

# Modeling Good Behavior

*By Diane Trautman*

It is a well known fact, backed up by research, that what parents do at home directly affects their children's performance in school. In particular, if parents read to, and in front of, their young children, and if they spend time having extended conversations with them, the children will develop better reading and critical thinking skills, which are the foundation of their educational experience.

Experts tell us to take time to read to our young children, and to read with them. It is equally important to be seen enjoying reading yourself. In a larger context, we're talking about creating a more literary environment around the house: having books, magazines, and newspapers available, in plain sight, and using them frequently

It seems so logical when stated in black and white, but practicing this can be difficult. Most parents' days are filled with their own activities, whether they work outside the home or not, and by the time their children are back from school and dinner's on the table, they may want nothing more than to collapse in front of the TV. Of course, there is nothing wrong with dumb entertainment, but as a parent, you must be aware that you are constantly being observed. You are the primary role model for your children's behavior.

This brings me to my larger point. Guiding your children to success in school is just one job you have as a parent. You can help guide your children to success in relationships by examining your actions within your own relationships at home. Do you show affection, really listen when others speak, and avoid letting your ego take control?

You can guide your children to success as citizens by getting involved with your community and showing them that you care about others. With older children, you can discuss current events and issues in the community. Especially important is demonstrating to them that you care enough about your community to register to vote, and then to consider carefully and discuss with them fully each measure and candidate before casting your ballot. As Gandhi once said, we must be the change we wish to see in the world. That change starts at home.