needed—long enough to get a drink or a snack, but not long enough to actually change activities and start thinking about or doing something else.

Plan for difficult assignments. Have a plan so that you know what to do when the child can't do the homework, and neither can you.

Keep it calm. Learning stops when the brain gets angry or upset. Remember, be the Homework Helper, not the Homework Police.

Monitor neatness. You can tell if an assignment is sloppy, even if you do not understand the work.

Pay special attention to writing. Always pay attention to writing. Encourage thoughtful writing.

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

11. Help Your Child Prepare for Tests

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

Main Idea: There are things you can do as a parent to help your child be a more confident test taker.

1. Before the Test

1. Tests are a fact of life in education. However, do not give them more meaning and importance than they deserve. Help children understand that tests are just one way that teachers and schools gather information about how each student is progressing.
2. Praise your child often when he does something well. Give him a sense that he is completely capable of success, because you have seen it many times! Make sure he knows that your love for him and confidence in him is not based on his test scores.
3. Long before the test, have a good sense of how well your child is prepared. Do not let a test score be the first time you realize she does not know the content. Check assignments and grades often. Talk to the teacher as needed.
4. Help your child plan and carry out a careful, comprehensive study effort to prepare for the test.
5. Be sure she has a good place to study.
6. Preparing for tests in small study groups is *very* effective. Group members can write test questions for each other and discuss them.
7. Have your child practice taking sample test questions, so the task is familiar. You can write your own practice questions or find samples on the internet. Find out what format the test questions will be in, and practice doing items in that format.
8. Make sure your child is well-rested before tests. This means more than just the night before! Several days in a row of adequate sleep is important. Scientists believe that our brain does most of its work of storing and organizing information while we are asleep.
9. Make sure your child eats breakfast an hour or two before the test. Do not let them enter a test too hungry or too full. For long tests, bringing a little snack might be useful. Check to be sure this is approved.
10. Don't let your child focus on test-taking "tricks" (such as "How to beat multiple-choice tests") or gimmicks. They do not work and can distract her from considering questions properly.



"When performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported, the rate of improvement increases."

THOMAS S. MONSON,
Preach My Gospel, 150

2. During the Test

1. Listen to the instructions carefully.
2. Make sure you understand the time limits.
3. Most people find it helpful to skim the test before starting.
4. Don't worry about how or what others are doing during the test or whether they seem to be ahead of you or whether they finish before you. Concentrate on your own paper and keep an eye on the clock.
5. Stretch and change positions a little bit once in a while.
6. Depending on the kind of test you are taking, you may want to do an "information dump" as soon as you get the test. You can't bring notes into the test, of course, but you can make notes during the test. On the back of the test, or on a piece of scratch paper (if allowed), write out information you have studied and think may be on the test.
7. Self-monitor. If you recognize that you are taking too much time on an item, move on. Go back to it if you have time.

3. Test Anxiety

Feeling a little anxious before taking a test is normal, and, for most people, even helpful. A little anxiety helps us give our full attention to the task at hand; it helps us do our best. Too much anxiety, however, can cause a person to not perform as well as they normally can.

1. The most common cause of test anxiety is knowing that you do not know the material well enough. Help your child prepare by doing homework and studying on a regular basis. *The best preparation for test anxiety is to actually know the material.*
2. Don't think about the test in a negative way, and don't talk with others about the test in a negative way. Science is showing that this negative self-talk interferes with your ability to think. Positive thoughts relax your mind and help you think more clearly. Spend time thinking and talking about something fun you are going to do after the test.
3. If you feel stressed or anxious during the test, take a couple of long, deep, slow breaths.
4. Remember, tests do not cause anxiety—you do! You cause it, and you can learn to control it. Learn to use it to your advantage—being a little anxious can actually help you concentrate and do better work.
5. If a child is concerned about a test, talk to them about the possibility of receiving a priesthood blessing.



SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 11. Help Your Child Prepare for Tests

Summary

Help your children prepare for tests by teaching them:

Before the Test

1. Tests are a fact of life in most educational settings. Prepare to do your best, but do not give the test more meaning and importance than it deserves.
2. Make sure your child knows your love for them and confidence in them is not based on their test scores!
3. Be aware of your child's level of preparation. No last minute surprises!
4. Nothing takes the place of preparation. Help your child learn to study and prepare.
5. Provide a good place to study.
6. Preparing for tests in small study groups is *very* effective.
7. Practice taking sample test questions.
8. Be well-rested before tests.
9. Do not enter a test too hungry or too full.
10. Don't spend time trying to learn test-taking tricks or gimmicks. They don't work.

During the Test

1. Listen to the instructions carefully.
2. Make sure you understand the time limits.
3. Skim the test before starting.
4. Don't worry about what others are doing or whether they are finishing before you.
5. Stretch and change positions a little bit once in a while.
6. You may want to do an "information dump" after you get the test.
7. Self-monitor. Watch the time and monitor your progress. Don't get caught worrying about one item too long.

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

12. Topic Selected by the Group

Return and Report

Review Plans and Commitments from the previous lesson.
What did you do at home? What did you learn?
Review a meaningful quote or scripture.

For Lesson 12, group members are encouraged to select a topic they want to discuss or learn more about. Group members can use one of the three topics in this section, or choose one of their own.

Write notes about that topic on this page.

When English is Not Your Native Language

Many students who do not speak English at home go to a school where English is the language of instruction. These students have a special challenge, and they will have to work harder than a native English speaker in order to succeed.

How can their parents support them, even if they are not English speakers? Here are some suggestions:³⁴

1. **Students will learn English better if they continue to develop their native language.** Remember, children are not learning English to replace their home language, but to prepare for more opportunity in the future by being able to use English. Many businesses are more likely to hire a bilingual applicant. This is true in many fields. If possible, provide books and other reading material in both languages, and watch television in both languages.
2. **Maintain pride in your native culture and language.** Help your child learn about your native culture by doing assignments in those areas, even when the assignment has to be done in English. For example, she could write an essay on the organisation of the government in your native country.
3. **Your child will have to work harder to get his homework done in English (rather than his native language).** You may have to talk with the teacher about the amount of time the homework is taking. It is better to do part of an assignment and understand it than to get the whole assignment done and not understand it very well.
4. **You may need to explain concepts in your native language.** If you explain an assignment to your child in your home language, try to restate in English what you have discussed. This will help so that the child can connect the English language to the home language.
5. **Teach your child to study in small groups with others in the same class** who speak the same language at home but may know English a little better.
6. **Encourage your child to get involved with extra-curricular activities.** This will help them enjoy school, build friendships with other students, and learn English more quickly.
7. **Keep in touch with the school and the teachers.** Most teachers will welcome your questions and recognize your desire to help your child succeed. Arrange to bring a friend to translate if necessary when you have school appointments. The school may provide a translator if you notify them in advance. Understanding what is going on in school will give you a better idea of how you can support your child at home.

"[Reading in the first language] can profoundly accelerate the development of reading ability in the second language.

"This is true because:

- *reading skills transfer from language one to language two,*
- *reading provides knowledge of the world that makes second-language texts more comprehensible, and*
- *the pleasure of the reading habit itself transfers to the second language."*²⁶

Starting the School Year Right

1. **Review the doctrines behind education with your children.** In Family Home Evening review with your children the doctrines found in Lessons 1, 2, 3, and 8 in this manual. Be sure they begin the new school year remembering who they are and confident about their divine potential.
2. **Every child should receive a “back-to-school” priesthood blessing to help them in school.** This helps each child know that school is important and that Heavenly Father will help them.
3. **Sit down with your family and talk about the family routines you will need during school days.** Review Lesson 4 in this manual.
4. **Read together every day.** Take turns reading out loud. If school is conducted in English, reading well in English is crucial to success.
5. **Practice and review maths from the previous years.** Begin with practice on basic computation—addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division—at a level appropriate to each child. Second, get last year’s textbook. Have your child go through each chapter, do some problems, and review the ideas. Older children may need to help younger children.
6. **Provide opportunities for your child to write.** With young children, practice forming letters and writing basic words, especially those most familiar to them, such as their name, other family names, and so on. Remember, repetition is important.
7. **Spend time reviewing and building vocabulary.** Play with words! Get words from last year’s school materials and put them on flash cards. Play speed drill games (such as holding up a word and having two children see who can say the word first). Some children will do best competing only against themselves—working for a faster time, etc.
8. **Give your children practice at planning and organizing.** These skills are important for school success. See Lesson 8 in this manual.
9. **Prepare for any back-to-school anxiety.** Some children, young and old, worry more about going back to school than they express. Have regular quiet conversations about the upcoming school year with your child. What are they looking forward to? What are they *not* looking forward to? Help them organise materials and clothing. For some children, especially young ones, it may be useful to go to the school together a few days before it starts and just walk around, inside and outside. This will help them feel more familiar with the school.
10. **Sleep matters. Get into a routine.** Start school bedtime hours a week or so before school starts, even for older students. A regular, established pattern of having enough sleep helps the brain function properly. Transition children into a routine a week or so before school starts so they are rested and ready. Not getting enough sleep is associated with lower academic achievement. Most children, young and old, require 8 ½ to 9 ½ hours of sleep.³⁵

What Should My Child Know *Before* Starting Year 1?

When entering Year 1, your child should:

Strong Brain Goals (Personal development)

1. Seek adult help when needed to resolve a conflict
2. Show eagerness and curiosity as a learner
3. Be developing “executive function” skills

Good Friend Goals (Working successfully in a group)

4. Understand, accept, and follow rules
5. Listen to and follow instructions given by a person in charge, including non-family members
6. Respect the rights of others
7. Take turns and share while working or playing with others
8. Be honest with others; tell the truth
9. Take care of and clean up personal belongings and materials

Language Goals (Home language and English)

10. Alphabet skills:
 - a. Sing or recite the alphabet
 - b. Identify many letters of the alphabet, upper and lower case
 - c. Name many letters of the alphabet, upper and lower case
 - d. Write many letters of the alphabet, upper and lower case
 - e. Know the most common sound made by each letter
 - f. Pronounce sounds clearly
11. Write his/her own name legibly
12. Understand how to use a book: right side up, spine to the left, front/back, reading words left to right and top to bottom, turning pages right to left, relationship of pictures to words, etc.
13. Recognize the same sound in rhyming words; memorize short rhymes
14. Retell accurately after hearing a short story
15. Recognize several high-utility words (words that have a lot of meaning to them, such as *mother, father, dog, run, water*, etc.)
16. Learn many new words
17. Participate in group singing and recitation

Math and Spatial Skills

18. Name and identify 10 colours: red, yellow, blue, green, orange, purple, black, white, brown, pink
19. Sort by colour, shape, and size
20. Order several objects on the basis of one attribute (size: small to large; length: short to long; temperature: cold to hot, intensity of colour, etc.)
21. Recognize simple patterns and reasonably duplicate them
22. Count objects correctly up to 10
23. Name and match numerals, 0 to 10
24. Count to 20
25. Identify and draw four shapes: circle, square, rectangle, triangle
26. Demonstrate positional/directional concepts (up/down, over/under, in/out, behind/in front of, beside/between, top/bottom, inside/outside, above/below, high/low, right/left, off/on, first/last, far/near, go/stop)
27. Show understanding of and use comparative words (big/little, large/small, short/long, tall/short, slow/fast, few/many, empty/full, less/more)

Health and Wellness Goals

28. Take care of personal hygiene, e.g., wash and bathe, brush teeth, wash hair, clean nails, clean nose
29. Learn the basics of a healthy, balanced diet

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL BEGINS AT HOME

Lesson 12. Topic Selected by the Group

Summary

Personal Plans and Commitments: What will I do in my home this week?

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