



# Tips for Involved Parents from Gwinnett County Public Schools

*Be There* is a national movement that inspires parents to become more involved in their children's education. Teachable moments are everywhere. Be your child's favorite teacher. Connect in meaningful ways and your simple actions will reap immense rewards at home, play, and school!

## A few ways to motivate your unmotivated child

Do you ever look at your capable child's less-than-stellar report card— or his messy room or half-finished project— and wonder how to motivate him to do his best? Here are a few ways to motivate, but, first, some myths:



### **Don't believe these myths about motivation.**

- **“Nothing seems to motivate him.”** Something does. You just may not have found it yet.
- **“One day she's motivated, and the next day...”** Motivation isn't a mood that comes and goes. It's more complicated, and often tied to the situation at hand or the project of the moment. As children become self-motivated, they become more “consistent.”
- **“Give him something. That will motivate him.”** Outside motivators like rewards can work for awhile, but are no replacement for intrinsic motivators, such as personal pride, responsibility, etc.
- **Competition is a great motivator.** In fact, it can be a de-motivator. Instead, set up win-win situations.
- **Punishment is an effective motivator.** Actually, it can breed resentment and have the opposite effect.

### **Use statements that enhance independence.**

- I'll get the job started and you can finish it.
- Take a chance. See if you can do it.
- I know you can...
- Sounds like you have a problem. What solutions have you thought about?
- Let me teach you to do this yourself.

**“Do something.  
If it works, do more of it.  
If it doesn't... do something else.”**

**Franklin D Roosevelt**

*In other words, motivating your unmotivated child may take a lot of trial and error, but it's worth it!*

*Continued*

## A few ways to motivate your unmotivated child *(Continued)*



### Practice the E and 4 P's of motivation...

— **Encouragement:** Unlike praise, encouragement is more of an observation that points out something your child can be proud of himself. For instance, say:

- You have really stayed focused on your project this evening. I know you're getting a lot done!
- I noticed how helpful you were at Grandpa's today. You should be proud of yourself.
- You've been working hard on that report. Keep it up!
- You were really helpful, working with me to clean out the garage. I really appreciate it.

— **Power:** Set-up win-win situations that allow your child to develop self-motivation.

- **Choose your battles.**
- Offer **choices**.
- Give **responsibility**.
- **Express interest** instead of praising.
- **Let your child generate a solution**, rather than offering your own solution.
- Be willing to **negotiate**.
- Remind yourself you are **grooming a leader**.

— **Prestige:** Kids are like everyone else. They just want a little recognition. Consider the following:

- **"Kid awards," lunchbox notes, and certificates of appreciation.** Slip a note of encouragement next to her juicebox or tape a "Hard Worker Award" or "Most Improved in Science" certificate to the bathroom mirror.
- **Bragging rights to a neighbor or relative.** Across the backyard fence or on the phone to Grandma (and overheard by your child): "Sally's working so hard in class. Her teacher says she is doing much better in language arts. Isn't that great!"

- **A display on the most sought-after space in the house**— the family refrigerator. Proudly display work that shows effort, improvement, or achievement. Include positive notes from school, items from the school newsletter, and pictures from award assemblies.
- **People:** Many children crave interaction with others, so a promised social occasion can be a real motivator for them. Offer opportunities to...
- Play with friends.
  - Visit with grandparents or favorite cousins.
  - Have a special play date.
  - Go to the concert of a favorite (and parent-approved) entertainer or a sporting event with mom or dad.
  - Spend time with a person they admire.
- **Prizes:** We're not talking about "bribes" to elicit better grades. However, a reward for a job well-done might inspire a child to put in the extra effort to do his best every time.
- **Social rewards**— Parental attention and verbal reinforcement can be just the thing for a child who needs a little more attention in order to keep focused on his goals.
  - **Material rewards**— Some consider prizes and rewards a bonus for going above and beyond what it expected, just as an employee might get a bonus for extra effort on the job. If you think about school as your child's "job" then you might decide this approach has merit but it's certainly a personal preference. Monetary rewards or prizes may not fit with your family's philosophy. It's up to you and just one of several tools in the motivational toolbox.
  - **Privileges**— A motivational privilege might be anything from a later bedtime to a sleepover with friends to a trip to an amusement park.



Together, we will be there for our students—  
Gwinnett County Public Schools and YOU!

**Make the ordinary extraordinary!**

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Sources:  
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Puckett's Mill Elementary Counselors  
Heather Heigl and Ginna Smith