

PARENTS AS PARTNERS



We all want to help our children be successful at school. No one wants to see their child struggle, because it leads to frustration and anger. Sometimes if a child struggles, it can lead to a sense of failure and negative attitudes about school which leads to disengagement. The home-school partnership is more important than ever - Parents and educators must work together to get a better understanding of one another with the primary goal of helping the child to blossom.

Parental involvement is a key element in a child's success in school. There have been many studies on the importance of parental involvement (i.e. Parental Involvement Is as Easy as PIE!, Hopkings 2004, America's Smallest School: The Family, Barton, Coley 1992). Students who have involved parents do better in school.

When parents take time to build vocabulary with their children through conversations, those children enter school with a larger vocabulary than their peers who lacked that experience (Rothstein, 2004).

Many schools love seeing **parents volunteer** in the classroom, help children with homework by checking it to make sure it is correct and attend school events, become judges for competitions, help out with concert preparation to support their children. That involvement helps to **build a stronger school community**.

It is all about the right Balance

Some parents care so much about their child's success that they can become **too involved in the day-to-day routine**. Too involved means parents who feel the need to do their child's homework for them. That does not mean completing the last couple of math problems on a worksheet. It means completing a class project without a great deal of child input. When this happens, **the child is being set up for failure**, not success.

Small children need to have their parents check their book bags when they get home from school, and make sure they are packed correctly before they leave for school in the morning. However, many times educators see **students who are in middle and high school not taking responsibility for items left at home**.

The home-school connection needs to be about **balance**.

Sometimes parents want so much to be involved in their child's lives that they **end up enabling them so they don't learn how to be responsible for themselves**. Children **need to be allowed to make their own mistakes**. Children often learn valuable lessons through those mistakes. It helps build resiliency and provides life lessons that will help them in the future when they enter adulthood. The following are some ways to help children negotiate their way through school:

Tips to Help Build Parental Involvement.

Number One: Allow your children to complete tasks on their own.

Children should:

- Clean up their bedroom
- Have chores they need to be responsible for like taking out the garbage or helping with dishes.
- Work out their problems on their own first. If they still need help after that, then intervene.
- Do their homework on their own. If they have homework, make sure they follow through on the responsibility.

- Check their homework after they're done (However, if they are really having a hard time with it, then intervene).
- If they decide not to complete their homework, let them deal with the consequences at school. They may not make the same mistake twice.

Number Two: Praise your children when they show responsibility.

- Statistic: For every one positive comment a child hears ten negative.
- Children can never hear that you love them enough. Let them know it everyday.
- No need to buy them a gift for completing a chore. A nice compliment is enough.

Number Three: Teachable Moments

- When a child neglects a responsibility. It's a perfect time to teach them about responsibility when they make mistakes.
- Help your child find different coping skills for when they make mistakes. Coping skills will help them the next time they run into a problem (i.e. Taking a walk, with supervision, when they are angry, writing a list of pros and cons, talking their feelings out with an adult, etc).

Rule Four: You're the role model.

- No one makes a larger impact on their children than their parents.
- Spend some quality time with your children because that is what they really want from you.

Recognize that there will be times when your child will be frustrated by a difficult task. Resist the temptation to solve the problem yourself. **Problem solving skills are a necessary skill for life.** Your child will learn and grow from this experience and will emerge with confidence to face the next challenge.

What the school does to cement the Partnership bond

1. Welcome parent communication from the outset of the school year.
2. Create a classroom or school program that welcomes parents
3. Communicate a sincere attitude that parents are important to you and that their participation makes a difference

4. Provide access to information regarding neighborhood/community services that help families with the task of child rearing and education
5. Set up and regularly use an email account for parents - Even better, create a website.
6. Have regular academic schedule sharing, Individual progress meetings, and “student-led portfolio conference.”
7. Telephone parents to tell them about some eureka moment, or when the child is missing home or if the child is unwell/hurt.
8. Know each child’s unique learning style
9. Provide opportunities to each child to come forth and excel
10. Have a non judgemental, non-punishable approach to handling small misbehaviors. Open discussion policy with self reflection and course of action.

