



TOP 10 PROVEN ACTIONS TO ENSURE YOUR STUDENT IS READY TO SOAR THIS SCHOOL YEAR

1. ATTENDANCE MATTERS, EVERY DAY.

- [Missing 10%](#) of school days, or only 2 days a month, over the course of the school year can affect a student's academic success.
- We know that students who are chronically absent score 19 percentage points lower in reading and 26 percentage points lower in math than their peers who attend school regularly.
- Starting in preschool and kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school. By 6th grade, [absenteeism](#) is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school. By 9th grade, attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.
- Parents can help keep their children in the classroom by sticking to a routine, developing backup transportation plans, and scheduling appointments and extended trips when school isn't in session. If parents are struggling to get their child to school, they should reach out to their child's teacher or counselor.
- Together we can be ALL IN on overcoming chronic absenteeism! Stay connected with us. [#AttendanceMattersVA](#)

2. PARTNER WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER AND SET LEARNING GOALS.

- Learn about your child's academic performance over time and set goals with your child's teacher for the school year through the Student Assessment Summary report, part of the new [VVAAS - Virginia's Visualization and Analytics Solution](#).
- As a caregiver and your child's first teacher, you are the most important partner and champion for your child's success in school and life. The VDOE strives to provide the best resources to parents, such as these grade-level specific charts for [literacy](#) and [mathematics](#) you can use to support your learners at home.
- Invest in your child's learning and, if needed, take advantage of free, flexible, and intensive small group [tutoring](#) for students in Grades 3-8 for both math and reading.
- Parent-Teacher involvement has been shown to increase [academic performance and strengthen a student's sense of cognitive competency](#).

3. PRACTICE MATH AND READING TWENTY MINUTES A DAY.

- Students who are not proficient in reading by the end of third grade are 4x more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.

- The Institute of Education Sciences [recommends](#) regularly helping your child sound out words smoothly and practicing breaking sentences into words and words into syllables.
- The [Literacy Resources for Families and Communities](#) site provides activities and tips to support reading and language learning during everyday activities for students in Grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.
- One way parents can support their younger children in mathematics is by providing opportunities to look for repeating and growing patterns when doing daily tasks such as preparing meals, dressing for the day, and going shopping. [Numeracy at Home](#) shares other tips for supporting mathematics learning during everyday activities for children in Grades K-2.

4. LIMIT SCREEN TIME.

- Children spend an average of 4.8 hours a day on social media. [Recent studies](#) indicate that spending more than three hours a day on social media doubles the risk of poor mental health for adolescents.
- Emphasize [digital wellness](#) by establishing healthy screen time limits, encouraging a balance between screen-based activities and other pursuits, and promoting activities that support emotional, physical, social, and cognitive development.
- Parents can set reasonable screen time limits, restrict use at least one hour before bedtime and ensure phones are out of the bedroom, set family “device-free” times, monitor their children’s accounts, and talk about social media including what is not okay. Parental resources are available through [#GoOpenVA](#).
- To promote a healthier and more focused educational environment, [Virginia’s public K-12 schools will commit to cell phone-free education by January 1, 2025](#).

5. BUILD HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS.

- How much sleep do children need? Generally, teenagers need 8-10 hours, school-aged kids need 9-11 hours, and 10-14 hours of sleep is ideal for preschoolers and toddlers.
- Getting the right amount of sleep can reduce risks of illness, promote healthy growth, lead to greater self-esteem, reduce stress, and build friendships. Set a regular bedtime and morning routine, lay out clothes, and pack backpacks the night before.
- Creating a consistent sleep schedule, with the same bedtimes and wake times every day, even on weekends, can help increase the time kids are asleep.

6. START THE DAY WITH A GOOD BREAKFAST AT HOME OR AT SCHOOL.

- Healthy food at the beginning of the school day is essential for your child to be ready to learn and thrive. [Students who eat breakfast](#) demonstrate better academic achievement, attendance, and overall health outcomes.
- A study of the [impact of breakfast on chronic absenteeism](#) found that [Breakfast After the Bell](#) programs can reduce chronic absenteeism by 6% and improve reading achievement by 1.5%.

- In Virginia, every public school is required to offer the [School Breakfast Program](#) and encouraged to offer Breakfast After the Bell to ensure a healthier start to the day, and to put your child in the best position to succeed in the classroom.
- On average, students who participate in Breakfast After the Bell eat a breakfast of [higher nutritional quality](#) than students who eat breakfast elsewhere. Contact your school to get additional information.

7. GET MOVING AND PLAY!

- [Physical activity](#) increases attention and memory, reduces risks of depression, builds strong muscles and endurance, and supports long-term health.
- Time to play! [Children ages 3-5](#) need to be active throughout the day. Children and adolescents ages 6-17 need to be active for 60 minutes every day.
- [Free play](#) is a healthy, essential part of childhood that offers important developmental benefits. When planning school activities and schedules, make sure to allot time for ample, independent, non-screen time for your kid to be creative, reflect, and decompress.
- Playing outdoors can also have significant mental and physical health benefits. Plan playdates at a [local park](#)!

8. TALK WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THE DANGERS OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.

- Underage drinking poses a [range of risks](#) and negative consequences. As parents, you play a significant role in supporting and guiding your children's overall health and learning. You can help your child avoid the dangers of alcohol and drugs by serving as a positive role model, getting to know your children's friends, and connecting with other parents to send a clear message on the importance of youth not drinking or using drugs.
- It's never too early to [talk with your children](#) about the risks of underage drinking and other drug use. Research suggests that one of the most influential factors in healthy childhood development is a strong, open relationship with a parent.
- As a parent, it is critical to learn more about the opioid problem, recognize warning signs, and open lines of communication with your child and those in your community about the dangers of taking a pill or substance not prescribed by a doctor. [Learn the facts](#) and consider being trained in [REVIVE!](#), the Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Education (OONE) program for the Commonwealth of Virginia. REVIVE! provides training on how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose emergency using naloxone.
- The First Lady of Virginia Suzanne Youngkin and Attorney General Jason Miyares are leading the fight against fentanyl in Virginia through the ["It Only Takes One"](#) campaign, which aims to warn families that just one bad mistake with the drug can cost someone their life.

9. SUPPORT YOUR CHILD’S MENTAL HEALTH.

- It can be hard to detect mental health conditions in children because typical childhood growth is a process that involves change. But knowing the [warning signs](#), and being prepared to have conversations about mental health can protect your child, build a trusting relationship, and grow their resilience.
- Your school has [behavioral health services](#) available to assist in creating the best learning experience and environment for your child. School-based mental health professionals include school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists. They support classroom instruction by helping to remove barriers to learning. They can also be a connector to services in your community if you feel you need additional help. Reach out to your child’s school counselor for more information.
- If your child, or someone you know, needs immediate assistance with a mental health or substance use issue, [get help](#) immediately by going to your local emergency room or calling or texting the “988” Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. You can also access the [2-1-1 Virginia](#) resource portal to find local mental health and other resources in your area.

10. TALK WITH YOUR CHILD—ANYWHERE YOU CAN.

- [When](#) a family sits down together, it helps them handle the stresses of daily life and strengthen connections. Eating together gives families a great opportunity to talk about their day at school and what they are learning in school, as well as promotes more sensible eating habits.
- Talking with your child [helps them build language skills](#). Some great ways to help your child develop speaking and listening skills at home include talking about what they are learning in school and reading books together and discussing what's happening in the story.
- [According to research](#), teens who dined with their families 5 or 7 times a week were 4 times less likely to smoke, 2.5 times less likely to use marijuana, and half as likely to drink alcohol than families who ate together twice or less.
- You can make a huge difference by letting your child know they have your unconditional love and support. Helping your child feel connected not only promotes mental health, it also prevents a range of negative experiences like drug use and violence. Building strong bonds and relationships with adults and friends at school, at home, and in the community provides youth with a sense of connectedness. Take the time to check in regularly with your child and encourage them to communicate what they are feeling. Also remember to let your child know they are appreciated and that you are proud of them.