

Parenting Pointers

Parenting Tips on *Creating a School & Home Connection*

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From birth, children imitate their parents. Parents are the most significant people in a child's life and the first and very best teachers a child can have! Most parents want to help children develop life and learning skills. New parents put a lot of time and energy into the baby's care and nurture. As children mature parents begin to look to outside sources, such as schools, churches and clubs, to expand their child's education, learning and experience. However, as children grow, their parents influence and involvement continues to be more critical than ever! Children whose parents participate in their education, both in and out of the classroom, learn more effectively and are happier and more successful at school. Research shows that children whose parents are involved and engaged in their education have better report cards, greater self-esteem, and a more successful future.

Parental participation involves two key components: encouragement and support for their child's learning; and active involvement with learning activities and environments. Today's families struggle to find time to participate in their child's learning as much as they would like, and this can be frustrating. However, there are many ways to demonstrate support and encouragement even when parents don't have time to actively volunteer. Communicating with the child's teacher, creating a learning environment at home, attending school events and meetings, and contributing appropriate treats, household craft items, and news articles to the classroom are all helpful ways to be involved. Parents' attendance at school events sends a strong message to children that school is important and that home and school are connected.

If parents' time is limited due to work schedules, some prioritizing and planning ahead is helpful. Talking with children about which events and activities are important to them, can help parents plan. When parents are unable to attend important events, asking a friend or relative to fill in and record the event through photos or video will allow parents and children to "re-live" the event later. Asking children about the event afterwards allows the child to share the experience and demonstrates the parents' interest.

Parents who have time to actively volunteer can organize fund-raisers, help out in the classroom where needed, attend field trips, serve on parent committees, or share a skill or interest in the classroom.

Don't wait until Kindergarten to "get involved" in your child's education! Children are born learning and parent involvement is crucial from the very beginning. Parents can foster their child's early learning experiences by taking time to talk with the childcare provider or childcare center at the beginning or end of each day. Ask how you can best support the learning and development your child is experiencing, and plan time to talk one-on-one with the teacher or provider to discuss how things are going.

Parents often underestimate how important and powerful their sincere "thank you" can be! Teachers and care-givers, especially in the early years, have a tremendous impact on the lives of young children. Supporting them in positive ways helps to raise awareness of the importance of the work they do.

The good news is that participating in your child's education can be easy and does not necessarily require huge amounts of time. Even the little things can make a big difference, and every parent can do something. The important key is to participate, no matter how large or small the task may be. Your child will recognize your efforts and imitate your example..... putting them on the road to success in school and life!

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