

11 Tips To Ensure Your Child's Success At Their International School

Written by Alix Bryant

If your child is a new student at school this year or has had a tough time adjusting in the past, then you'll want to implement the 11 tips below to set the stage for a successful year ahead.

We parents know that the Foreign Service lifestyle provides many benefits for our children. It also comes with challenges that can be heartbreaking to witness, especially if you don't know how to help.

Think about how you would feel if you had to go into the office every day to a job where you felt unqualified, unprepared, or isolated. You would hate it and probably not succeed for very long. Following the tips below will ensure that the groundwork is in place for our kids to shine and feel proud of themselves!

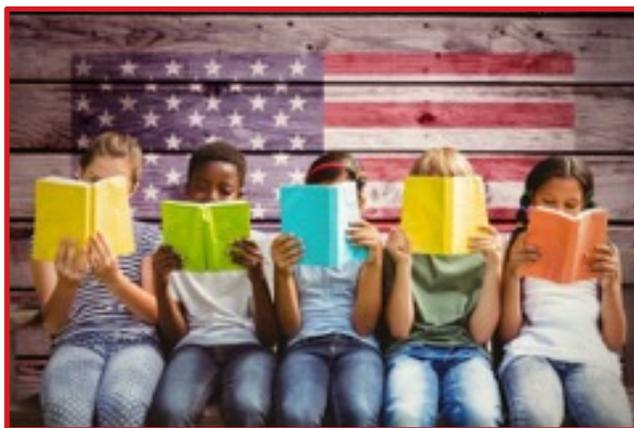
1. Meet the teachers. Parent-teacher conferences are nice, but don't wait until you're invited to meet the teacher. Not every school has them and sometimes they occur several months into the school year, which is too late.

Instead, schedule 20-30 minutes before or after school for an introductory meeting with the teacher. You will show the teacher that you are an involved parent that cares about your child's progress. You should also use this time to discuss unique or specific circumstances with the teacher. Is your child an introvert? Do they have learning differences? Are there any family matters that would affect your child's focus?

2. Get involved with the school. Commit to volunteering at least 1-2 hours a month at the school. If parents are not allowed in the classroom then ask if you can assist in the library or with special projects, performances, or school events. Most schools have a parent association that you can join. Your kids will notice that their education is important to you.

3. Encourage reading at home. Readers tend to be more creative, open to new ideas, and do better in school. Also, when kids are reading a good book, they can relax and de-stress. Audiobooks count too! Here's a list of some great **American classics** to listen to: <https://www.ushistoryabroad.com/audio-books-pdf.html>

4. Emphasize friendships. Help kids connect with at least one other person in their classroom. If your child is shy, they may need your help! Offer to host a make-your-own-pizza party, a create an ice cream sundae bar, or a sugar cookie decorating party for your child and a few friends. Repeat until your child has at least one friend that they look forward to laughing and talking with at school.



5. Fill in the gaps. One of the most frustrating parts about constantly moving is the inconsistency of curriculum. Here's an example; The old school didn't teach multiplication until 4th grade, but the new school teaches it in 3rd. SOOO, when you get to post, your 4th grader is now "a year behind" in math. **What about U.S. History?** Most International schools don't teach it all, but your child will certainly need it if a domestic post is in your future, or if your kid intends to take the ACT and SAT to get into college.

U.S. History Abroad provides online American history courses for expat kids. The lessons are self-paced so students can fit them in on a weekday afternoon, a weekend, or a summer break. This year, students get a \$150 Amazon gift card to purchase their choice of recommended books and games. www.ushistoryabroad.com

6. Fuel the brain. The daily grind of a typical school day can get pretty boring, pretty fast, BUT meals don't have to be mundane. Here is a link to some yummy (some funny) **breakfast and snack ideas** that are sure to boost alertness and memory.

7. Talk (and listen). If you've ever asked your child "How was school today?" and they responded with "Fine." or "Good." then you're asking the wrong question. Try asking questions that elicit full sentences and result in interesting conversation like:

- When were you happiest today?
- What would your teacher tell me about you today if I called her?
- What made you laugh today?
- If you were asked to be the teacher tomorrow, what would you do differently?
- Who would you like to sit by in class? (Who would you NOT want to sit by? Why?)
- If your day at school was a movie/song, what would the name of it be?
- Which is your easiest class? (Hardest? Learn the most? Learn the least?)
- If you could be invisible at school for a day, what would you do?
- What are the top two topics that you hear other kids talking about most at school?
- What part of the day do you look forward to? (What part do you dread?)

It's also fun to ask kids to rate the school day on a scale of 1-5 on a daily basis.

8. Define success. It's important to talk with kids at the beginning of the school year to communicate what is expected of them. It's equally important for them to be able to express to you what their goals for the year are. The point is, success is not just getting top grades. For some kids it means trying new things that are difficult for them (speaking up in class, learning a new language, trying a new sport/instrument). Other ideas to define success are turning in homework on time (without nagging), packing healthy lunches, maintaining friendships, or waking up on time/by themselves.

9. Get equipped. Start the school year off right with the proper school supplies. Some schools will send a list of required items that you can buy on the local economy or order from Amazon. If not, here is a **list** that you can download: <https://www.ushistoryabroad.com/back-to-school-pdf.html>

10. Encourage more sleep. Millpond Children's Sleep Clinic founder, Mandy Gurney, says that in general, children need to get more sleep. Here is her guidance:

- 11 hours at age 5.
- 10 ½ hours at age 7.
- 10 hours at age 9.
- 9 ½ hours at age 11.
- 9 hours at age 14.

You can set a reminder alarm 45 minutes before bedtime to help kids remember to start winding down their day and get into bed.

11. Protect family time. Older children may try to slink off with their phones or tablets, but research shows that teens who spend more time with their parents have higher self-esteem & self-confidence. Eat dinner together! Declare Friday nights (or Sunday afternoons) family game time or watch a movie together. Bribe kids to chat about current events with you by serving them dessert, lots of it.

Foreign service kids are great because they tend to be more compassionate and supportive of other new kids. They also are likely to be better problem solvers, more adaptable, and extremely patriotic. They have a LOT of greatness going for them so let's continue to cheer them on through to the finish line by utilizing these simple tips!



Alix Bryant is the mother of 3 kids and wife to a Foreign Service Specialist. She started FS Bidding Tools in 2016 as a spot to get all of your bidding resources in one place. She and her family have lived in Moscow, Russia; Rabat, Morocco; and currently reside in Virginia and are eagerly awaiting their next overseas assignment.