



Tips for Parents: Parent Involvement

Your child goes off to school every day, and you probably see your primary role in this routine as getting your child to school well groomed, well fed, and on time. If you're leaving educating up to the school, however, you're overlooking the most important role you can play. Your involvement in your child's school experience could mean the difference between success and failure for your child.

Your involvement is important because of who you are, not what you know.

Parents have more influence on a child's academic success than teachers do. No matter how excellent the school program, parents remain the primary educators of their children. What your child "knows" about school has a lot to do with the example you set. If you show an interest in school, your child "learns" that school is important. This could be the most important "lesson" of your child's school career.

Parents know best. Many parents regard teachers and school administrators as the professionals, and are hesitant to interfere with the education process, preferring to "leave it up to the experts." But in fact, you are the expert on your child—and because you know your child better than anyone else, you are in the best position to motivate, challenge, and support your child in his or her learning experience. Most of all, you can make school subjects more meaningful by relating them to your child's personal life. Teachers and principals are not in a position to make that kind of connection for your child.

Getting involved not only helps children—it helps parents. You may not be aware of all the things your child works on at school. Getting involved gives you a good look at your child's responsibilities and a better understanding of your child's life. You'll be surprised how much your increased understanding will add to your child's self-esteem and willingness to work.

Busy, busy? It's okay—home is the best place for you to make a difference.

Sit with your child while he or she does homework. Just your physical presence helps your child fight restlessness and concentrate better. Being able to discuss the work with you makes homework less frustrating when your child is doing something difficult and even more exciting when your child is working on something interesting.

Let your child see you reading, and read to young children whenever possible. This one activity can be essential to your child's academic success. Achievement in all subjects improves with good reading skills.

Talk about school. It sounds simple, but it's an important part of getting involved with your child's education. Find out what subjects your child likes and dislikes. Find out what's difficult in class, and talk about ways to make school easier and more interesting. Ask your child to bring home school bulletins. Reading pamphlets, newsletters, and flyers not only keeps you up to date on school events, it gives you a chance to talk to your child about what goes on at school.

Use your telephone. A lot of parents are simply too busy to participate in school activities as much as they would like. If you're one of these busy parents, don't forget that a call to a teacher or principal goes a long way in demonstrating your concern about your child's school experience. School staff will take notice of your interest.

If you're a parent with a little more time to spare...

Help the school make good decisions. Don't forget organizations like the PTA and PTO are there to provide you with decision-making power. Such groups give you a chance to discover how school administrators view the goals of the school and to express your view of what the school's goals should be. One of the best ways for you to affect your child's education is by helping to determine school policies.

Volunteer in the classroom. The presence of parents in the classroom is credited with many positive effects, including giving students more individualized attention, exposing students to a broader base of expertise, and providing powerful role models.

Be in the audience. Don't underestimate the value of attending school functions such as plays, sports events, and field trips. Just putting in an appearance makes a strong statement about your commitment.

For more information:

Parent Teacher Association:

www.pta.org

"Being Involved With Learning: The Working Parents' Guide

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