
Ready for School News: Ten Characteristics of Children Who Succeed in School

Ramey and Ramey (1999) summarize ten characteristics of children who do well in school. They aren't necessarily the characteristics you might expect such as strong pre-math or pre-reading skills, but rather they are a series of qualities discussed below. The characteristics are true of children from different personalities, levels of intelligence and socio-economic backgrounds. Most children do not exhibit all of these, but rather a cluster of these.

- These children love to learn: Children who do well in school are curious and have been encouraged to explore and experiment with their world.
- These children ask questions and request help. They are comfortable asking questions both at home and in school. Questions are warmly welcomed in both settings.
- They work hard and know that their efforts matter. They understand that their hard work can make a difference. They have been encouraged for their efforts. This could be through participation in tasks seemingly unrelated to school such as family chores or other endeavors.
- They are strong socially and emotionally. Sometimes we think that school success is strictly dependent on academic excellence, but a child who succeeds in school is also the child who feels good about himself or herself and has positive interactions with other children and with adults. Often these strengths grow from an opportunity to engage in constructive play, make choices and from having the attention of a caring adult.
- They are good at assessing their own skills. They have an accurate idea of their own abilities possibly because problem solving has been encouraged vs. rote learning/memorization.
- The parents of successful children demonstrate an interest in their own learning. These children observe their parents showing an interest in reading and learning new things.
- Children who experience school success have parents who encourage learning by teaching naturally at home. Parents of these children use opportunities throughout the day to teach in subtle ways – examples could be as diverse as lots of talking and naming of objects and actions, showing how to read a map when on a trip, or counting out change at the store. They also show interest in the child's school and/or child care center activities.
- Their family routines support doing well in school. These children have a sense of order in their lives. They follow routines in eating, sleeping and doing homework.
- The children's parents are effective at setting and maintaining appropriate limits. This is often one of the most challenging for many of us to learn and maintain. Families who feel they need suggestions in this area should talk to their center Director about resources such as readings or classes in their area.
- The children's schools have high expectations for student achievement and they support professional development of the staff. They also communicate frequently with parents about their children.

No matter what your child's age, it is neither too early nor too late to begin encouraging these characteristics. If you want more specific ideas, feel free to consult with your child's teacher or center Director.

Reference: Ramey, S.L. & Ramey, C.T. (1999). *Going to School*. New York: Goddard Press.

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