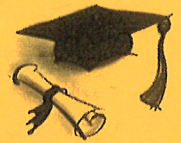


# ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: THE ACADEMIC FOUNDATION

## Fostering Self-esteem and Academic Achievement



### LESSON No. 2

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**INTRODUCTION:** A person needs to be self-confident in order to achieve a productive and successful life. That is why the influence of parents and teachers is very important in the formation of a child's self-esteem. When a child experiences success and is rewarded for his or her effort, that child's self-confidence will grow.

### WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?

Self-esteem is the concept we have of ourselves, the image that we form of ourselves. When we are confident about our gifts and abilities, we have high self-esteem. On the other hand, when we question our talents and capabilities, we become insecure and have low self-esteem.

### SELF-ESTEEM IS LEARNED

The first seven years of a child's life are fundamental in the formation of his or her self-esteem. It is in this period that he or she learns to believe or doubt in his or her capabilities. Parents and elementary school teachers are a child's primary role models and they have the greatest influence during this time. It's important that we as parents realize the responsibility that this implies and make sure that the messages we communicate help foster a positive self-image.



*Children believe what we tell them. When we encourage and respect them, they gain confidence in themselves.*

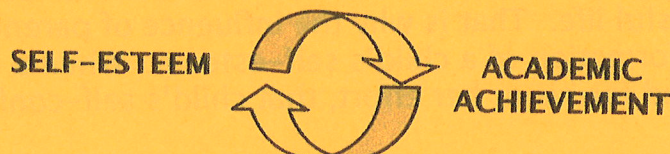
### COMMON MISTAKES WE MAKE AS PARENTS

In our eagerness to guide our children, we sometimes do or say things that keep them from trusting in their own abilities. These are only some examples of those "well intended" behaviors:

- Do something for them, when they are capable of doing it on their own.
- Scold or punish them when they make a mistake.
- Use other children as examples so that they can "learn" from them.
- Laugh at their "dreams" when they share them with us.
- Over praise them. Don't say "you are the best," just to make them feel good, when they know other children who are better than them.

## SELF-ESTEEM IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

It has been found that there is a strong correlation between self-esteem and academic performance. When students have high self-esteem, they tend to do better in school; these positive results help them improve their self-image, which in turn plays a role in increasing their self-esteem.



## HOW WE CAN HELP OUR CHILDREN HAVE HIGH SELF-ESTEEM



As parents, we all want our children to succeed in life and be happy. For this to take place, we need to help them have confidence in themselves. Let us explore some guidelines (Based on Reifler Associates, 1987, pp. 27-29) on how to do this as well as some possible academic benefits students can obtain from implementing these suggestions.

### LET'S HELP THEM DEVELOP THEIR:

### POSSIBLE ACADEMIC BENEFITS:

#### Sense of Belonging

Children need to feel that they belong to a group that accepts them unconditionally, simply because they love them. The family should be that place of security in which they can feel at home.



If our children know they are accepted unconditionally at home, then they will very likely feel comfortable participating and expressing their ideas in class.

#### Sense of Being Unique and Special

It is important that our children feel appreciated as individuals and that they are not compared or pressured to imitate or "learn" from anyone else (i.e., "You should learn from your little sister.").



This feeling will give them self-confidence to develop their skills and abilities at school without feeling they have to compete with other students to be number one.

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## LET'S HELP THEM DEVELOP THEIR:

## POSSIBLE ACADEMIC BENEFITS:

### Sense of Power

In order for our children to believe they can succeed, they must learn to take risks. They will only do so, if they feel it is safe to make mistakes without being punished. When our children make their best effort, we should acknowledge it by saying something like, "Good effort," regardless of whether or not they obtained the desired results.



A family and school environment that encourages our children to take risks, learn from their mistakes, and recognize their successes, will build their self-confidence. In turn, this will give them the confidence to participate actively in class.

### Sense of Purpose in life

When we help our children set goals and they work toward meeting them, we are giving them tools for success. Having clear goals and establishing priorities builds an individual's self-image and sense of direction.



If we teach our children how to work toward meeting goals, it will be easier to introduce the idea of going to the university and to work towards meeting that objective.

*The family should be a place where the child feels secure, accepted, and loved.*



### Sense of Ability

If we acknowledge our children's small accomplishments and applaud their efforts, they will learn at an early age that they are capable and won't be afraid to try new things.



When our children know they are capable beings, they won't give up or get discouraged if they don't do well on an exam or a school assignment. Instead, they will try harder next time to get better results.

### Sense of Curiosity

Children are naturally curious. If we have frequent conversations with our children and attempt to answer their questions, we promote their interest in what takes place around them.



By fostering our children's natural curiosity, we make it easier for them to ask questions and develop an interest in various class topics.

- Encourage our children to see their own mistakes as learning experiences.
- Provide them with activities in which they may experience success.
- Let them know that we are proud of them.
- Focus on their strengths, not their weaknesses.
- Allow them, at an early age, to make certain decisions on their own and help them distinguish which of them have been correct.
- Teach them to say positive things to themselves, such as, "I know I can solve this math problem. I just need to work on it some more."
- Become interested in their school work and acknowledge their efforts and their good grades.

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**REMEMBER:**

*Children learn what they live...*

*Appreciate them and they will learn to appreciate themselves!*

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