

# BETTER FAMILY

I will not demand rockstar treatment for my  
I will not do my son's algebra homework for  
I will not ambush my kid's teacher with n



## Class rules for parents

When your child hits a rough patch in school, it's tempting to swoop in and smooth everything over. But education experts say a more hands-off approach can provide valuable lessons for kids (and make life easier for you).

BY DENISE SCHIPANI | PHOTO MARTY BALDWIN

**M**egan Murphy's daughter was struggling in middle school English. The nightly homework assignments were challenging, and although she was perfectly capable of completing them, the girl became frustrated and started slacking. Pained at seeing her daughter fall behind, Megan did something she hates to admit: *She started doing the assignments.*

It didn't take long for the teacher to notice something was up, and Megan (an educator herself) received a sternly worded note written in red ink. "The teacher said I was doing my daughter no favors, and that all students must learn to take responsibility for completing and turning in their own work," Megan says. "As a teacher, I knew she was right. As a parent, I struggled to accept it."

Megan's misstep is surprisingly common. Compared with previous generations, today's parents are far more actively engaged in children's academic lives. By and large, schools have embraced the shift. "There's no question parental involvement increases school success for kids," says Dr. Jane

Bailey, dean of the school of education at Post University in Waterbury, Connecticut. But the right kind of involvement is key. Some well-meaning moms and dads forget that as kids grow older, it's best to step back and play a supporting—not starring—role in the school environment. Here's how to do it, and how kids can benefit.

**ASK QUESTIONS EARLY** You already know that back-to-school night is a chance to meet your child's teachers and check out the classrooms. It's also a great opportunity to get specifics on how to help your child work, study, and stay organized at home, says Marcia Tate, author of *Preparing Children for Success in School and Life* (Corwin). After the teacher gives her presentation, don't hesitate to pipe up with questions: Are students expected to study their own notes before unit tests, or will she hand out review sheets? Will she post homework assignments to a website, or are students responsible for copying them off the board? A clear-cut understanding of the teacher's expectations and instructional style will help you guide your child through the year ahead.