

PARENT edition

A PUBLICATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS



The importance of parent involvement

We hear it all the time - parents are their children's first and most important teachers. That role seems more clear cut when they are very young and need help with just about everything - from practicing how to tie their shoes to looking both ways before crossing a street. But once a child enters school, other adults assume the teacher role, leaving many parents wondering what they can do to support and encourage learning... in school and out.

One thing is certain: for children to learn their lessons well and remain curious about the many new and interesting parts of their world, they still need their parents' help and daily encouragement. Research repeatedly shows that children are better, more successful learners when their parents are actively involved in their learning, both at home and at school. (See sidebar: *Parent Involvement Pays Off*)

Before you rush to the store for a pack of flash cards consider this: When it comes to helping children grow as learners, many of the things that parents do

each day are what really matter most. For example:

Create a home where learning is encouraged.

This includes setting aside a consistent time each day when children will complete their homework. It also means encouraging children to read and write for pleasure and setting limits on television, computer and video game usage. (FYI: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that school-age children spend no more than one to two hours a day watching TV and playing computer games - and that children not watch TV while doing homework).

Set high expectations for learning.

Parents know better than anyone else as to the interests and talents of their children. Take the time to encourage your children's strengths and find ways to support them when they struggle. This sends the

message that you are ready to help them succeed. For example, offer to help younger children sound out words as they read to you. Play math games as you drive in the car. Meet with the teacher to discuss how you can work together to help your child master a difficult subject.

Encourage exploration and discovery.

Just because the school day is over doesn't mean that learning has to end. If your child is learning about different types of communities, a family trip to a local farm can provide an interesting lesson on rural community life. Try turning an interest in cooking into an international theme dinner. If you have a skateboarding enthusiast in your family, subscribe to a magazine on his/her favorite topic. The point is to make learning fun. Libraries, museums, local historical sites and the Internet are all wonderful

resources to help you nurture your child's interests while spending quality time together. Two kid-friendly search engines to try are Yahoooligans (www.yahoooligans.com) and Ask Jeeves for Kids (www.ajkids.com)

Build a strong home-school partnership.

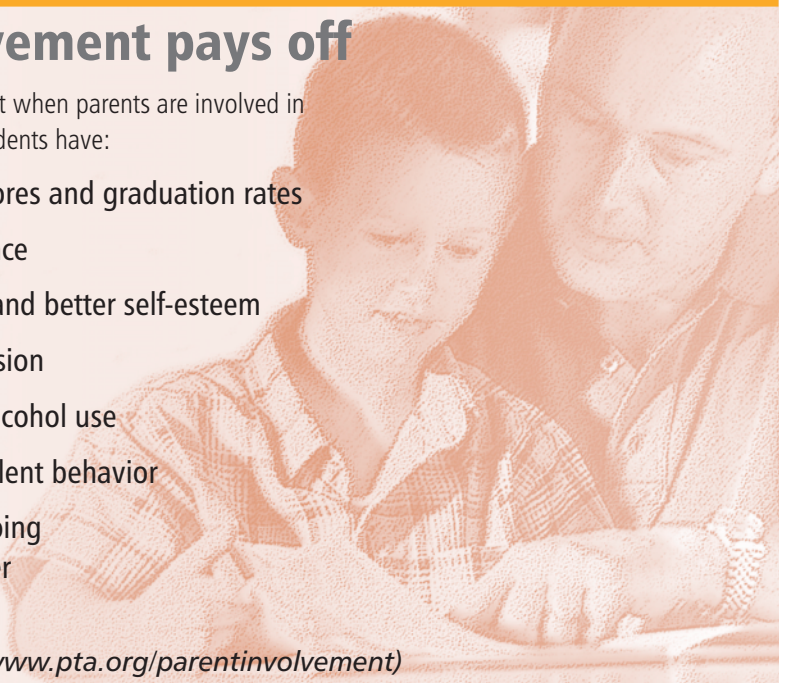
"Open House" at the beginning of the year is a great time to get to know your children's teachers and learn about ways you can support the year's learning at home. Parent-teacher conferences are a good time to talk about the areas where your child may need extra help or ways you can expand upon classroom lessons. Volunteering in the classroom, attending school events and sending notes or e-mail messages are great ways to keep in touch with teachers throughout the year and stay informed about what your children are learning.

Parent involvement pays off

Decades of research show that when parents are involved in their children's education, students have:

- Higher grades, test scores and graduation rates
- Better school attendance
- Increased motivation and better self-esteem
- Lower rates of suspension
- Decreased drug and alcohol use
- Fewer instances of violent behavior
- A greater chance of going on to college and other secondary education

Source: National PTA (www.pta.org/parentinvolvement)




 mark your **Calendar**

November 16

•Elementary Parent Conferences

April 26

•Elementary Parent Conferences

Good Attendance is a Stepping Stone for Success

Students usually return to the classroom each fall excited to see their friends and to get back into the educational swing of things. They also are provided opportunities to learn and make discoveries that only a classroom environment can provide.

Sometimes, however, that excitement and anticipation changes as the school year progresses. In some cases, it becomes a struggle to get children out of bed in the morning. At first, a parent may think it is no big deal to let their child stay home for one day. "What's one day going to hurt?" they may ask. But before you know it, one day turns into two days, two turns into three, and eventually the child is so far behind in school it might be impossible to catch up. Even the occasional class-cutter runs the risk of missing that one critical class that will make a difference in his or her grades.

Once a student starts to fall behind, it becomes easier to miss more classes, producing a pattern that's detrimental to success. This child is missing out on his or her education while creating bad attendance habits that can persist throughout school and continue into the workplace.

If this is a familiar situation to you, there are some things you can do to help your child (and yourself) through this challenging task. First, keeping a predictable daily routine is extremely important. This includes wake-up and bedtime at about the same time each day. As well as clear plans for getting cleaned and dressed and having family meals together as often as possible. When children know that things at home run smoothly, they are more likely to feel calm and confident as they take on the day.

If your child does not want to go to school, find out why. There are many reasons why a student might "skip" school or "cut" a class, even when penalties are attached. It might be personal, such as a failed relationship with another student or a fear of being bullied. Or it might be academic, such as a conflict with a teacher or a fear of failing a test. Whatever it is, parents are encouraged to ask the principal or a guidance counselor for help. The one thing parents can be sure of is that teachers and administrators share their desire to make sure the student is in attendance and successful in school.

Help your child make responsible decisions

TEACH YOUR CHILD THIS THREE-STEP PROCESS FOR MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION.

- **Be aware of the choices you are making.** Sometimes children choose without realizing what they are choosing. Teach children to stop and think before they make choices. Teach them to remind themselves that they do have choices.
- **Identify Possibilities.** Sometimes, children think there are only two choices - when there are really many more. For example, if a friend wants to try to sneak in an R-rated movie, your child might think that there are only two choices, to go or not to go. But, a third option is to suggest going to another movie.
- **Consider Consequences.** All choices have consequences. Help your child think through the consequences of each action.

(Quick Tips from the Parent Institute)

Helpful Hint

The Greater Johnstown School District's attendance policy requires that all medical excuses must be submitted within three days of the student's return to elementary school, and within two days of the student's return to junior and senior high schools, in order to be considered a valid excuse.



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