

**California State**  
**PTA<sup>®</sup>**  
*everychild.one voice.*

Parents

**p**

Parents

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Empowering

**e**

A resource to assist PTA Leaders to carry out  
effective parent involvement.

PARENTS  
EMPOWERING  
PARENTS

## **California State PTA Parents Empowering Parents PEP Guide**

Parents Empowering Parents is a resource to assist PTA leaders in encouraging parent involvement. Parents Empowering Parents (PEP Guide) includes the following chapters. Click on a chapter title to go to that chapter.

**Introduction**

**Communicating**

**Parenting**

**Student Learning**

**Volunteering**

**School Decision Making**

**Collaborating with Community**

**Resources**

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# California State PTA

## Parents Empowering Parents

# Introduction

**Parents Empowering Parents (PEP)** is a resource to assist local PTA leaders to carry out an effective parent education and involvement program. Each chapter is based on one of the six National PTA Standards for Parent Involvement. (Refer to Successful Programs in this section and Developing a Parent Involvement Program in the Volunteering section.) This guide contains information and ideas to help:

- promote PTA leadership to build strong home-school partnerships;
- assist parents with techniques to use in supporting their children's efforts in school; and
- enhance parents' skills in working with their own children.

The **PEP** Guide can be kept in a school office or parenting center to assist parents with day-to-day parenting education needs. Copies of the **PEP** Guide can be donated to libraries and other organizations.

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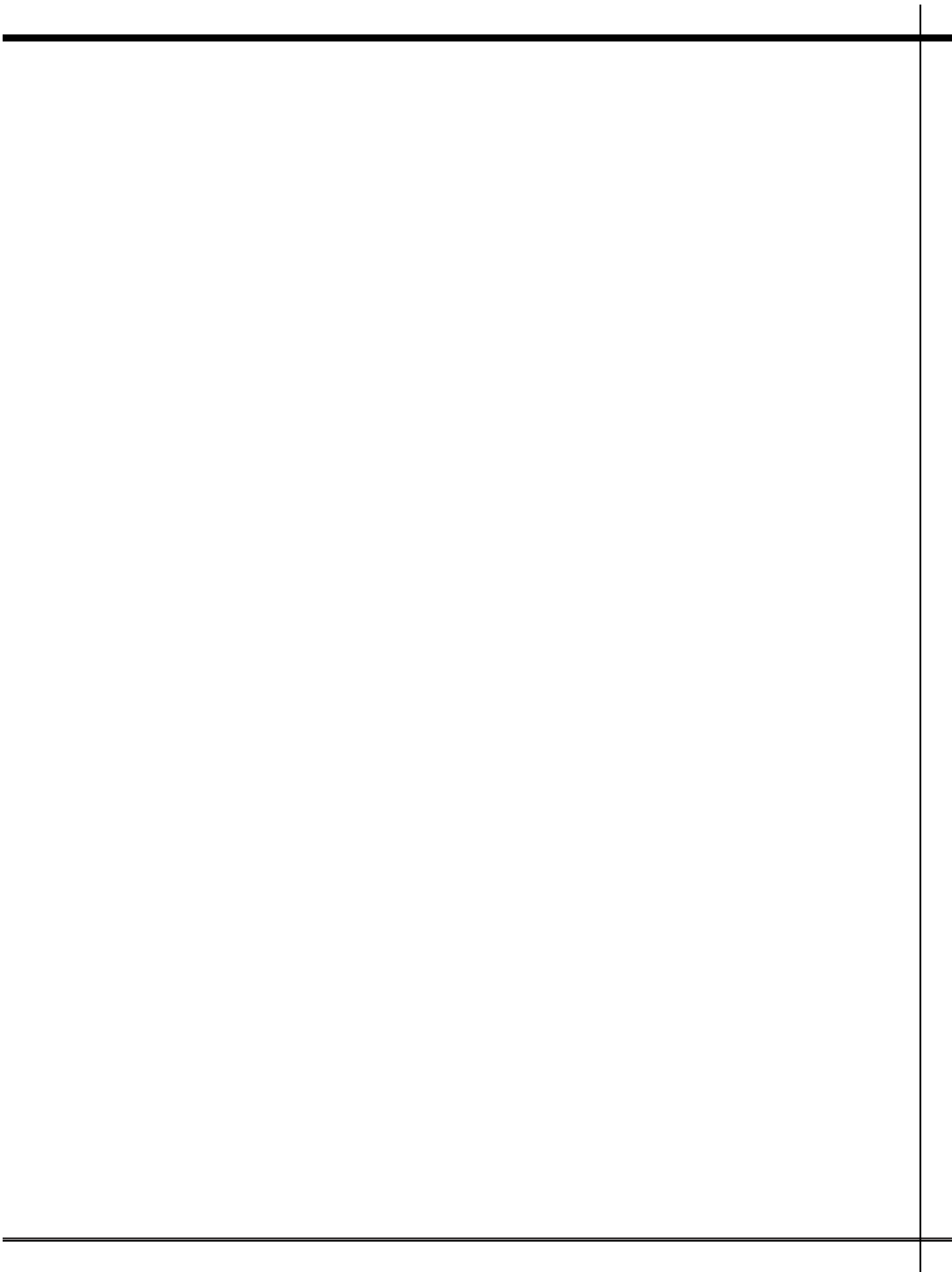
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## SIX STANDARDS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

*(Adapted from the National PTA)*

### Background

Research shows that parent and family involvement is key to helping children succeed in school. This idea is basic to PTA's philosophy and action since its beginning in 1897.

Tremendous changes have occurred in families over the past twenty years. Today the majority of school-age children have mothers in the work force. There are greater numbers of single parents, and far more families have complex relationships. The proportion of children living in single-parent families has more than doubled since 1970. The percentage of children living with two biological parents has decreased.

Practices must be changed so that parents in **all families** can be involved with their children's schools.

In this guide, "parent involvement" is defined as the participation of parents in every facet of children's education and development from birth to adulthood.

The word "parent" is used in this guide to refer to those individuals who are involved in a child's education, recognizing that other adults may also carry the primary responsibility for a child's education and development. Therefore, all references to parents should be interpreted as including any adults who play an important role in a child's development and well-being.

### Fundamental Beliefs

School, community, and the home are not isolated but are interconnected with each other and with the world at large. Successful parent involvement programs share several fundamental beliefs about parents:

- Parents want what is best for their children.
- Parents, regardless of their background or circumstances, can be key resources in their children's education.
- All children can learn, and the focus of educators' efforts needs to be on children's success.
- Together, educators, families, and communities

can succeed in educating children and preparing them to lead healthy, happy, and productive lives.

- Parents must be involved in all aspects of their children's education including its governance and decision making.

### Parent Roles in Education

**Teachers/Nurturers** focus on the parent's involvement with children's total development. Parents provide an appropriate environment that promotes learning and develops the skills and values needed to become physically, psychologically, and emotionally healthy adults.

**Communicators/Advisors** establish effective, two-way communication between the home and school. Parents also maintain open communication with their children in order to counsel them on personal and educational issues.

**Supporters/Learners** focus on the parents, obtaining skills and knowledge that will assist them with their children's education and social development. Parents can contribute their knowledge and skills to the school to enrich the curriculum and support classroom and school projects.

**Collaborators/Decision Makers** focus on parent participation with school staff and educators to help make decisions, solve problems, and develop policies.

### The Standards

In 1997, the National PTA created and adopted the **National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement**. Each standard addresses a different type of parent involvement, and the presence of all standards indicates a strong parent involvement plan.

**Communication** – Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.

**Parenting** – Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

**Student Learning** – Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

**Volunteering** – Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

**School Decision Making and Advocacy** – Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

**Collaborating with the Community** – Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

These standards were developed with education and parent involvement professionals through the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE). They are designed to be used with other education content/performance standards and reform initiatives in support of establishing quality parent involvement programs.

The California State PTA believes that parent and family involvement is the foundation upon which all other education reform should be based. This **PEP Guide** will help educate and empower parents to become successful and active advocates for children.

Effective parent education programs provide information and a way for parents to become involved.

## SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

### It Takes a Plan

Preparing for a parent involvement program—or any program—takes careful and thorough planning. The **Parents Empowering Parents Guide** contains program and activity suggestions for PTAs. Interested PTAs may contact their PTA districts to request a National PTA *Building Successful Partnerships* presentation.

PTAs can plan, market, and conduct programs that attract, inform, and support parent involvement.

### Three Steps to Planning a Parent Involvement Program

**Step one:** the program committee selects the topic and speaker(s) to address parents' concerns and makes the meeting arrangements.

**Step two:** the event chair designs the meeting to make sure it runs smoothly. The **PEP Guide** Resources section includes a suggested meeting agenda and a meeting checklist.

**Step three:** the chair, committee handles publication and follow-up to bring parents to the meeting.

### Meeting “success factors”

- PTA leaders help parents feel welcome before the meeting and during breaks. They purposefully meet and mingle with newcomers.
- The meeting starts on time. PTA business is limited, and the meeting is conducted in a business-like manner.
- The program must be presented at the announced time—regardless of where the leader is on the meeting agenda.
- The program must provide information parents can use at home, helping them feel their effort to attend was worthwhile.

## Marketing Strategies

How does the PTA market, or publicize, parent education programs?

- Distribute program information at the start of the school year listing PTA meetings and activities. Ask parents to “calendar” these dates.
- Publicize all event details in at least two newsletters prior to the meeting.
- Make posters advertising the event one week in advance.
- Send a flyer home one week before the meeting/event. If space is limited, include a response card or “tear-off” section to be returned to the school.
- Remind members by making telephone calls or sending e-mails within two days of the event or meeting.
- Provide childcare, and publicize its availability. Be sure to follow all laws and guidelines regarding childcare.
- Ask administrators, teachers, and staff to promote and attend the meeting.
- Request that your PTA board members invite parents and community members they know. Word-of-mouth is still one of the most effective marketing tools!

Effective parent education programs provide information and a way for parents to become involved.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT: WHAT PTA CAN DO

### Parents As Partners

- Help parents understand their responsibilities and rights.
- Provide information that emphasizes the benefit of sending the child to school each day, on time, and ready to learn—well rested, well nourished, and prepared for the day's lessons.
- Provide information on school policies and how they are implemented; the curriculum and how it is taught; the use of tests in student placement, etc.
- Help parents learn about alcohol and other drug abuse, AIDS, and sex education classes so they can talk more easily with their children.

### Parents As Problem Solvers

- Educate parents about school rules and procedures.
- Emphasize the value of communicating with their child's teachers.
- Stress the importance of attending parent-teacher conferences.
- Teach parents how to help with homework.

### Parents As Audience

- Help plan and publicize school events.
- Sponsor special programs and activities for family education and enrichment.
- Work with the school to meet transportation and childcare needs.
- Rotate PTA meetings between daytime and evening hours and weekdays and weekends.

### Parents As Supporters

- Organize a parent/community volunteer program based on classroom and school needs.
- Cooperate with school and community agencies to reduce teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and alcohol, drugs, and sexually related problems.
- Provide information and support for families during their students' special education placement processes.
- Plan long-term parent education and parent involvement programs.

### Parents As Advisors and Decision Makers

- Promote school-sponsored programs to address problems that arise at that school.
- Involve parents in understanding school curriculum and how it is taught to all children.

- Ensure parental participation on school councils, and provide a forum for dialogue with the community to ensure representation.

## Guidelines for PTA Action

The official school district **Parent Involvement Policy and Implementation Plan** should be developed by a broad-based task force which includes administrators, teachers, classified staff, parents, students, and community. Steps in the plan:

1. Study and discuss the various perceptions people have about "parent involvement." Invite speakers to present issues that will guide your PTA's vision of parent involvement in your school district. Explain the "parent involvement law" and the broad concept of parent involvement to the groups including what it means for them.
2. Understand that an effective parent involvement policy requires an implementation plan. Obtain policies and implementation plans from other school districts.
3. Solicit the support of the school district and teachers' organization in establishing a broad-based, permanent parent involvement committee or task force to draft and approve the policy and plan and to monitor their implementation. The committee should reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural, and family diversity of the school district. It is crucial that all groups in the overall school community participate in the process from the beginning. Therefore, it would benefit the committee to have representation from members of the following groups at the least:
  - School district administrators
  - School site administrators
  - Teachers' organizations
  - School site teachers
  - Classified personnel
  - PTA memberships
  - Chapter I District Advisory Committee (parents and staff)
  - Bilingual District Advisory Committee (parents and staff)
  - Special Education District Advisory Committee
  - Other parent groups
  - The community
4. PTA representatives on the committee should participate actively in the process, ensuring the PTA voice is heard speaking for **all** parents. PTA representatives should see that racial, ethnic, cultural, and family differences are considered throughout the process.

5. In addition to components required by law, PTA representatives should advocate including the components that the PTA study has found to be important.
6. Ensure that the policy is written with measurable actions and outcomes.
7. Keep the PTA council and units apprised of the committee's work and take their input back to the committee. Publish reproducible articles in the PTA district newsletter, explaining the continuing work of the committee and PTA's role.
8. Distribute the final draft to staff and community for their input. Sufficient time should be allowed between its distribution and the response deadline.
9. After the policy and plan are approved by the Board of Education, publish this information. Inform units of steps they can take to support implementation at their schools.
10. Hold a training session (perhaps together with the school district advisory committee members) to explain the policy and implementation plan to parents.
11. As the committee continues to monitor and contribute to the district's parent involvement process, serve as a liaison between PTA members and the committee.



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# Handouts/Articles

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## ACTION PLAN FOR BUILDING HOME-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Area of Parent Involvement Focus: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

What will be done? \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Who will accomplish? \_\_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_

Budget: \_\_\_\_\_

Resources/materials needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence of success (to be used in evaluation): \_\_\_\_\_

## Ten Things Parents Wish Teachers Would Do

1. **Build students' self-esteem** by using praise generously and avoiding ridicule and negative public criticism.
2. **Get to know each child's needs**, interests, and special talents, as well as the way each child learns best.
3. **Communicate often and openly with parents**, contacting them early about academic or behavioral problems, being candid rather than defensive when discussing these problems.
4. **Regularly assign homework that helps children learn** and advise parents on working with their children on this homework.
5. **Set high academic standards**, expecting all students to learn and helping them to do so.
6. **Care about children**, since children learn best when taught by warm, friendly, caring, and enthusiastic teachers.
7. **Treat all children fairly** and do not play favorites.
8. **Enforce a positive discipline** code based on clear and fair rules that are established and fully explained at the beginning of the school year—reinforcing positive behavior as well as punishing negative behavior.
9. **Be aware of students' different learning styles** and vary teaching methods to help each child achieve success.
10. **Encourage parent participation** by reaching out to involve parents in their children's educations. Show parents how they can help their children at home. Understand that parents want to work with teachers to help these children do their best.



## Ten Things Teachers Wish Parents Would Do

1. **Be involved in their children's education.** Parent involvement helps students learn, improves schools, and makes teachers' jobs easier.
2. **Provide resources at home for reading and learning.** Parents need to have books and magazines for their children and read with their children each day.
3. **Set a good example.** Parents need to demonstrate that they believe reading is enjoyable and useful.
4. **Encourage children to do their best in school.** Children need to be guided to set obtainable goals.
5. **Confirm that academics are of primary concern**, followed by their children's preparation for the adult job and involvement in athletics and other extracurricular activities.
6. **Support school rules and goals.** Parents should take care not to undermine school rules, discipline, or goals.
7. **Use pressure positively.** Parents need to encourage children while being careful not to apply too much pressure by setting unrealistic goals or by involving their children in too many activities.
8. **Call teachers as soon as a problem becomes apparent**, so prompt action can be taken.
9. **Exercise parental responsibility**, not expecting the school or teachers to take over this job. For example, teaching basic discipline is a parental rather than a school responsibility.
10. **Understand that alcohol use and excessive partying are problems as serious as drug abuse.** All take a serious toll on a student's health and classroom performance.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN OUR SCHOOLS

For the purpose of this survey, I am responding as a(n):

☐ parent    ☐ teacher    ☐ administrator    ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

Some of these questions are deliberately intended to expose differences of opinions between parents and school professionals. The survey is not intended to be an end in itself, but rather to serve as a means for opening a dialogue between groups.

### ***Section 1: Respond to the following statements by checking "Yes" or "No."***

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                              |                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. There should be many school activities that involve students, parents, and teachers, such as reading enrichment programs, sports events, and recognition ceremonies to honor student achievement. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Parents should be encouraged to work in the school as volunteers.                                                                                                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Parents should supervise children with homework.                                                                                                                                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Parents should be able to schedule visits to the school during the day to understand the kinds of experiences their child is having in school.                                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. The PTA should conduct parent education classes, in cooperation with resource personnel provided by the school, to teach parents how to help their children benefit from school.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Parents' primary connection with the school should be as sponsors of activities such as potluck suppers, fund-raising activities, and open houses.                                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Parents should initiate personal conferences with teachers when the parents believe it is necessary (outside of regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences).                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Parents should attend school board meetings.                                                                                                                                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

***Section 2: Please respond to each statement by circling the number that comes closest to your thoughts about the appropriate level of parent involvement.***

**RATINGS:**

0 = Not an appropriate role for parents—should be left solely to education professionals.

1 = Parents should be asked to review revised programs and policies.

2 = Parents should be asked for input before education professionals plan programs or set policies.

3 = Parents should be actively involved throughout the process.

1. Developing written school district policies (such as attendance, homework, and graduation requirements)	0	1	2	3
2. Developing written goals for increasing parent involvement	0	1	2	3
3. Planning written goals for increasing parent involvement	0	1	2	3
4. Deciding/evaluating how well teachers and principals do their jobs and how to reward and retain good teachers	0	1	2	3
5. Determining policy on when students should be retained rather than promoted to the next grade	0	1	2	3
6. Setting up a school advisory group to bring suggestions for changes to the principal and the school board	0	1	2	3
7. Establishing the discipline code in the school	0	1	2	3
8. Selecting textbooks and other learning materials	0	1	2	3
9. Developing the school budget	0	1	2	3
10. Serving on the team that revises report cards	0	1	2	3
11. Participating in school events such as parties, field trips, sports events, plays, etc.	0	1	2	3
12. Establishing a policy for recognizing outstanding teacher performance	0	1	2	3
13. Developing strategies to establish school-business partnerships	0	1	2	3
14. Serving on a task force to resolve an emerging issue	0	1	2	3

**Section 3: Please answer the following question:**

The PTA program in our school should be (check one):

☐ expanded    ☐ maintained    ☐ reduced

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT THE ANSWERS AND SCORES MEAN****Section 1: Answers**

*If you responded as a parent:*

The more "yes" answers you circled (with the exception of Question 6), the more you value parent involvement in education.

*If you responded as a teacher or as an administrator:*

The more "yes" answers you circled (with the exception of Question 6), the more open you are to including parents in visible roles at the school.

**Section 2: Scores**

*If you responded as a parent:*

The lower the number circled on each question in Section 2, the more you believe the schools should handle education decisions. You are unsure of the appropriateness of parents becoming involved as cooperative partners with school professionals. The higher the number you selected, the more you want to help make school decisions on behalf of your own children and those in the community. You may empower other parents to be meaningfully involved.

*If you responded as a teacher or as an administrator:*

The lower the number circled on each question in Section 2, the more you question the value of parent involvement in education. The higher the number you selected, the more open you are to including parents in education planning. High scorers often try new ideas, because the ultimate beneficiaries are the children. You have an easy relationship with parents in your community, and they ask your opinion and trust your judgment.

*Source: The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs Training Module, National PTA, 1998.*

**FACULTY SURVEY**

Dear Faculty Member:

The PTA is developing ways to encourage family and community support of our school(s). The information you provide will help us better serve the entire school community. Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey and return it to (PTA contact): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you currently have parents or other family members volunteering in your classroom or for other activities?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Would you consider using parents/community volunteers in your classroom?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What are your current needs for assistance?

☐ Materials ☐ Visual aids ☐ Books and magazines

☐ Art supplies ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Volunteers to help with the following:

☐ Support tasks, e.g., gather resources; set up learning centers, displays, or experiments; arrange for speakers or field trips; record tapes for learning center

☐ One-on-one teaching tasks

☐ Listen to children read

☐ Coach in spelling or math facts

☐ Practice vocabulary with non-English-speaking students

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Small-group or class teaching tasks

☐ Perform or help with music or art

☐ Supervise parties or field trips

☐ Talk to students about careers or hobbies

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. What areas do you feel the PTA needs to address?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What methods have you found effective for improving home-school communications (phone calls, newsletters, notes, e-mail, etc.)?

\_\_\_\_\_

**OPTIONAL**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to contact \_\_\_\_\_

Grade level(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Subject(s) \_\_\_\_\_



## Parents' Rights

### Family Involvement

Parents and guardians are encouraged to participate in their children's public school education. Early and consistent parental involvement helps children academically and benefits the school and the community.

Parents and guardians of students enrolled in California public schools have the right to be included in the educational process and to have access to the system on behalf of their children. These rights include the following:

- Classroom observation
- Teacher conferencing
- Volunteering
- Monitoring student attendance
- Student testing
- School selection
- Ensuring safe school environments
- Reviewing curriculum
- Student academic progress
- Having access to their students' records
- Helping to establish and review standards
- Participating in the development of school rules
- Being informed about psychological testing
- Involvement on councils and committees
- Contributing to policy development

*Refer to Chapter 864, Statutes of 1998 Education Code Sections 51100-51102*

To obtain information on parents' rights or family involvement issues, contact:

California Department of Education  
1430 N Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Telephone: (916) 319-0854  
Web site: [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)



# Communicating

*Communication between home and school is regular, two way, and meaningful.*

Effective home-school communication is the two-way sharing of information vital to student success. This type of effective partnering requires give-and-take conversation, goal setting, and regular follow-up.

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## THE PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

Parents worry about what their children learn, while teachers are more concerned with how they learn. While the parents see the result of education, the teachers live the process of educating.

Parents can provide teachers with insight about their children, and teachers can help parents understand and embrace the curriculum.

From a teacher/administrator point of view, the following are a few tips for a parents wanting to building positive relationships with teachers:

### Make Your First Interaction Positive

If a parent greets a teacher with a warm “hello” on Back-to-School Night, the teacher is much more likely to be receptive if the parent comes to the teacher with a problem later.

### Get the Facts Before Getting Angry

When a child comes home from school upset, confirm the facts with the teacher. Parents and teachers who share information and viewpoints often can resolve issues calmly.

### Follow School Protocol

As a teacher, nothing is more frustrating than learning about a parental complaint about the class from the principal. Talk to the teacher first. Contact the principal only if you are still concerned.

### Remember That Teachers Are People, Too

Teaching is an intensely personal job—teachers are people who are paid to care about the thoughts and feelings of others. Tact and consideration for their feelings is very important.

### Finally...

Good teachers welcome dialogue with parents, because it gives them a better understanding of their students. Parents have the right to expect periodic updates from teachers and timely notification of academic problems. Remember: In the parent-teacher relationship, as in most others, communication is the key.

(Adapted from *The Parent-Teacher Trap* by Bruce Hammond, Parent Central, [www.parentsoup.com/edcentral/](http://www.parentsoup.com/edcentral/))

## HOW PARENTS ESTABLISH A CONNECTION

PTA encourages all parents to contact their child's teacher at the beginning of the school year. There are several ways to do this:

- Make a short personal visit to the classroom.
- Make a brief phone call and leave information regarding how and when they can be reached.
- Send a note to the teacher's school mailbox or by E-mail, introducing the family and telling how they can be reached.
- Introduce themselves at a welcome or orientation function, or at Back-to-School Night.

These actions demonstrate the parent's vital interest in their child's achievement and well-being while at school. Parents can emphasize that they are interested in understanding what is being taught, supporting learning at home, and helping the teacher.

Taking time during the first days of school to establish a positive relationship, will make it easier for parents and the teacher to work together if any problems or concerns arise.

## CONTINUED COMMUNICATION

Communication between the home and classroom should continue throughout the school year. Teachers need to be alerted by parents of home situations that might cause the child problems at school. Unusual behavior on the part of children often reflects their reactions to seemingly minor incidents. Even a timely note that a favorite pet has died can be helpful to the teacher.

Children can be devastated by a family crisis—whether they show it or not. Parents should inform the teacher:

- When the family has faced the tragedy of losing a loved friend or relative.
- If there has been a separation, divorce, or remarriage resulting in different living situations. The office also should be notified of any change in parents' addresses.
- The arrival of a new brother or sister or departure of an older sibling can also be difficult for a child.

This information may help the teacher understand the child.

Parents also need to tell the teacher about any learning difficulties or physical limitations their child may have. Informing the teacher of any strengths or weaknesses in your child's academics may allow the teacher to be better prepared to help your child learn.

### Two-Way Exchange

It is equally important that teachers communicate with parents. Class size may prevent teachers from routinely making individual phone calls. PTA encourages schools to find innovative ways to implement daily or weekly communication to parents utilizing a classroom newsletter, or homework folders that require a parent signature.

E-mail is often an effective way for teachers and parents to communicate. For those without access to e-mail, phone calls work well when parent and teacher can find a mutually agreeable time to talk. Teachers may send a letter home at the beginning of the year with information regarding how to contact them. (See "Dear Parents..." sample letter in the Handouts section of this chapter.)

Always respond to a teacher's e-mail, note or phone call. It is often easier—and better for the student—to address issues as soon as they arise.

### THE SECONDARY CHALLENGE

Junior high school and high school students sometimes discourage communication between the home and school, because they want to be independent. Students at the secondary level still need the support and interest of their parents.

Working together parents, students, teachers, and counselors can communicate effectively. At some secondary schools, an advisor or homeroom teacher periodically contacts the parents. If members of the school personnel do not make contact, parents need to take the initiative and call the school.

Most classrooms have phones for parent-teacher calls. Before and after school are usually the best times to reach a teacher, but parents can always leave a message with the office personnel asking for the teacher to return their call. Many teachers



have e-mail addresses that they distribute at the beginning of the school year or term.

At the secondary level, counselors take on an increasingly important role. In the case where the student has several teachers, parents may opt to communicate with the counselor, homeroom teacher, or advisor. These professionals act as liaisons and can help parents communicate with all of the student's teachers. When a parent's first language is not English, the school often provides translation services.

### SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Effective schools have established regular routines for providing information to and receiving information from parents. In these schools, parents are viewed as integral partners in the educational process. Teachers keep them informed about classroom activities. Principals tell parents about school-wide events, current policies, and future plans being discussed, indicating how parents can be involved.

#### School Handbooks: A Good Beginning

Many schools use student handbooks to communicate general information about the school, including the school's philosophy, mission statement, purpose, and ways for school and family to work together. The handouts should be reviewed each year for accuracy. PTAs often work with school personnel to ensure that the handbook answers the questions parents most often ask. Sometimes, PTAs publish the school handbook.

A school handbook might contain the following:

- School address, phone number, FAX number, and Web site
- Routine school procedures, regulations, and code of conduct
- The year's calendar
- Sample daily/weekly schedules
- Attendance policy and system for notification about student absence and tardiness
- Grading and reporting system, including interim reports
- School homework expectations and district homework policy
- Availability of faculty and administration for conferences
- Resources and guidance available for parents
- Grade-level curriculum standards
- School lunch and nutrition program
- Transportation schedules, fees, and regulations
- Student health and immunization policies
- Policies on safety, emergencies, parties
- Facts on student clubs, organizations, and activities
- Information on field trips and special outings
- Volunteer opportunities

If published annually, it might include the following:

- Names of student officers
- Names of school personnel
- Names of PTA leaders and of officers of other parent groups'
- Schedule of PTA and other parent group meetings

## Web Sites

A well-designed and comprehensive Web site is a useful tool for communicating to parents and prospective families.

A school's Web site can include all of the information contained in the school handbook. However, because many families do not have Internet access, this information still should be available in print. In addition to the information above, a Web site might contain the following:

- Administrator's welcome letter
- Map of the school
- Directories of teachers, staff, and administrators, including e-mail addresses
- Class assignments from teachers
- Parent newsletter
- PTA information
- Examples of student work



- Student publications
- Class offerings and schedules (secondary)
- Links to other schools or the school district
- Links to homework help, libraries, museums, etc.
- Recent news

One of the best features of having a Web site is the ability to update it as often as is needed.

School Web sites can be simple or comprehensive; it all depends on the resources available. Sometimes, parents help create or provide information for the Web site.

## Newsletters

Newsletters are a key component of a good school-to-home communication plan. Parents who receive newsletters regularly know more about the school and feel more connected. When newsletters are mailed home, they are the most effective means of keeping the parents of secondary students informed. By including mini-surveys for parent response on critical topics, the newsletter can be a valuable two-way communication tool.

Distribution of the newsletter should be frequent (at least once a month) and regular, since it is often the school's primary communication tool. Since 65–85% of the surrounding neighborhood may not have children in the school, sending the newsletter to these homes and local businesses can be an important way of increasing school support.

Extensive information on preparing newsletters can be found in the California State PTA Toolkit. The newsletter may include the following:

- A “message to parents” from the principal
- News of school events and parent activities
- Information on topics of interest

It is a good idea to evaluate the newsletter annually to see whether it is meeting the readers’ needs.

The following ideas may increase the likelihood that the newsletter will get home and be read:

- Use an identifying masthead, including the school logo.
- Include a Table of Contents
- Adhere to a regular and frequent publication schedule.
- Publish a calendar well in advance so parents can schedule, plan, anticipate, and attend events.
- Use headlines to make it easy to find topics; be brief.
- Use bullets, as done here, to emphasize key points.
- Include student writing and artwork in the newsletter.
- Translate into the language(s) children speak at home.
- Mail the newsletter home or send it home in a large manila envelope with the school or PTA logo.
- Have a tear-off for parents to sign and return to school.

## E-Mail

Schools may use e-mail to send out e-newsletters, update calendar information, promote special events, make announcements, ask for assistance, distribute parent surveys, and/or provide emergency information (i.e., school closures).

Establishing, maintaining, and regularly using school-parent-community e-mail systems takes some initial work but can prove worthwhile. The heaviest commitment is in establishing the initial mailing list. A single form can be completed by parents at registrations, Open House, or Back-to-School Night, or in a newsletter or volunteer information flyer that is sent home.

The school may want to refresh their e-mail addresses yearly. New parents can be added, and parents of graduated students deleted. Privacy is

critical—these addresses should never be used to send personal messages.

## COMMUNICATION FROM THE TEACHER

Introductory or welcome letters sent by teachers to the parents before the first day of school or at the beginning of the term greatly strengthen home-school relations. Parents are often more comfortable if the teacher makes the initial contact; it may later make it easier for parents to talk to the teacher. To encourage two-way communication, the letter might also contain a tear-off portion to be returned with information including when parents can be contacted by phone, meet for conferences, or help in the classroom. (See “Dear Parents...” sample letter in the Handouts section of this chapter.)

A get-acquainted or welcome letter might contain the following:

- Introductory information about the teacher
- Teacher’s telephone number at school, office hours, and e-mail
- A note on the important role parents play in their child’s education
- Description of classroom procedures
- Homework and grading expectations
- Reading lists or projects students can work on at home
- Information on upcoming parent-teacher activities
- Suggestions for ways parents can assist the teacher

### Communication Helps Parents Know How to Help

Broad parent involvement improves student success. To be effective in helping both their students and the teacher, parents need information on a regular basis—daily, weekly, or periodically. Even in secondary schools where progress reports serve as an interim contact and early warning, they frequently do not spell out deficiencies, unmastered skills, or missing assignments.

At back-to-school nights, in the welcome/introduction letters, and at parent-teacher conferences, teachers can tell parents how homework is handled in their room. Homework provides a window into the classroom. Parents can see the skills their child is learning and chart the successes or difficulties the child is having. Ideally, a system of daily or weekly communication is in place to pro-



vide parents with information on how to monitor homework assignments and assist their child.

## CONFERENCES

### It's Time for a Parent-Teacher Conference

A conference is simply a meeting between a parent and a school professional such as a teacher, counselor, or principal in order to talk about the child. There are many times when the student also takes part in the conference.

A conference may take place by phone, but usually a person-to-person meeting is more productive because:

- The parent and the teacher can examine the student's work together.
- The teacher can demonstrate learning processes and suggest ways the parent can help the child at home.
- Both can agree on goals and write them into a plan of action during the meeting.
- A high school counselor can take the time to describe available courses or alternative educational programs offered by the school district.

#### Why Conferences Are Important

Parents have a right and a responsibility to see that their child is getting the best education possible. Conferences help keep parents informed about their child's performance at school, both as a student and as an individual. If parents are concerned that a child is not receiving the necessary attention, conferences with the teacher, the principal, or other school staff members help ensure that the child's needs are met.



When the parent and teacher communicate regularly, it is easier to identify and talk about concerns. If a problem does arise, it is easier to resolve because a relationship between home and school already exists.

*At a parent-teacher conference, parents provide valuable information about their child that the teacher will use to help the child succeed.*

### Reasons for Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are generally held for the reasons listed in the following paragraphs. Asking yourself why a conference is being held will help you prepare for it.

#### *Parent-Teacher Conferences*

##### **Is it a conference regularly scheduled by the teacher to review the report card?**

Parents should be ready to share how their child feels about school, class work, peer pressure, recess, etc. Keeping samples of schoolwork brought home by the child in a special folder makes it easy to review before and during a conference.

#### *Parent Requested*

##### **Is the conference requested by the parents to seek help in solving a problem?**

Parents have a responsibility to be fully prepared for a meeting at their request. They need to have an accurate account of the facts as the parents and child understand them, as well as clear, concise reasons for their concerns. It is critical that the parent have possible solutions and a specific goal in mind for this type of conference.

#### *Teacher or School Requested*

##### **Has the conference been arranged by the teacher or other school staff member in order to get the parent's help in solving a problem?**

Parents should ask for a clear explanation of the problem prior to the meeting. Parents need time to talk with their child and think about possible solutions.

#### *Referral for Possible Special Services*

##### **Does the child have continuing problems, either academically or behaviorally?**

A thorough assessment of the child may be needed in order to find out if additional services are appropriate. Either the parents or the school can

request a meeting to discuss having the child evaluated by the school psychologist. Gathering information and conducting a professional assessment is the first step in determining a child's eligibility for special services.

Parents should ask for a full explanation of the services available at the school site and through the school district. Often, an instructional plan that calls for individual or small group tutoring will enable a child to keep up with his grade level. If not, a thorough understanding about placement in a special program is essential.

### ***College and Career Planning***

**Has the conference been scheduled for the parents, student, and school counselor to discuss the high school classes necessary for college or a chosen career?**

These conferences usually take place during high school. However, parents may begin discussing college and career plans with their children during elementary school.

Some children believe they cannot work toward a certain career or go on to college. When schools encourage students and their parents to explore career and college opportunities, parents become aware of and can begin discussing the many opportunities and choices available to their students.

### **Before the Conference**

If the school requests the meeting, parents should request contact, information in case they have questions before the meeting. Once parents know what type of conference is scheduled, they can prepare. Parents should talk with their child, making sure they understand how he views the teacher, his classmates, and the school. If a student is having academic problems, parents should review schoolwork before the meeting. Depending on the age of the child and the reason for the conference, the parents should decide whether the child should attend. In secondary schools, the school may request the student also attend.

**Note:** *Children may not have the vocabulary to express their feelings, or they may be unable to do so if there is a problem. It is important to listen to children carefully and to watch for closed body language and facial expressions when you talk about school.*

### **During the Conference**

During the meeting, parents can focus on the question, "What do my child and I want as a result of this meeting?" The underlying goal of any parent-teacher conference is to make school and learning positive experiences for their child. By being prepared, thinking positively, taking notes, and staying calm throughout the meeting, parents have a greater opportunity to help their child succeed.

If something is said during the meeting that the parents do not understand, they should ask for clarification immediately. If parents disagree, they should say so courteously and then state their point of view. Together, the parents and the teacher should agree on the goals they want to help the student work toward during the next grading period.

Whether a conference is requested by parents or by the school, a plan of action or a contract can be developed where in each person's responsibilities, including the student's, are spelled out.

### **DEVELOPING A PLAN OF ACTION**

If a follow-up plan to the conference is needed, make sure each person understands the goals everyone has adopted, what will happen next, and who is responsible for taking each step. This plan also should provide a timeline and define how progress will be measured and reported between the home and the school.

One action plan is a "contract" in which the student, the teacher, and the parent each agree to take certain actions. (See Sample Contract.)

Effective contracts:

- Clearly define responsibilities for student, teacher, and parents.
- State a time period to complete each goal, such as in the next two days or the next six weeks, depending on the age of the student and the goal. The time period for the agreed-upon action should be short enough that the student can feel successful, yet long enough for him/her to achieve the goal.
- Clearly describe acceptable and unacceptable behavior and the consequences for the latter.

### **SHARING THE PLAN OF ACTION**

If the student were not present at the conference, parents should talk with their child about the meeting, goals, and action plan. Take notes during

the conference. If appropriate, the action plan can be shared with older brothers, sisters, or other family members, who are often role models. This is a time when parents can help their child understand how important school is and how much they really care about him/her learning.

To ensure that the action plan is working, parents need to contact the teacher regularly at the times agreed to in the contract. They should compare notes, even when things seem to be going well, and especially when things are not going as planned. A series of conferences may be necessary to resolve serious issues.

### After the Conference

When the conference is over, parents should express their appreciation for the time and effort taken on behalf of their child. It is also important to decide which steps are to be taken, by whom, and when. If necessary, another meeting can be scheduled.

### Resolving the Unresolved

If a parent and teacher cannot resolve a problem, the parent can take additional steps. Even if the parent and teacher have met, a parent always has the right to confer with the principal. The following steps may be used, if it becomes necessary to take a concern beyond the teacher.

**Note:** It is important for parents to be calm and focused on their child's education. **Parents need to keep in mind that finding ways to help their child can be extremely challenging, and solutions will not always be found easily and quickly.**

#### STEP 1:

Make an appointment to speak with the child's counselor (if there is one) or the principal. The best avenue for solving a problem is with both the teacher and the counselor/principal—teachers and principals want happy, satisfied parents.

**It is important for parents to help the principal and the teacher find ways to work toward a solution that enables the child to be successful.**

Therefore, time should be taken to prepare carefully and thoughtfully for the conference. Parents should review notes from all previous meetings and prepare their presentation by listing points to

be discussed. Parents should bring notes from previous meetings, **listen carefully** to what is being said, and **think carefully** about their response.

Ideally, the principal or counselor will be able to suggest steps that neither the parents, nor the teacher has thought of trying. This may involve seeking additional help for the child outside of school. Again, an action plan or contract may be appropriate and used to spell out each person's responsibilities in working toward the agreed-upon goals.

**Note:** *Parents may want the child to be present for all or part of this discussion, particularly if he/she is in middle or high school. It is often easier for the child to accept his/her part of the action plan if he/she has been able to take part in developing it.*

#### STEP 2:

If the conference with the principal or counselor does not satisfy the parents' concerns, the next step is to ask to speak with the principal's superior. This formal procedure often requires completing a form or writing a letter describing the problem. If the issue is still unaddressed, the parents may contact the school district superintendent or the Board of Education.

**Note:** *If parents are concerned about making a verbal or written presentation, it is acceptable to ask the school district if there is someone who can give them assistance. This may be particularly helpful for parents with limited English skills. Parents may ask the PTA for help in describing the issue in writing. **The PTA does not have to agree with the parents in order to help them exercise their parental rights.***

### REPORT CARDS: THINGS TO REMEMBER

When report cards are issued, parents and children may have varying reactions. If parents lose sight of the fact that their child is a learner and look only for perfection, report card time can be stressful for the high achiever as well as the low achiever.

**REPORT CARD**

Name: JANE EYER

School: Kennedy EL Grade: 4 Track: D

HS: 1938 Teacher: Miss Cavanaugh

**MAJOR SUBJECT AREAS:**  
 A = Superior (Exceeds Grade Achievement)  
 B = Above Average (Exceeds Grade Achievement)  
 C = Average Grade Achievement  
 D = Below Average (Needs Improvement)  
 F = Failing (Needs Improvement)

**SUPPORT:**  
 S = Satisfactory  
 I = Inadequate  
 N = Needs Improvement

LANGUAGE ARTS		REPORT PERIOD		
		1st	2nd	3rd
READING	effort	A	B	C
WRITTEN LANGUAGE	effort	A	B	C
ORAL LANGUAGE	effort	A	B	C
MATHEMATICS	effort	A	B	C
Work (1-3) indicates improvement needed				
Comments: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z, AA, AB, AC, AD, AE, AF, AG, AH, AI, AJ, AK, AL, AM, AN, AO, AP, AQ, AR, AS, AT, AU, AV, AW, AX, AY, AZ, BA, BB, BC, BD, BE, BF, BG, BH, BI, BJ, BK, BL, BM, BN, BO, BP, BQ, BR, BS, BT, BU, BV, BW, BX, BY, BZ, CA, CB, CC, CD, CE, CF, CG, CH, CI, CJ, CK, CL, CM, CN, CO, CP, CQ, CR, CS, CT, CU, CV, CW, CX, CY, CZ, DA, DB, DC, DD, DE, DF, DG, DH, DI, DJ, DK, DL, DM, DN, DO, DP, DQ, DR, DS, DT, DU, DV, DW, DX, DY, DZ, EA, EB, EC, ED, EE, EF, EG, EH, EI, EJ, EK, EL, EM, EN, EO, EP, EQ, ER, ES, ET, EU, EV, EW, EX, EY, EZ, FA, FB, FC, FD, FE, FF, FG, FH, FI, FJ, FK, FL, FM, FN, FO, FP, FQ, FR, FS, FT, FU, FV, FW, FX, FY, FZ, GA, GB, GC, GD, GE, GF, GG, GH, GI, GJ, GK, GL, GM, GN, GO, GP, GQ, GR, GS, GT, GU, GV, GW, GX, GY, GZ, HA, HB, HC, HD, HE, HF, HG, HH, HI, HJ, HK, HL, HM, HN, HO, HP, HQ, HR, HS, HT, HU, HV, HW, HX, HY, HZ, IA, IB, IC, ID, IE, IF, IG, IH, II, IJ, IK, IL, IM, IN, IO, IP, IQ, IR, IS, IT, IU, IV, IW, IX, IY, IZ, JA, JB, JC, JD, JE, JF, JG, JH, JI, JJ, JK, JL, JM, JN, JO, JP, JQ, JR, JS, JT, JU, JV, JW, JX, JY, JZ, KA, KB, KC, KD, KE, KF, KG, KH, KI, KJ, KK, KL, KM, KN, KO, KP, KQ, KR, KS, KT, KU, KV, KW, KX, KY, KZ, LA, LB, LC, LD, LE, LF, LG, LH, LI, LJ, LK, LL, LM, LN, LO, LP, LQ, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, LW, LX, LY, LZ, MA, MB, MC, MD, ME, MF, MG, MH, MI, MJ, MK, ML, MM, MN, MO, MP, MQ, MR, MS, MT, MU, MV, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NB, NC, ND, NE, NF, NG, NH, NI, NJ, NK, NL, NM, NN, NO, NP, NQ, NR, NS, NT, NU, NV, NW, NX, NY, NZ, OA, OB, OC, OD, OE, OF, OG, OH, OI, OJ, OK, OL, OM, ON, OO, OP, OQ, OR, OS, OT, OU, OV, OW, OX, OY, OZ, PA, PB, PC, PD, PE, PF, PG, PH, PI, PJ, PK, PL, PM, PN, PO, PP, PQ, PR, PS, PT, PU, PV, PW, PX, PY, PZ, QA, QB, QC, QD, QE, QF, QG, QH, QI, QJ, QK, QL, QM, QN, QO, QP, QQ, QR, QS, QT, QU, QV, QW, QX, QY, QZ, RA, RB, RC, RD, RE, RF, RG, RH, RI, RJ, RK, RL, RM, RN, RO, RP, RQ, RR, RS, RT, RU, RV, RW, RX, RY, RZ, SA, SB, SC, SD, SE, SF, SG, SH, SI, SJ, SK, SL, SM, SN, SO, SP, SQ, SR, SS, ST, SU, SV, SW, SX, SY, SZ, TA, TB, TC, TD, TE, TF, TG, TH, TI, TJ, TK, TL, TM, TN, TO, TP, TQ, TR, TS, TT, TU, TV, TW, TX, TY, TZ, UA, UB, UC, UD, UE, UF, UG, UH, UI, UJ, UK, UL, UM, UN, UO, UP, UQ, UR, US, UT, UY, UZ, VA, VB, VC, VD, VE, VF, VG, VH, VI, VJ, VK, VL, VM, VN, VO, VP, VQ, VR, VS, VT, VU, VV, VW, VX, VY, VZ, WA, WB, WC, WD, WE, WF, WG, WH, WI, WJ, WK, WL, WM, WN, WO, WP, WQ, WR, WS, WT, WU, WV, WW, WX, WY, WZ, XA, XB, XC, XD, XE, XF, XG, XH, XI, XJ, XK, XL, XM, XN, XO, XP, XQ, XR, XS, XT, XU, XV, XW, XX, XY, XZ, YA, YB, YC, YD, YE, YF, YG, YH, YI, YJ, YK, YL, YM, YN, YO, YP, YQ, YR, YS, YT, YU, YV, YW, YX, YY, YZ, ZA, ZB, ZC, ZD, ZE, ZF, ZG, ZH, ZI, ZJ, ZK, ZL, ZM, ZN, ZO, ZP, ZQ, ZR, ZS, ZT, ZU, ZV, ZW, ZX, ZY, ZZ				

Children go to school to “work” at the job of learning. As learners, students progress at their own rates and learn in their own ways. They need support and encouragement when learning new skills. The report card, as an evaluation of how well a student is doing in school, can be just as stressful to a child as a job evaluation can be for a parent. There may be times when students need extra support and encouragement, particularly if the student finds it hard to adjust to the first years of school or a new learning situation.

### Effort and Improvement Deserve Praise

Even if a child brings home low grades—Ds and Fs, parents should acknowledge effort and remember that improvement as well as high grades can show academic success. The child's strong points should be stressed, especially if his/her strengths are not academic. The family should focus on ways to help improve weak areas. Above all, parents should never ridicule or threaten their children. They should strive to build the child's confidence and feelings of self-worth as well as to encourage a willingness to try harder. The long-term goal of education is for children to succeed over a lifetime of learning, not just in one class or semester.

### WHERE TO GO FOR ANSWERS

See the **Resource** section for a guide to schools, legislators, and educational organizations. It is divided into five sections in order to help parents find answers and organizations to help them.

The five sections are:

- Your Local School
- Your School District
- County and State Educational Offices
- State Government and Legislators
- Statewide Groups

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**PTA**  
**Programs/Activities**  
**Information**

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## To Promote Effective Parent-School Communication

1. Work with the school administration and staff to ensure that each classroom adopts techniques to implement consistent, two-way communication between home and classroom. At secondary levels, work with the school administration to develop creative ways to communicate between parents and teachers.
2. Campaign to have families make personal contacts with their child's teacher during the first days of school. Share how important this is through newsletter articles or in a letter from the PTA to parents. Conduct a workshop on effective communication to teachers; use information from this chapter and sample letters.
3. Encourage the school to schedule Back-to-School Night soon after the start of school and help make it an enjoyable, informative event for everyone. Hold an informal event before Back-to-School Night so parents and teachers can meet each other. Publicize the event through the newsletter, posters, phone calls, and personal contacts.
4. At a PTA program, feature a short segment on "How Parents and Teachers Can Work Together." Have teachers or the principal share how communication from the home helps them work with each child, or request a Building Successful Partnership presentation from your PTA district. Use handouts from this section and follow through with parents who are interested in participating.
5. Make the newsletter a top priority for PTA, working with school staff to increase its effectiveness in covering school, student, and parent news.
6. Invite school counselors to present a program at a PTA meeting telling about the many ways they can help students and parents.



## PTA Letter Welcoming New Parents

*This sample letter is designed for inclusion in a packet for parents who are new to the school.*

Date

Dear Parents:

Welcome to (name of school) and the (name of) PTA. The PTA at (name of school) is very special, because all parents are treated as VIPs—Very Important Parents. To help you get to know our school and PTA, we have enclosed the following materials for your use:

- Parent Checklist . . .a reminder about school information.
- PTA Program Book . . .has information about PTA, school, and community.
- PTA Membership Envelope . . .dues are only \$\_\_\_\_\_ per person.
- Volunteer Sign-Up Sheet . . .for whenever your time allows.

In addition, you might want to ask the office for the School Handbook. It covers the school rules and policies that you and your child need to know. Since it was written with the help of our students, there is information that will be of interest to your children.

We look forward to seeing you at our next school event. Our monthly PTA newsletter will keep you up to date. Join us in supporting all students and parents at our school.

We also urge you to become a Very Involved Parent by establishing close contact with your child's teacher(s) right away.



*This sample letter is designed for inclusion in a packet for parents who are new to the school. The following sample letters can be used as handouts or transparencies at a program or workshop where the importance of communicating with teachers and counselors is the topic. Ideally, this kind of information should be offered early in the school year.*

**Parents “Introduce” Themselves—  
To the teacher and—**

Date

Dear Ms. Talbot,

Carmen Rojas, our oldest child, will be in your third grade class this year. We want to work with you in every way so that she has a successful year.

You can reach us at home at (home phone) after 4:00, or you may call me at (work phone) during the day. Our e-mail address is: (e-mail). We will appreciate hearing about Carmen’s progress during the year.

José and I look forward to meeting you at the Back-to-School Night.

Sincerely,  
Maria Rojas

**—To the Counselor**

Date

Dear Ms. Golden:

I understand that you are the counselor for my daughter, Melanie Jones, who is in seventh grade this year. Melanie has always enjoyed school and is making plans to attend college. Any encouragement along these lines would be appreciated.

Since I am a working single parent, I would appreciate you or Mel’s teachers calling me at work, if there is anything I need to know. I can be reached there at (work phone) or at home in the evening at (home phone). My e-mail address is (e-mail).

Sincerely,  
Gary Jones

### Notes After a School Absence

Date

Dear Mr. Garcia,

Tommy was out of school for the past three days because of a severe cold. Please excuse his absence and send any make-up work you think is necessary.

Judy King

### —And a Note Used to Plan Ahead of Time.

Date

Dear Mrs. Reynolds,

Richard will be out of class for two weeks, because we are traveling to the East Coast for a family gathering. I regret that this has happened during the school year. However, we think the trip will be a good experience for him. I have notified the office that Rick will be gone from March 26 to April 6.

I don't want Rick to fall behind in his schoolwork, so could you give him some assignments that follow the planned class work? I can help him as we travel. Please call me at \_\_\_\_\_ if there is any problem. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,  
Betty Smith

## Counselors Help Parents, Too!

### Sample parent phone call asking the counselor to do a quick survey of the student's classes.

(Note date of phone call)

"Mrs. Alonso—I'm Carol Brewster, Phillip Brewster's mother. I hope that, as Phillip's counselor, you can help me.

Lately, my son seems very depressed about school. He doesn't talk about anything to do with school, and that isn't at all like him.

Could you check with his teachers to see if he's having any problems in class—about his work or attitude or whether he's been absent? He hasn't talked about having problems with his teachers, but I'm really concerned.

Could you call me tomorrow or the next day? Yes, my number (or e-mail) is still \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for helping."

### Requesting help on schoolwork while the student is at home due to illness.

Date

Dear Mr. Chow,

As you suggested, I have attached a letter from our family doctor to verify that Bill has been home ill with mononucleosis. The letter also indicates that Bill will have to remain at home for at least two or three more weeks.

Since Bill and I are quite concerned about his keeping up with his classes, Bill wants to do as much work at home as possible. Would you please ask his teachers to provide any class work Bill has missed so far, along with work he should be doing each week? I need to know how and when to pick up his assignments and other needed materials and how to return completed work. Should this all be handled through your office?

Please call me at work, \_\_\_\_\_, to let me know how to proceed. If you or any of Bill's teachers have suggestions on working from home, we would appreciate hearing them.

Please thank Bill's teachers for working with us on this problem.

Sincerely,

Donald Lange

## To Promote Effective Parent-School Conferences

1. Undertake a Parent-Teacher Conference Campaign to help parents understand the importance of attending their child's conferences. Use the PTA newsletter, programs, or workshops to provide parents with information that can increase the skills needed for more effective parent-teacher conferences.

If your school does not schedule regular conferences for parents, take action to help the school plan to do so. Encourage parents to request time to discuss their child's progress with each of his teachers individually.

2. Urge the school administration and staff to implement staff development on home-school communication. Administrators and PTA leaders can provide each counselor and teacher with information, materials, and training that lead to working effectively with parents and students, including how to develop an action plan.
3. Work with school administration and school staff to ensure that there is a standard school-wide process for requesting a conference that parents, counselors, or teachers may use when any one of them considers it necessary.
4. Make sure that workshops for staff and parents including discussions of the differences between a conference for a report card and one requested by the teacher or the parent to solve a problem. Request that the training enable all participants to focus on cooperative problem-solving rather than on blame or anger.
5. Ask the school counselor(s) to present an in-depth program on the various problems with which counselors can help parents, such as changing their child's behaviors or attitude toward school or providing career and college guidance.
6. Encourage staff to explore innovative ways of scheduling conferences that take into account the parents' work hours, baby-sitting or transportation problems, and language needs.
7. Suggest that the school staff use the Parent Evaluation Form to provide useful feedback on parent-teacher conferences.
8. Help parents and teachers understand that meaningful conferences are important for the high-performing, average, and low-performing student. Improvement strategies for every student should be expected; student efforts should be acknowledged by adult efforts.



*The following sample letters and forms can be used  
as handouts or transparencies for a program or workshop.*

## Sample Conference Follow-up Forms

### Report of Parent-Teacher Conference

Date of Conference \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

STRONG POINTS:

IMPROVEMENT NEEDS:

PLANS TO HELP THE CHILD:

### Post-Conference Response Form

I have been listening to \_\_\_\_\_ read for 15 minutes a night, five nights a week.

	Yes	No	Somewhat
I am enjoying this time together.	___	___	___
Student cannot sit still to read for 15 minutes.	___	___	___
The books student brings home are too difficult.	___	___	___
I need more help.	___	___	___
I see an improvement.	___	___	___

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*(Adapted from the Poway Unified School District)*

### Sample Conference Follow-up Letter from the Teacher to the Parent

Date

Dear Mrs. Garcia,

Thank you for your help at yesterday's conference. As we agreed, I am summarizing our conference and the things we each decided to do.

We both agree that Cindy learns quickly and is eager to do her schoolwork correctly. The problem is that she is frequently late to school and then doesn't know what the class is doing. She gets frustrated being out of step and starts to bother her classmates.

You helped me better understand Cindy's situation by telling me she gets up in plenty of time for school and seems to get sufficient sleep yet is very slow getting dressed and ready for school. She becomes easily distracted and begins playing with her toys or watching television.

Together we agreed to help Cindy learn to be on time by doing the following:

1. I will teach spelling, one of her favorite subjects, first in the morning to increase her desire to arrive at school on time.
2. I will verbally praise her for being on time.
3. You will put the kitchen timer in Cindy's room to remind her how many minutes she has left until she must leave the house for school.
4. You and Cindy will select her clothes the evening before.
5. Cindy will agree not to watch morning TV or play until she is dressed, has eaten, and has everything ready for school.

I will call you on Thursday at 5:30 p.m., so we can compare how things are going at home and at school. I'm sure our plan will work, but feel free to let me know about any problems that arise.

As we decided, I have provided a space for each of us to sign, so that Cindy will know we all are working together on our action plan.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

(Adapted from *Communicating With Parents*, San Diego County Office of Education)

Sample Letter Requesting a Meeting with the Principal

Date

Dear Mrs. Jacobian,

I would like to meet with you to talk over the concerns I have about my daughter, Christy Saunders. She seems to be having a great deal of difficulty this year in Mr. Larson's class. The teacher and I have talked several times, but with no agreement on how we can help Christy. I believe it is necessary to have a parent-principal conference.

I will be able to meet with you at any time this week. If you will let me know when it is convenient for you, I will make arrangements to be away from work. I prefer to meet without Mr. Larson's being present, at least at the beginning of our discussion. It might be helpful to have him come in later or include him at a follow-up meeting.

Thank you for your help. I am most anxious to hear from you. Please call me at work (\_\_\_\_\_) or at home (\_\_\_\_\_) after 5:30 to set a time for our meeting.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Sally Anderson

### Sample Contract from a Conference on Attendance and Academic Problems

#### **Student Attendance Review Team Contractual Agreement**

The \_\_\_\_\_ School Student Attendance and Review Team (SART) believes that \_\_\_\_\_ will benefit from the following directives that have been agreed to by the parties signing below.

**The student shall:**

- Attend school each day school is in session.
- Arrive at school and at all classes on time each day.
- Remain at school for the full time assigned.
- Abide by the school rules and maintain appropriate behavior while at school.
- Report to the counselor or administrator of the school as directed.

**The parent(s) shall:**

- Be aware of their legal obligation to see that their child attends school, arrives on time, and remains at school for the full time as assigned each day school is in session.
- Attend all meetings and conferences concerning their child at school.
- When requested, attend school with their child or escort their child to school.

**The Student Attendance and Review Team shall:**

- Report absences to the district School Attendance and Review Team.
- Arrange for additional counseling for the student.
- Arrange for additional testing to reaffirm appropriate placement.

**To the student:**

The purpose of this contract is to provide all possible assistance to you in improving your school attendance and achievement. By signing this contract, you state that you are willing to do your best. Even with support from the school and your parent(s), your success as a student and as an individual rests with your desire to achieve.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Review Dates \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of SART Chairperson

(Adapted from *Communicating With Parents*, San Diego County Office of Education)



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## Handouts/Articles

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**Sample Compact Among Student, Parent, Teacher and Administrator****Partners in Learning**

We know that children learn from adults and that love and caring, encouragement, positive support, and a wholesome, nurturing environment are critical to the healthy development of every child. We are committed to working together, with each of us doing our best to promote \_\_\_\_\_ 's achievement.  
*student name*

**As a student, I pledge to:**

- Work as hard as I can on my school assignments.
- Tell my parents what I am learning in school.
- Ask my teacher for help when I don't understand something.
- Follow my school's Code of Student Conduct.
- Limit my TV watching and read books instead.

Student signature \_\_\_\_\_

**As a parent, I pledge to:**

- Provide a quiet study time at home and encourage good study habits.
- Talk with my child about his/her activities every day.
- Know how my child is progressing by attending conferences, looking at schoolwork, talking to the teacher, and being involved with the school.
- Participate in decisions that affect my child's education.
- Encourage my child to read by reading to him/her and by reading myself.
- Limit my child's TV viewing, help select worthwhile programs, and watch TV together.

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_

**As a teacher, I pledge to:**

- Provide motivating and interesting learning experiences in my classroom.
- Explain my goals, expectations, and grading system to students and parents.
- Find out what teaching methods and materials work best for each student.
- Explain the Code of Student Conduct to students and parents.
- Work with each parent to ensure their child's best possible education.

Teacher signature \_\_\_\_\_

**As a principal/administrator, I pledge to:**

- Create a welcoming and positive learning environment at our school.
- Talk with students and parents about the school's mission and goals.
- Ensure a safe and orderly learning environment.
- Support the partnership between parent, student, faculty, and staff.
- Encourage parents to be involved in decisions that affect their child's education.
- Provide appropriate in-service and training for teachers and for parents.

Principal signature \_\_\_\_\_

We promise to work together to help each other carry out this agreement.

Signed on this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

### Sample Student-Teacher-Parent Contract

Each student should be helped to reach his/her highest potential for intellectual, emotional, and physical growth. To achieve this, the home and school must work together by recognizing and agreeing upon the responsibilities of each party in the learning process.

**As a student, I will be responsible for:**

1. Showing respect and cooperating with all adults at the school.
2. Coming to class on time prepared to work.
3. Completing all assignments to the best of my ability.
4. Respecting the rights of others to learn without disruption.
5. Showing respect for people and property by not using profanity, stealing, or vandalizing.
6. Practicing the rules in the Code of Student Conduct.
7. Spending time at home on daily studying or reading.

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Student Signature\_\_\_\_\_

**As a teacher, I will be responsible for:**

1. Providing instruction in a way that will motivate and encourage my students.
2. Providing a safe and positive atmosphere for learning.
3. Explaining assignments so that my students have a clear understanding.
4. Supplying clear evaluations of student progress to students and parents.

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Signature\_\_\_\_\_

**As a parent, I will be responsible for:**

1. Providing a caring environment, including adequate food and rest, so my child is ready to learn.
2. Providing a time and place for quiet study and reading at home.
3. Helping my child in any way possible to meet his/her responsibilities.

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature\_\_\_\_\_

(Adapted from Twin Peaks Middle School, Poway, CA)

## Checklist for Families New to the School

### Things I need to know about the school and my child's classroom:

1. I have asked for a school handbook and information on school procedures such as:
  - ☐ time the school day begins and ends
  - ☐ the earliest time my child can arrive at school
  - ☐ notification about absences by school and by parent
  - ☐ whether my child can go home for lunch
  - ☐ permission for riding a bike to school
  - ☐ availability of after-school activities
  - ☐ visiting the school and classroom
  - ☐ school disaster preparedness plan
  - ☐ availability of school and district communications: newsletters, Superintendent's newsletter, School Accountability Report Card, School District Web site, etc.
2. I have contacted my child's teacher to introduce myself, supplied needed information about our family, and set up a way for us to communicate on a regular basis. I did this:
  - ☐ by e-mail
  - ☐ by phone
  - ☐ by writing a letter/note
  - ☐ in person
3. I made an appointment to ask the teacher about:
  - ☐ the amount of homework to be expected
  - ☐ being kept informed daily or weekly about my child's progress
  - ☐ what I can do to assist my child's progress
  - ☐ how and when to contact the teacher by phone
  - ☐ notification of tests and how results are used
4. I have signed up to support my child's school by volunteering for activities as my time allows.

## Dear Parents ... Sample Letter from the Teacher

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents,

Welcome to room # \_\_\_\_\_. I am \_\_\_\_\_, your child's \_\_\_\_\_ grade teacher. I am looking forward to a happy and successful year working with you and your child. It is important for the children that we work together. I hope we can get to know each other better during the year.

The following information about me may be of interest to you: I attended \_\_\_\_\_ college. I have been teaching for \_\_\_\_\_ years and have been at \_\_\_\_\_ school for \_\_\_\_\_ years.

I will be in contact with you from time to time to talk about your child. I will also be sending home a daily homework folder Tuesdays through Fridays. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need any information. My number at school is \_\_\_\_\_, and the best time to reach me is between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, or you can reach me by e-mail at \_\_\_\_\_.

I like to have parents visit the classroom at least once each semester. Of course, you are welcome as a visitor or volunteer. I hope you will visit often.

There will be a special Parent's Night in a few weeks. One of our room parents or I will contact you regarding the meeting. I look forward to meeting you in person.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

----- Please tear off and return -----

Yes, I would like to meet with you for a 30-minute parent-teacher conference scheduled during November \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, between 2:30-8:30 p.m.

Preferred times are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_.

Preferred dates are November \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_.

Student's name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information \_\_\_\_\_

(Adapted from *Communicating With Parents*, San Diego County Office of Education)

## Effective Parent-Teacher Conferences

Your school may schedule conferences regularly with you to discuss your child's report card. If not, you may ask for such a conference. A conference also may be requested when either you or the teacher believe there's a problem. Whatever the reason, an effective parent-teacher conference is one of the best ways for you and the teacher to establish and reinforce a partnership, so the two of you can work together for your child's success. Your knowledge of your child and your point of view are important for the teacher, and the teacher's professional viewpoint and advice are important to you. The conference is the time for this important exchange of information to take place.

### BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

- **Be sure you understand the purpose of the conference.** Whether the conference is one in a regularly scheduled series of meetings to discuss your child's academic progress or report card or has been requested to discuss a problem or concern, remember that you and the teacher meet as adults mutually concerned about your child's achievement and well-being.
- **Talk with your child before you go.** Ask what she likes about school, what she dislikes or would like changed. What are her feelings about the teacher, the class environment, the playground, herself? Has anything changed at school to change her opinion?
- **Write down things it would be helpful for the teacher to know, such as:**
  - Any unusual stress at home.
  - Your child's relationship with brothers, sisters, and others at home.
  - What your child likes to do in free time.
  - Organized activities in which your child participates.
  - Your perception of your child as a learner and as a person.
  - Previous school experiences, if you think it would be helpful.
- **Write down questions you have for the teacher.**
  - How much homework will my child have? How should I help?
  - How are grades decided?
  - What is the classroom discipline policy?
  - What kinds of tests are given? What do they mean?
- **Write down questions you have about your child.**
  - How is my child doing in reading, math, and other subjects compared to her potential; compared to her peers at her grade level?
  - How is my child doing socially? Does he get along with others?
  - What does she like to do? What does she not like to do?
  - Does he seem happy in school? Are there any problems?
  - What can I do at home to support classroom learning activities?
- **Include questions you have about why things are done a certain way:**
  - What happens to the homework after it is handed in?
  - How does a child move into a different reading group, etc.?
  - Why are there more students in some classes and fewer in others?
- **Whenever possible, both parents or guardians should attend the conference.**
- **You have the right to have an interpreter at the conference.** However, if you need one, remember to ask in advance.

**DURING THE CONFERENCE**

- **Keep in mind that you are meeting with your child's teacher, not your own.** You are meeting as partners, which means meeting as equals, sharing the responsibility for your child's education.
- **Come prepared to listen first.** Teachers often have information they want to share which will answer some of your concerns.
- **Tell the teacher the things you have listed in your notes from home that you think would be helpful for her to know.**
- **Ask the questions on your list.** As other questions come up during the discussion, make sure you discuss your child's achievements and development—academically, socially, and emotionally.
- **If you do not understand something, immediately ask to have it explained.**
- **Ask the teacher what specific activities** you can do at home that would help your child's progress. Sometimes an **"action plan"** can be worked out to tell you how to help your child at home and what the teacher will do at school. Make sure it is clear who is to do what and when; what has been agreed on for the teacher to do, the parent to do, and the student to do; and how all will stay in contact.
- **Take notes during the conference, so you can remember what was said.**
- **Assure the teacher of your continued support.** State your appreciation for the opportunity to discuss your child's education.

**AFTER THE CONFERENCE**

- **Share what occurred at the conference with your child by:**
  - stressing positive points brought out by the teacher;
  - praising your child's achievements;
  - discussing the action plan on which you and the teacher agreed.
- **Follow through with the action plan, keeping in touch with the teacher.**



## Parent Checklist for Effective Parent-Teacher Conferences

Take time before the conference to think about your child—his strengths and weaknesses, study and learning habits, classmates, and homework. Review your child's file of schoolwork and talk with him about his feelings toward school. Jot down things you want to share with the teacher and questions you want answered. Take this conference time with the teacher to discuss your child's all-around performance at school.

### Questions to ask your child before going to the conference:

- What do you like about the classroom?
- What would you like to change?
- Do you understand the work? Do you feel you're doing well? What makes you think you are or are not?
- I know you're doing your homework every day. Do you hand it in?
  - What happens to it after you hand it in?
  - Do you get it back? How soon after you hand it in?
  - Do you find out if you made any mistakes?
  - Does the teacher help you understand what you were doing wrong?
  - Do you correct the mistakes?

### Questions you might consider asking the teacher:

- What are my child's best and worst subjects, and how can I help him improve or do better?
- Is my child working up to his potential? If not, why not, and how can I help?
- Is my child's schoolwork progressing as it should? If not, how can I help him catch up? If my child is ahead of other students, what will serve as a challenge or encouragement?
- How does my child get along with his classmates? Does he participate in group activities? Is he unusually shy? Too aggressive? Does he seem to have friends?
- How does my child get along with you and other teachers? Are there any special behavior or learning problems of which I need to be aware? Does he participate in class discussions and talk about his interests and activities?
- What kinds of tests are being given this year? When? What are the tests supposed to tell, and what have they told you about my child so far?
- Is my child's homework turned in on time, in completed form, and done as it should be? Is there any continuing homework problem? How can I help? How much time should be spent on homework each night?

### Questions you may want to ask if the conference is to resolve concerns that you have as a parent:

- Has my child any unexplained absences, or problems with attendance or tardiness?
- Have you noticed any recent changes in either my child's behavior or schoolwork? Do you see any signs of possible emotional or physical problems?
- As the teacher (principal, counselor), what do you think is the problem? What is your point of view?
- If we agree that this is the problem, how do you think we should deal with it?
- This is what I would like to see change. What would you like to have happen?
- How do you think we can work together to make this change take place? What kind of action plan or contract can we agree to for this to happen?



## Parent Evaluation Form for Parent-Teacher Conferences

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents:

In an effort to improve the quality and effectiveness of parent-teacher conferences, we would like you to complete the following questionnaire. Please circle the response that indicates how you feel about each item.

- |                                                                                                                                   |     |    |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|-------------|
| 1. I was able to discuss the things that most concern me about my child's education and overall school experience.                | Yes | No | Somewhat    |
| 2. I feel that my questions were answered satisfactorily.                                                                         | Yes | No | Somewhat    |
| 3. I felt at ease during the conference.                                                                                          | Yes | No | Somewhat    |
| 4. The teacher was courteous and treated me with respect.                                                                         | Yes | No | Somewhat    |
| 5. The focus of the conference was on the child, without irrelevant discussions about other matters.                              | Yes | No | Somewhat    |
| 6. Materials and other necessary items were organized and ready for the conference.                                               | Yes | No | Somewhat    |
| 7. I received a plan from the teacher of things I can do to maintain or improve the quality of my child's educational experience. | Yes | No | Somewhat    |
| 8. I plan to come to school again on the next conference day.                                                                     | Yes | No | If possible |
| 9. Comments: _____                                                                                                                |     |    |             |

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature (Optional)      My Child's Teacher is \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to the school office.

(Adopted from Operation *Fail-Safe*, Houston Independent School District)

# Parenting

*Parenting skills are promoted and supported.*

Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. During school years, children spend only one eighth of their time in school, and parents and caregivers spend more time with their children than any educator. Therefore, the influence parents have on their children's success in school and beyond is tremendous.

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## BIRTH TO KINDERGARTEN

### Brain and Development Stages

There exists new scientific evidence that suggests the first three years of life are much more important in the long-term development of young children than previously believed. Researchers now confirm that the way parents interact with their young children and the experiences parents provide have a big impact on their youngsters' emotional development, learning skills, and functioning later in life.

Touching, holding, rocking, talking, listening and reading, or just playing with a child dramatically influences the youngster's brain development.

Today's parents should be encouraged to begin thinking about brain development even before their child is born. A baby's brain cells multiply at an astonishing rate before birth, and it is important that brain development is supported during this crucial time. The mother's poor nutrition, drug use (legal and illegal), cigarette smoke, and use of alcohol are just a few factors that affect brain development before birth. At birth, the human brain is unfinished. It contains about 100 billion brain cells that are yet to be connected into functioning networks. By the time a child is three, the brain has formed about 1,000 trillion connections between these brain cells. Connections that are used repeatedly during a child's early years become the foundation for the brain's organization and function throughout a child's life. A youngster's environment is central in shaping the brain.

Parents can meet these needs best by providing a healthy, loving, safe, and emotionally balanced home environment. Youngsters raised by caring, attentive parents in predictable environments are better learners than those who experience less attention in less secure settings.

**The following elements of a child's health are important in early brain development:**

- **Nutrition**—A proper balanced diet plays a vital role in the growth and development throughout childhood.
- **Developmental Activities**—Direct face-to-face communication and reading between parents and their young child support language development.

- **Early Identification of Developmental Problems**—Early assessment, intervention, and referral prevent or treat many developmental and medical problems.
- **Positive Environment**—Raising a child in a positive, safe, and loving environment has a profound impact on your child's development.

### Guidelines for the Care of Young Children

#### Day-to-Day Care of the Brains of Young Children

Recent research on early brain development and school readiness suggests the following broad guidelines for the care of young children:

- **Ensure health, safety, and good nutrition**—Seek regular prenatal care, breast feed if possible, make sure your child has regular check-ups and timely immunizations, safety-proof the places where children play, and use a car seat whenever your child is traveling in a car.
- **Develop a warm, caring relationship with children**—Show them that you care deeply about them. Express joy in who they are. Help them feel safe and secure.
- **Respond to children's cues and clues**—Notice their rhythms and moods, even in the first days and weeks of life. Respond to children when they are upset as well as when they are happy. Try to understand what children are feeling, what they are telling you (in words or actions), and what they are trying to do. Hold and touch them; play with them in a way that lets you follow their lead. Respond in when children want to play, and pull back when they seem to have had enough stimulation.
- **Recognize that each child is unique**—Keep in mind that from birth, children have different temperaments, that they grow at their own pace, and that this pace varies from child to child. At the same time, have positive expectations about what children can do and hold onto the belief that every child can succeed.
- **Talk, read, and sing to children**—surround them with language. Maintain an ongoing conversation with them about what you and they are doing. Sing to them, play music, tell stories, and read books. Ask toddlers and preschoolers to guess what will come next in a story. Play word games. Ask toddlers and preschoolers questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer, like "What do you think...?" Ask children to picture things that have happened in

Connections that are used repeatedly during a child's early years become the foundation for the brain's organization and function throughout a child's life. A youngster's environment is central in shaping the brain.

the past or might happen in the future. Provide reading and writing materials, including crayons and paper, books, magazines, and toys. These are key pre-reading experiences.

- Encourage safe exploration and play—Give children opportunities to move around, explore, and play (and be prepared to step in if they are at risk of hurting themselves or others). Allow them to explore relationships as well. Arrange for children to spend time with children of their own age and of other ages. Help them learn to solve the conflicts that inevitably arise.
- Use discipline to teach—Talk to children about what they seem to be feeling and teach them words to describe those feelings. Make it clear that while you might not like the way they are behaving, you love them. Explain the rules and consequences of behavior, so children can learn the “whys” behind what you are asking them to do. Tell them what you want them to do, not just what you don’t want them to do. Point out how their behavior affects others.
- Establish routines—Create routines and rituals for special times during the day like mealtime, naptime, and bedtime. Try to be predictable, so the children know that they can count on you.
- Become involved in childcare and preschool—Keep in close touch with your children’s child-care providers or teacher about what they are doing. From time to time, especially during transitions, spend time with your children while others are caring for them.
- Limit television—Limit the time children spend watching TV shows and videos as well as the types of shows they watch. Make sure that they are watching programs that will teach them things you want them to learn.
- Limit video game and computer contact.
- Take care of yourself. You can best care for young children when you are cared for as well.

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*Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development*, Rima Shore, 1997, Families and Work Institute, 330 Seventh Ave., New York, New York 10001; (212) 465-2044; [www.familiesandwork.org](http://www.familiesandwork.org)

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## Parents Are Teachers

Parents are their child’s first, most long-lasting, and **most important teachers!** So much of the time we only think of a teacher as the person in the school classroom. However, research shows that **more is learned between birth and entering school, and is learned at a faster rate, than at any other time in a child’s life.**

From the moment a child is born, parents are teaching him/her the skills for living—how to crawl and then walk; the meaning of words and how to use them to express needs and ideas; how to solve problems and take action; how to process information about himself/herself and his world; how to be a caring, loving person who feels good about himself/herself and others. The way parents “teach” their child establishes the all-important relationship—the parent-child connection—that will be with them throughout their lives.

### Children Learn from Birth

Learning is growing, and along with playing, it is the “business” of childhood. From the very beginning, children have a constant hunger to learn—and parents are always teaching. Without realizing it, parents are constantly teaching by actions as well as by words. Children imitate what they see their parents doing.

Parents are seldom taught how to be parents. It is usually “on-the-job” training. Often parents turn to their own experiences and do as their parents did. Being parent and teacher is challenging, sometimes scary, and often confusing. Yet it is the most important responsibility a parent will ever have.

During the first years of rapid growth and learning and throughout a child’s life, he/she will need support from parents who reward success or honest effort with a smile and words of encouragement. A child needs limits set on his/her behavior until he/she is capable of setting his/her own. At that point, parents face the task of letting go—letting their child live with the successes and consequences of his/her own decisions.

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## How Do Children Grow and Learn?

### Parent Expectations—and Reality

Parents are their child's first teachers. To be their child's best teachers, one of the most helpful things parents can do is to learn how their child will grow and change. It helps to know what can be expected of a child at each different age. Each child is an individual with a personality and temperament different from any other child.

All too soon, the small helpless baby who looks to his parents for every physical and emotional need will become the independent teenager who truly believes he knows more than his parents could ever hope to know. One of the greatest challenges for parents is to learn how to teach each individual child the skills needed to be successful at that child's own pace of growth and development. How parents go about doing this helps determine how a child thinks and feels about himself/herself and his/her abilities.

### Responsibility at an Early Age

In a way that is age appropriate, children should be given the opportunity to do meaningful tasks. Parents may need to learn what children at different ages can be expected to do and set the tasks accordingly. The tasks should have value to the family and to the child, and once done, the child should be praised for following through to completion. By starting with very simple tasks for toddlers and carefully increasing the number and difficulty of the tasks, the child will find it easier to accept the responsibilities of school and, later, of the workplace.

## Parent Tips

### The Bottom Line

- Keep a sense of humor—it can work wonders with a child.
- Keep in perspective what is really important and what is not—it helps!
- Keep a firm hold on reality—just as there are no perfect children, there are also no perfect parents.
- Keep in mind that your child is an important and worthwhile person—in fact, parents should treat their child the way they themselves want to be treated.

## School Readiness

Definition of readiness: having the skill to learn and handle the school environment without undue stress.

Skills that your child will need to be ready to start kindergarten:

- Naming the colors
- Recognizing some or all letters
- Counting to ten
- Writing and recognizing his/her first name
- Printing and recognize own first name
- Knowing his/her age
- Counting items
- Recognizing shapes
- Holding and using scissors
- Playing cooperatively with others
- Putting on his/her coat, including buttons and zippers
- Following two-or three-part commands



- Paying attention and concentrating
- Sitting for long periods of time
- Singing the alphabet song
- Understanding simple stories
- Spending extended time away from parents
- Dressing him/herself, including shoes
- Verbally communicating his/her needs and wants
- Being eager to learn and to engage in new activities
- Being ready to learn how to share, wait, and handle situations
- Handling personal hygiene.

Kindergarten classes are made up of children from a variety of backgrounds. Some children will have attended daycare since they were infants. Some will have been through preschool and pre-kindergarten, and some will have been at home with Grandma or Auntie. Your child's teacher will be ready for a range of skill levels in the classroom. You can, however, increase your comfort level, and that of your child, by working on skills at home before school begins.

### How Do I Know If My Child Is Ready for Kindergarten?

Answering the following questions might help you make that decision:

- What are the school's expectations? What is the pace of the kindergarten?
- Can my child express his/her needs and wants so that others can understand them?
- Can my child take care of his/her personal needs (dressing, buttons, zippers, bathroom, eating, etc.) with little or no assistance?



- Is my child ready to explore the surrounding world?
- Does my child listen and follow directions from other adults?
- Can my child adapt to new situations?
- Will my concerns about my child's size, age, shyness, maturity, etc., be likely to change in a year, or are they factors influenced by my child's personality or genetic make-up?
- Has my child experienced any major life events (such as divorce, a death in the family, remarriage, or a move) that could have delayed or impacted his or her development?

## PARENT-CHILD CONNECTIONS IN THE ELEMENTARY YEARS

### Parenting for Busy Parents

A close, supportive relationship between parent and child is critically important for healthy development. Although the contributions of loved ones during the first three years of their children's lives are especially critical for the acquisition of conscience and compassion, their relationship can continue to be important across the lifespan. Relationships are created around a loved one's devotion and willingness to sacrifice. Feeling and intention are not sufficient. Children at all ages must have tangible demonstrations of devotion. A relationship cannot be bought. The price of gaining a relationship with a child is the sacrifice of time. The best gift is a loved one's *presence*. In a busy world, this purchase price has become more difficult to pay. The following suggestions may be helpful in using the time you have wisely.

#### 1. Consider the time you spend with a child as an investment.

Every friendly caring moment is a deposit in the relationship account. Everything in the relationship that is discouraging, from a discipline consequence to a separation, is a withdrawal from that account. Some deposits are small, some are big, just as are the withdrawals. A bankrupt account will cause a child to drift, to slip away from caring. The result: indifference toward a parent who has lost the capacity to influence.

#### 2. Think carefully about your priorities.

We sometimes complain about not having "enough time," but we have sufficient time to invest in our



top priorities. Are we using the most precious thing we have - time - to serve the most important priorities in our lives? The challenge is to use time effectively. If we must work to provide food, clothing, and shelter for our children, then that makes sense as a high-ranked priority. Keep in mind that fancy clothes, fine foods, and a big house are not important to children at all. If our children are a priority and we have to face distracting "time pulls," then time management is critically important.

### 3. Create "time islands."

Accept the fact that we have 24 hours in a day, no more and no less. Take a good look at your schedule and that of your child, to find segments of time when you can come together without being distracted by others or by other activities. What matters is the relationship... not household chores, driving to the store, or adult worries. Sitting and talking with a child as soon as she comes home from school, reading a story and tucking a child in at night, or taking a teenager to lunch every Monday and Friday are examples of *time islands*. The best time islands are predictable, something the child can count on in a regular way. Even small amounts of time can become a nurturing *time island* in which children discover that they are the central focus of the parent's attention.

### 4. Be a tuning fork.

During these moments, set aside all your adult worries and other mental distractions. Be *responsive* to the child. Listen, do not criticize. Encourage the child to talk and take the lead, do not push and direct. Listen for the meaning behind the words, behind the play. What is the story our children are trying to tell us? What are their hopes and aspirations, worries and fears? When you talk, express your own feelings and ideas in words the child can understand. When you play, let the child take the lead and then "play above" to add a slight challenge. Have fun. Build a relationship one step at a time. Keep in mind that real love always finds time.

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## Listening to—Talking with

### Starting Out Right

The average American mother spends less than 30 minutes a day talking or reading to her children, and fathers spend less than 15 minutes, states the 1986 U.S. Department of Education report "What Works." Yet, talking with their children is one of the most important things a parent can do. Even the busiest parents need to make time to be involved with their children. Talking with a child, truly listening to what he/she has to say, builds those all-important, positive "parent-child connections" that all parents desire.

Parents teach their child how to talk and listen by:

- Explaining the meaning of words and how these words relate to the world around him/her.
- Encouraging him/her to put him/her thoughts and ideas into sentences.
- Listening and responding to him/her in a way that builds her sense of confidence and self-worth.
- Being patient while he/she searches for the right words and sentences to express himself/herself. (Later on, parents may have to be just as patient, perhaps even more so, as their teenager expresses ideas that may be very different from those held by the rest of the family.)

The following tips offered by the National Association of State Boards of Education and cited by the National School Public Relations Association can help parents become better listeners.

- Be attentive. Stop what you are doing as soon as you can, and give your child your full attention.
- Focus on your child's words, using your eyes as well as ears. A child may say nothing is wrong, when dejected looks tell you differently. Ask yourself what your child is trying to tell you but may not know how.
- Encourage talk. Eye contact, a smile, a nod, and short responses can and should be used to indicate understanding—even when you may not be in agreement.
- Keep questions brief. Avoid "why" questions, as children don't always know the reasons behind their feelings and actions. Often repeating or rephrasing an important idea your child has expressed in a tentative way draws the child out.
- Try to empathize. Empathizing with your child may take imagination and patience, but try to

focus on the underlying feelings your child may be having difficulty in expressing.

- Listen with respect. React to your child or teenager as you would to an adult friend. Grown-ups tend to do most of the talking when conversing with young people.
- Talk—so they'll listen. Take time to have a relaxed conversation with your child on a regular basis, five to ten minutes each day. Frequent talks help spot difficulties before they become real problems.
- Be aware of your tone of voice. Often it's not what you say but how you say it that conveys your message—how loudly, softly, fast, or slowly you speak.
- Be specific. Strive to consciously communicate in simple, specific terms.
- Help your teenager empathize with you by expressing your feelings. Don't be embarrassed to reveal some of your inner self.

## The Importance of Self-Esteem

From the beginning, one of the most important things parents can do for their children is to help them develop high self-esteem. Having high self-esteem is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives.

People with high self-esteem are capable of making good decisions and being proud of their accomplishments, willing to take responsibility, and able to cope with frustration. They are more likely to be creative thinkers, find ways to meet challenges, and take risks in new situations. All of these are traits we value in adults.



The degree of self-esteem a child has is closely tied to his family and environment. From the moment a child is born, his parents begin molding his feelings about himself and his worth as an individual by how they talk with him, hold and care for him, and even by how they think about him. A child knows when he is listened to and taken seriously. If he feels he is genuinely cared for, his self-esteem will probably be high.

## Self-Esteem and Decision Making

Success in school is heavily linked to a child's sense of self-esteem. High self-esteem has an even greater payoff over a lifetime of making decisions. Such critical decisions as whether to use drugs, drop out of school, or become sexually active are all affected by a child's sense of self-worth.

Parents need to foster their child's self-esteem, self-discipline, and ability to make decisions about who he/she is and who he/she wants to be. They may need to learn ways that help a child make decisions and then let the child live with the results of those decisions. In addition parents need to find ways to let their child know he/she is respected as an individual, just as he/she is expected to give others around him/her that same kind of respect. Parents also may need to acquire skills that enable them to provide discipline in a way that is positive—never negative or hurtful.

## Making Decisions Takes Practice

### Children *Can* and *Do* Make Decisions

It is important that parents learn to let their child learn how to make decisions. Allowing a child to make decisions works best if parents set limits for such decision making. The limits set must be appropriate to the child's age and his/her ability to handle a decision. Once a decision is made, the child should be expected and allowed to deal with the consequences.

Initially, decisions may be as simple as what to have for dinner, what to wear to school, or how to spend an allowance. With young children, it is often wise to limit the choices to a few options, i.e., "Would you prefer hamburgers, burritos, or lasagna for dinner?" Children later may make choices about family outings, vacations, when completing homework will be scheduled, or about their educational programs. It is essential that

children be given many opportunities to develop decision-making skills. It is critical to their own well-being and important to their futures. Making good decisions takes practice—and it isn't always easy to do. However, before you start, be certain this is an appropriate decision for your child's level of maturity, and that you can live with whatever decision your child will make.

### ***Parent Tips***

#### **Coaching Your Child on Decision Making**

One way to help your child become better at making decisions is to become the “coach” and help him/her understand how to begin doing this. “A child who helps make a decision will be more willing to make that decision work.” Work with him/her in learning how to think through these steps to reach his/her own decisions:

- Discuss the issue of concern. Try to be thorough and objective.
- Decide what the problem is, and have him/her state it clearly.
- Find out if more information is needed in order to make the decision.
- List the choices available, making sure nothing is overlooked.
- Discuss the possible results of each choice. If necessary, have him/her make a list of good and bad points for each choice, keeping in mind both long-term and short-term results—list the possible benefits and consequences.
- Discuss how he/she will feel about each decision in terms of his/her own values and expectations for himself/herself and the values of the family.
- Reach the decision together, keeping in mind that younger children need more assistance and teenagers demand more independence.

Children must be allowed to work through and live with the consequences of their decisions. They need praise for making good decisions, and they need to know you are proud of them. There may be times when you dislike or disagree with a decision that has been made. At these times, you must make it clear that you love your child, in spite of the decision.

### **Discipline: Fair and Consistent**

#### **Expectations and Limits**

**The purpose of discipline is to help children make good decisions, not to punish them for doing something wrong.** Parents need to help children understand the expectations and limits that have been set. These should be age appropriate and not so numerous that it is impossible for a child to live up to them. As children grow older, they should be allowed to help set family rules. Children are less likely to break rules they have helped to make.

“A child who helps make a decision will be more willing to make that decision work.”

#### **Children Need to Learn Self-Discipline**

Self-discipline is one of the basic requirements for achievement in the classroom and throughout life. How parents use discipline may well determine whether a child learns to discipline himself/herself.

“Discipline should be consistent and given with love and respect for the child as an individual.”

To many people, discipline means verbal or physical punishment, but studies have shown that spanking or shouting punishments are **ineffective** and achieve only momentary results. Such punishment demoralizes and humiliates a child, causing low self-esteem and other problems. Discipline, on the other hand, is setting limits and helping a child follow those limits. “Discipline should be consistent and given with love and respect for the child as an individual.” Ways should be found to stress “do’s,” not “don’ts,” so that praise may be given for good behavior. Discipline should be a positive way to:

- Help the child achieve self-control.
- Help him/her toward acceptable behavior.
- Teach him/her how to make decisions when faced with life's problems.

#### **The Key Is to Be Selective About Punishment**

Parents need to be selective about the issues for which they punish their child. Sometimes minor problems can be ignored or worked through by setting up a contract stipulating a specific reward. Whenever possible, set natural and logical consequences for behavior so that living with the negative consequences of a poor decision is its own punishment. This reserves punishment for those major actions or misbehaviors that you cannot allow—actions that are harmful to the child, are against the law, or are against the family's value system.

## PARENT-TEEN RELATIONSHIPS

### The Awkward Years

Most parents will be surprised at the variety of changes middle school students experience as they make the developmental transitions from child to teen. The following material, reprinted from *Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools*, describes the intellectual, physical, psychological, social, and moral/ethical development of middle grade students. Parents of pre-teens and early teens will recognize many of the characteristics of this age that differ from those of children or teenagers. Recognizing the unique developmental characteristics of our middle grade students allows parents to respond more helpfully to the needs of their children during these stressful, challenging, and vulnerable years.

#### Characteristics of Middle Grade Students

Reprinted, by permission, from *Caught in the Middle, Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools*, California Department of Education, CDE Press, 1430 N. Street, Suite 3410, Sacramento, CA 95814. *Caught in the Middle* is out of print and no longer represents California Department of Education policy; it has been replaced by a publication titled, *Taking Center Stage*.

#### Intellectual Development

1. Display a wide range of individual intellectual development as their minds experience transition from the concrete-manipulatory state to the capacity for abstract thought. This transition ultimately makes possible:
  - Propositional thought
  - Consideration of ideas contrary to fact
  - Reasoning with hypotheses involving two or more variables
  - Appreciation for the elegance of mathematical logic expressed in symbols
  - Insight into the nuances of poetic metaphor and musical notation
  - Analysis of the power of political ideology
  - Ability to project thought into the future, to anticipate, and to formulate goals
  - Insight into the sources of previously unquestioned attitudes, behaviors, and values
  - Interpretation of larger concepts and generalizations of traditional wisdom expressed through sayings, axioms, and aphorisms

2. Are intensely curious;
3. Prefer active over passive learning experiences; favor interaction with peers during learning activities;
4. Exhibit a strong willingness to learn things they consider to be useful; enjoy using skills to solve real life problems;
5. Are egocentric; argue to convince others; exhibit independent, critical thought;
6. Consider academic goals as a secondary level of priority; personal-social concerns dominate thoughts and activities;
7. Experience the phenomenon of metacognition—the ability to know what one knows and does not know;
8. Are intellectually at-risk; face decisions that have the potential to affect major academic values with lifelong consequences.



#### Physical Development

Middle grade students ...

1. Experience accelerated physical development marked by increases in weight, height, heart size, lung capacity, and muscular strength;
2. Mature at varying rates of speed. Girls tend to be taller than boys for the first two years of early adolescence and are ordinarily more physically developed than boys;
3. Experience bone growth faster than muscle development; uneven muscle/bone development

results in lack of coordination and awkwardness; bones may lack protection of covering muscles and supporting tendons;

4. Reflect a wide range of individual differences, which begin to appear in prepubertal and pubertal stages of development. Boys tend to lag behind girls. There are marked individual differences in physical development for boys and girls. The greatest variability in physiological development and size occurs at about age thirteen;

5. Experience biological development five years sooner than adolescents of the last century; the average age of menarche (onset of menstruation) has dropped from seventeen to twelve years of age;

6. Face responsibility for sexual behavior before full emotional and social maturity has occurred;

7. Show changes in body contour including temporarily large noses, protruding ears, long arms; have posture problems;

8. Are often disturbed by body changes:

- Girls are anxious about physical changes that accompany sexual maturation;
- Boys are anxious about receding chins, cowlicks, dimples, and changes in their voices;

9. Experience fluctuations in basal metabolism which can cause extreme restlessness at times and equally extreme listlessness at other moments;

10. Have ravenous appetites and peculiar tastes; may overtax digestive system with large quantities of improper foods;

11. Lack physical health; have poor levels of endurance, strength, and flexibility; as a group, are fatter and unhealthier;

12. Are physically at-risk; major causes of death are homicide, suicide, accident, and leukemia.

### Psychological Development

Middle grade students ...

1. Are often erratic and inconsistent in their behavior; anxiety and fear are contrasted with periods of bravado; feelings shift between superiority and inferiority;

2. Have chemical and hormonal imbalances which often trigger emotions that are frightening and poorly understood; may regress to more childish behavior patterns at this point;

3. Are easily offended, and are sensitive to criticism of personal shortcomings;

4. Tend to exaggerate simple occurrences and believe that personal problems, experiences, and feelings are unique to themselves;

5. Are moody, restless; often feel self-conscious and alienated; lack self-esteem; are introspective;

6. Are searching for adult identity and acceptance even in the midst of intense peer group relationships;

7. Are vulnerable to naive opinions, one-sided arguments;

8. Are searching to form a conscious sense of individual uniqueness—"Who am I?";

9. Have emerging sense of humor based on increased intellectual ability to see abstract relationships; appreciate the "double entendre";

10. Are basically optimistic, hopeful;

11. Are psychologically at-risk; at no other point in human development is an individual likely to encounter so much diversity in relation to oneself and others.

### Social Development

Middle grade students ...

1. Experience often traumatic conflicts due to conflicting loyalties to peer groups and family;

2. Refer to peers as sources for standards and models of behavior; media heroes and heroines are also singularly important in shaping both behavior and fashion;

3. May be rebellious toward parents but still strongly dependent on parental values; want to make own choices, but the authority of the family is a critical factor in ultimate decisions;

**Note:**  
Parents shouldn't retreat from their teenager's life—rather they should accept the challenge to find unobtrusive ways to be interested in what he/she is doing.



4. Are impacted by high level of mobility in society; may become anxious and disoriented when peer group ties are broken because of family relocation to other communities;
5. Are often confused and frightened by new school settings which are large and impersonal;
6. Act out unusual or drastic behavior at times; may be aggressive, daring, boisterous, argumentative;
7. Are fiercely loyal to peer group values; sometimes cruel or insensitive to those outside the peer group;
8. Want to know and feel that significant adults, including parents and teachers, love and accept them; need frequent affirmation;
9. Sense negative impact of adolescent behaviors on parents and teachers; realize thin edge between tolerance and rejection; feelings of adult rejection drive the adolescent into the relatively secure social environment of the peer group;
10. Strive to define sex role characteristics; search to establish positive social relationships with members of the same and opposite sex;
11. Experience low risk-trust relationships with adults who show lack of sensitivity to adolescent characteristics and needs;
12. Challenge authority figures; test limits of acceptable behavior;

13. Are socially at risk; adult values are largely shaped conceptually during adolescence; negative interactions with peers, parents, and teachers may compromise ideals and commitments.

### Moral and Ethical Development

Middle grade students ...

1. Are essentially idealistic; have a strong sense of fairness in human relationships;
2. Experience thoughts and feelings of awe and wonder related to their expanding intellectual and emotional awareness;
3. Ask large, unanswerable questions about the meaning of life; do not expect absolute answers, but are turned off by trivial adult responses;
4. Are reflective, analytical, and introspective about their thoughts and feelings;
5. Confront hard moral and ethical questions with which they are unprepared to cope;
6. Are at risk in the development of moral and ethical choices and behaviors—primary dependence on the influences of home and church for moral and ethical development seriously compromises those adolescents for whom these resources are absent; adolescents want to explore the moral and ethical issues that are confronted in the curriculum, in the media, and in the daily interactions they experience in their families and peer groups.

### Help Wanted, But Not Requested

#### Parents Should Be There

Parents often think they are not wanted when their children reach the adolescent years. Wrong! Parents are still needed—and wanted—but in a very different way. Gone is the need for the openly demonstrative and caring parent-child relationships of childhood. In its place are the demands for freedom and privacy and, ironically, the need for even more support and caring; however it should be support, love, and caring offered in a very private manner—never in public. To say that teenagers seem to send mixed messages is one of the greatest understatements of all time.

Parents have to be sensitive to their teenager's need to be more independent and accept this as part of the teen's being a normal, healthy adolescent. If parents want their teenager to be self-sufficient and able to make his/her own decisions eventually, they need to give their support where it has always been given, but in ways that are non-threatening.

- Family rules and limits must be set, even as the teenager pushes against these limits, and new limits need to be negotiated along with the ability to accept new responsibilities.
- Parents need to work at keeping lines of communication open, understanding that discussions will probably take place more easily if the topics center on the immediate interests of the teenager.
- Parental support should still be given at school functions or other activities in which the teenager is involved, even though parents and teenagers will most likely go their own separate ways at the event.

#### A Buffer—and Maybe More

It may seem more difficult to set limits for teens, because they constantly challenge those limits. Parents need to discuss the limits set by the family and change them as their teenager matures and is able to handle more responsibility for his/her own actions. At the same time, family rules may serve another purpose—that of helping the teen withstand peer pressure by being able to say, “No, I can’t do that; my folks would kill me,” or “That’s not allowed in my family, and I wouldn’t be able to drive the car if I did that.”

There may be times when a teenager needs to understand that it is okay to be different from his/her friends. He/She needs to talk with his/her parents about what the family believes is important, about values that have always been upheld and why. He/She needs to realize that it can show strength to not go along with the crowd if it is against his/her values, and that his/her friends will respect him/her for doing that about which he/she feels strongly.

## Playing the Power Game

From *Parenting the Teenager*, Carl E. Pickhardt, Ph.D., Capital Printing Co., Inc. 1983

If you want to enjoy parenting your teenager, you need to understand how to play the game. What game? If you don't know the answer to that, you may already be in trouble.

The name of the game is **Independence**. Its purpose is for teenagers to gather increasing amounts of power until ultimately they can self-determine their own lives, free from parental support and control.

The game itself is structured around a seemingly endless series of conflicts, where freedoms that teenagers demand are opposed by parents, and where responsibilities parents demand are opposed by teenagers. In addition, the contestants are assigned different roles, both of which are contradictory in nature. The parent is required to hold on to power while at the same time letting it go; the teenager is required to assert power while at the same time allowing others to retain it. If this all sounds challenging, it is.

The game begins about age 10 to 12, with the opening move usually being a declaration of general dissatisfaction with the parents. We suddenly observe that the child who once respected, even loved, us now simply endures our presence and believes we can do no right. Caught off balance by this unanticipated loss of approval, we may respond with hurt or resentment. What, after all, have we done wrong?

Bad move. Never take this early criticism personally. It simply reflects a desire to discount the worth of our authority and raise in its place their own superior judgment as the basis for guiding what they should and should not be able to do. Hence the refrain: “Well I know better than you!”

After dissatisfaction has been declared and our judgment discounted, the direct challenge to our authority gets underway. Demands and resistance, confrontation and negotiation, become the defining activities in our new relationship. The game has truly begun.

For parents, the purpose for this continuing combat is important to remember. Over and above the

Most important, remember that parents do not lose the game by losing power. They only lose the game by losing their sense of humor.

differences being contested, you are now playing a game in which the teenager needs to win power from you. That doesn't mean they must be allowed to prevail in every dispute. Far from it. What they do need, however, is for you to provide enough resistance to their demands so that they must at times fight you for freedoms they want, and win frequently enough to experience a growing sense of power. These freedoms, which they gain through argument, are often more highly valued than those they are simply given. Thus, by your losing, you, as well as they, can win.

Since they are so expert, you may as well learn from their experience. A 16-year-old summarized a winning strategy this way. "Always start by asking for more than you can reasonably expect to get, and then let them argue you down to where they think they have won, and you have got what you were really willing to accept in the first place." So for parents, always start by declaring less than you can reasonably expect to give and then proceed as they do. In this way, you can each feel that you have won, and in fact you have. Compromise allows both players to preserve their self-respect.

Most important, remember that parents do not lose the game by losing power. They only lose the game by losing their sense of humor. When the game becomes so serious that we can no longer laugh at ourselves and our teenagers, then the spirit of play is gone, perspective falls away, and a constructive game can degenerate into harmful conflict.

## Peer Pressure

### It Isn't Easy Being Me

All teenagers are faced constantly with decisions that are critical to their well-being. While pressure from many sources bombards them, at this age peer pressure is a major influence in their lives—pressure often involving decisions about whether to use drugs and alcohol, become sexually active, or drop out of school. The decision-making skills that parents have been helping their child learn all along can now become the guiding factors in the choices a teenager makes.

### Some Peer Pressure Is Good

Hanging out, listening to the same music, dressing, and talking as their friends do are all normal steps teenagers take in struggling for their inde-

pendence. "Having to belong" is preparation for the bigger step of becoming an independent adult. Parents need to understand how important it is to most teenagers to "be part of the crowd."

With the support of their peers, teens learn how to build friendships, including friendships with the opposite sex. They use each other to develop, test, and practice social skills that will be with them for their entire lives. Their friends serve as the bridge between dependence on the family and the independence needed as an adult. Parents need to understand that positive peer pressure serves a welcome purpose—even so, a teen does need help resisting pressures that are contrary to the family's values.

The key to dealing with negative peer pressure is self-confidence. Teenagers who are unsure of themselves and want to be accepted are much more likely to give in to negative peer pressure than those who have plenty of confidence. The following are some ways parents can help teenagers develop self-confidence.

### Parent Tips

- Show interest in your teenager's activities.
- Support your teenager's growing independence. Encourage responsibility.
- Help set realistic goals.
- Avoid personal criticism. When it is necessary to be critical, it is better to attack the problem.
- Show your teenagers you love and respect them. Knowing they can count on you will help them develop confidence in relationships with people outside the family.

(From *"Helping Youth Say No,"* National Association of State Boards of Education, as cited by National School Public Relations Association.)

## Some Rules Are a Must

When youth are given too many rules, it is sometimes hard for them to follow through on each one. There are, however, some rules that are required without question and that must be followed. Each family will have different priorities for what is an understood requirement, but the rules should be rules that are essential to the child's well-being. According to the National School Public Relations Association, parents in Green Bay,



Wisconsin, joined together to set guidelines to help parents who were concerned about their children. They agreed that four main points are critical.

### Parent Tips

- **Family Communication**—Know where to reach each other by phone. Be awake or awakened when your youth comes home at night. Assure your children they can telephone you to pick them up whenever necessary. Get to know your children's friends and their parents. Form a parent network, and call one another about concerns or questions.
- **Reasonable hours**—On school nights, youth should stay at home unless employed or attending school, church, or community events, or studying at the library. Students should be home a half-hour after an activity ends.
- **Social Life**—Be alert to signs of drug and alcohol abuse, and be aware that driving after drinking or drug use is not only extremely dangerous — it is also a crime. When a teen is going to a party, feel free to contact host parents to verify the occasion and check on supervision. Ask what will and will not be served. As a host parent, encourage your children to tell their friends their parents are welcome to inquire about the party. **(If teenagers are to accept family rules such as these, they need to be thoroughly discussed and mutual agreement must be obtained!)**
- **Malls and Shopping**—Be sure your teens know where to go for help, if problems occur while they are on a shopping trip. Encourage reasonable time limits for shopping, and be aware of the amount of money your children have to spend and what items are brought home.

#### Note:

*Don't believe it when your teen says, "Everybody gets to do it!" Check with other parents, so you know for sure. More often than not, you may find they are struggling with the same problems you are handling. Parents need to network, too.*

## Teens, Music, and Television

### Powerful Messages from Media

Music and television are recognized as powerful ways to communicate attitudes, emotions, and behaviors. For adolescents, these are important sources on a broad range of topics—love, sexuality,

suicide, drugs, politics, etc. Although no direct correlation has been established between listening and viewing habits and behavior, concerned parents may want to listen to the same music and watch the same television programs as their teens, especially if their teens have exhibited a radical change in their behavior.



### Guiding Your Adolescent's Choices

The following was adapted from "Let's Talk Rock," a publication of the Parents' Music Resource Center:

- **Listen, before you lay down the law.** Before taking the "dump all this trash" approach, take time to find out what music he/she is choosing then can you discuss the theme, lyrics, how you feel about him/her listening to it, and how the themes relate to your family values. Focus on content as opposed to musical style. Allow music that meets your family's standards, even if you wouldn't listen to it yourself.
- **Establish specific guidelines as to what kind of themes are appropriate.** Be very clear on what you will not allow in music, television, videos, or on the Internet. Pornography? Violence? Suicide? Songs that glorify abuse of drugs and alcohol? Satanism and the occult? Make the decision and decide together what disciplinary action will be taken if these rules are broken. Be ready to enforce the consequences, if necessary.
- **Help your teen pick out music consistent with your guidelines.**

***Note:** Prolonged exposure to loud music has been shown to cause hearing damage. For this reason, advise teens who use headphones to keep the volume at a level that still allows them to hear the telephone ring. Get to know your child — does he study better with music in the background, or does he need quiet study time?*

## Extracurricular Activities

### Being Connected to School

No matter what activities a child decides to become involved with, how this involvement affects him will depend on his own academic ability, study habits, and personality.

Participating in extracurricular activities can provide students with strong feelings of being connected to school. Many times, being involved with activities outside of the classroom is the deciding factor in keeping a student from dropping out of school. Sports and other extracurricular activities have provided some students with entry into college; band, speech, art, drama, etc., often support or enlarge a student's academic interests.

There is a great deal of support for students being involved in extracurricular activities, but there are also some who criticize the time such activities take from academic studies. No matter what activities a child decides to become involved with, how this involvement affects him will depend on his own academic ability, study habits, and personality.

Some evidence shows that activities that help teenagers learn interpersonal skills and accept leadership roles may have a payoff in later years. It may be these students develop higher goals and aspirations when they accept responsibility as school leaders and, consequently, are more willing to accept leadership roles in their career opportunities.

### How Much Is Enough?

Parents may want to encourage their teenager to be involved in school activities, but they also need to counsel against over-involvement. Some students can work very well under pressure and seem to be better organized when handling many activities. Others may need more time to achieve success in their class work and are more comfortable with no additional activities or just a select few. The parents' role is to help the child keep a balance of activities, to monitor, counsel and support, and to help the teen learn to say "no."

Parents may need to help even a healthy, energetic teenager to realize that young people do not have unlimited energy. When too much is attempted or too much is expected, his body may fail under the stress and declare a time-out. To keep this from happening, the parents may need to have a discussion with their teen and encourage him to decide what things are priorities in his life at that point in time. If a daily schedule is filled out and used for a week or two, it may surprise everyone to see how very involved, busy, and perhaps over-

worked a teenager can actually be. (See **Student Learning** for more information on homework.)

## To Work or Not to Work?

### The Pros and Cons of Working

Another demand on a teenager's time is the after-school or part-time job. According to statistics cited in *The National PTA Talks to Parents*, 60 percent of high school sophomores and 75 percent of seniors were working at part-time jobs. One fourth of all sophomores work half time (20 hours per week), and 10 percent of seniors have a work week equal to a full-time job.

Working often produces a better understanding of what the job market is all about—the skills needed for higher-paying jobs, what working conditions are like, and how much education is needed for various career options. Many jobs help teenagers learn responsibility, self-confidence, and job skills, and give them a feeling of what it is like to earn a living. However, needing—or wanting—extra money is usually the main reason students go to work. Sometimes there is also family pressure to get a job. How much time is given to work is a question of family priorities. There are only so many hours in the week, so the number of hours spent at work limits the time spent on other activities, including schoolwork.

### Parents Need to Monitor and Counsel

In some cases, too many hours at work can cause teens to have less interest in school and schoolwork, even leading to the decision to drop out of school. With an independent source of spending money, there is the potential for use or increased use of alcohol and drugs. For these reasons, parents need to monitor their teen's working hours. Long shifts after school or in the evenings on school days should be avoided. The decision regarding how many hours to work should be evaluated carefully. Some parents insist their teenager work only during school vacations. If the need for money is not a factor, parents might want to encourage their teenager to forgo working and counsel them into school-related activities or community work that may be related to the work world.

## Parent Tips

The following suggestions may help you when discussing part-time jobs with your teenager:

- Be sure your teenager's job and work hours are governed by your family's priorities, i.e., the need to contribute to the family income or earn competitive grades for college scholarships.
- If your youngster aims for college, studies are important—more important in the long run than the stereo he/she is working to buy or the car he/she is going to have to support.
- If the teenager wants to begin a career immediately following graduation from high school, advise him/her that an employer may place higher value on performance in vocational courses than on hundreds of hours of minimum-wage work.

## Asset Approach—Raising Resilient Youth

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### The Asset Approach—40 Elements of Healthy Development

Search Institute has identified 40 positive experiences and qualities that each of us can offer children and youth. These are called developmental assets. For many people, these assets have become a source of ideas and inspiration for many people in the face of frustration and even despair.

The assets are spread across eight broad areas of human development. These categories paint a picture of the positive things all young people need to grow up healthy and responsible.

The assets provide a framework for action that encourages all individuals to make a difference, no matter who they are or what their lives are like.

Imagine for a moment what young people experience when they have numerous people and places in their lives, all committed to nurturing and strengthening them by building assets. These include families that communicate and enjoy spending time together; supportive teachers and school staff; elected officials, who have worked diligently to protect rights and opportunities for all youth; and so on.

Experience has taught us that our asset-building power grows exponentially in this kind of environment. As we work together on behalf of young people, we ensure that they receive consistent messages and treatment, and we ourselves benefit, because we connect with people who share our ideals, our vision, and our commitments.

Residents in hundreds of communities across the country are discovering that embracing the asset framework brings them together in new and exciting ways. The concept serves as a call to action and cooperation, a catalyst for uniting people who never before had reason to work together. As they explore this new territory, there are a few principles that help guide the way:

- **Everyone can build assets.** Building assets isn't just about great families or schools or neighborhoods. It requires consistent messages across a community.
- **All young people need assets.** While it is crucial to pay special attention to youth who struggle – economically, emotionally, or otherwise – nearly all young people need more assets than they have.
- **Relationships are key.** Strong relationships between adults and young people, young people and their peers, and teenagers and children are central to asset building.
- **Asset building is an ongoing process.** Building assets starts when a child is born and continues through high school and beyond.
- **Consistent messages are important.** It is important for families, schools, communities, the media, and others all to give young people consistent and similar messages about what is important and what is expected of them.
- **Intentional repetition is important.** Assets must be continually reinforced across the years and in all areas of a young person's life.

You may find that there are people in your community who share your enthusiasm for positive youth development. Search Institute's Web site at [www.search-institute.org/communities/](http://www.search-institute.org/communities/) can help you determine if there is a formal asset-building initiative where you live.

Excerpts from Search Institute *"The Asset Approach 40 Elements of Healthy Development"* Copyright 2002. For complete information on the 40 Developmental Assets go to [www.search-institute.org/assets/](http://www.search-institute.org/assets/)

As we work together on behalf of young people, we ensure that they receive consistent messages and treatment, and we ourselves benefit, because we connect with people who share our ideals, our vision, and our commitments.

### Giving Kids What They Need to Succeed

**Why do some kids grow up with ease, while others struggle?** Why do some kids get involved in dangerous activities, while others spend their time contributing to society? Why do some youth “beat the odds” in difficult situations, while others get trapped?

Many factors influence why some young people have success in life and why others have a harder time. Economic circumstances, genetics, trauma, and many other factors play a role. But these factors—which seem difficult, if not impossible, to change—aren’t all that matters. Research by Search Institute has identified 40 concrete, positive experiences and qualities—“developmental assets”—that have a tremendous influence on the lives of young people. They are things that people from all walks of life can help to nurture.

Research shows that the 40 developmental assets help young people make wise decisions, choose positive paths, and grow up competent, caring, and responsible. The assets are grouped into eight categories:

- **Support**—Young people need to experience support, care, and love from their families and many others. They need organizations and institutions that provide positive, supportive environments.
- **Empowerment**—Young people need to be valued by their community and have opportunities to contribute to others. For this to occur, they must be safe and feel secure.
- **Boundaries and expectations**—Young people need to know what is expected of them and whether activities and behaviors are “in bounds” or “out of bounds.”
- **Constructive use of time**—Young people need constructive, enriching opportunities for growth through creative activities, youth programs, congregational involvement, and quality time at home.
- **Commitment to learning**—Young people need to develop a lifelong commitment to education and learning.
- **Positive values**—Youth need to develop strong values that guide their choices.
- **Social competencies**—Young people need skills and competencies that equip them to make positive choices, to build relationships, and to succeed in life.

- **Positive identity**—Young people need a strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth, and promise.

The asset framework is a framework that includes everyone. Families, schools, neighborhoods, congregations, and all organizations, institutions, and individuals in a community can play a role in building assets for youth.

## Does Your Child Have What It Takes? 40 Developmental Assets

The Search Institute lists these 40 assets as crucial to a child's development. The average child experiences only 18 of them.

The Student has:

1. Family support
2. Positive family communication
3. Other adult relationships
4. Caring neighbors
5. Caring school climate
6. Parent involvement in schooling
7. A community that values youth
8. A useful role in the community
9. An hour or more of community service per week
10. Feeling of safety at home
11. Clear rules and consequences at home
12. Clear rules and consequences at school
13. Neighbors who take responsibility for monitoring behavior
14. Positive adult role models
15. Positive peer influence
16. High expectations from parents and teachers
17. Three or more hours a week in music, theater, or other arts
18. Three or more hours a week in sports, club, or organizations
19. One hour or more a week in religious activities
20. Time at home, at least five nights a week
21. Motivation to do well in school
22. Active engagement in learning
23. At least one hour of homework every school day

The Student:

24. Cares about her or his/her school
25. Reads for pleasure at least three hours a week
26. Values helping others
27. Values equality and reducing hunger and poverty
28. Stands up for beliefs
29. Tells the truth, even when it isn't easy
30. Accepts personal responsibility
31. Shows restraint from sexual activity, drugs, and alcohol
32. Can plan ahead and make choices
33. Has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills
34. Is comfortable with people of different backgrounds
35. Can resist negative peer pressure
36. Seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently
37. Possesses a sense of control over things
38. Has high self-esteem
39. Displays a sense of purpose
40. Is optimistic about the future

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**PTA**  
**Programs/Activities**  
**Information**

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## BASIC PARENTING

### A Comprehensive Approach to Parent Education

Based on the National Extension Parent Education Model  
Developed by Charles A. Smith, Ph.D.,  
Professor and Parent Educator, Kansas State University

**Basic Parenting** is a comprehensive parent education program that focuses on 80 principles and skills that form the foundation for effective parenting. The program is based on the *National Extension Parent Education Model of Critical Parenting Practices*, a collaborative effort by parent educators throughout the country to find common ground on priorities in parent education. It is designed for parents who are experiencing adversity in childrearing. Materials for parents are written at about the sixth grade level but are suitable for audiences at higher reading levels.

The goal of **Basic Parenting** is to nurture in parents the capacity to engage in mindful parenting and decision making in six areas: care for self, understanding, nurturing, guiding, motivating, and advocating. The goal is to create a program that is responsive to the neediest audience while simultaneously providing value to any parent, regardless of educational level or degree of child-rearing difficulty. **Basic Parenting** is simple, because it deals with fundamentals. Simplicity can have a powerful elegance that makes a lifetime impression.

Parents can step back from perceived problems and perceived solutions to view situations as novel. They can act on the belief that there are no failures-only ineffective solutions. More than anyone else, parents are the experts on their children. Parents should experience resources and group activities more as an awakening of something they already know than as being told something dramatically new.

This model emphasizes six critical areas or pathways for parents:

**Care for self** emphasizes the parent's personal well-being, e.g., managing personal stress.

**Understanding** emphasizes parent knowledge about children, e.g., observing and understanding one's children and their development.

**Guiding** involves the use of influence and authority, e.g., establishing and maintaining reasonable limits.

**Nurturing** emphasizes emotional support for children, e.g., expressing affection and compassion.

**Motivating** focuses on more intellectual pursuits, e.g., teaching children about themselves, others, and the world around them.

**Advocating** emphasizes reaching out beyond one's resources to benefit one's children and the community of children.

The emphasis in the program is not on training parents to carry out a type of scripted response to specific situations. Instead, the emphasis is on encouraging parents to listen to their informed intuition, develop hunches, and be playful in trying out different types of child-rearing strategies.

The eighty principles and skills in **Basic Parenting** provide a core set, much like a box of Lego™ blocks.

The first set of resources focuses on **Foundations**, the broad range of fundamentals of effective parent-child relationships in each of the six categories. Additional programs are being developed to complement and expand this foundation. The first **PLUS** program examines the developmental implications of children's art and drawing. The second **PLUS** program focuses on the development of conscience. Each program includes a set of **Insights**. Insights are principles and skills that are defined and described on a single page. Each principle and skill also is included in a deck of cards for small group activities. Each program also has a *Guide for Program Leaders* that provides information on implementing the program, including workshops for parents.

**Basic Parenting PLUS** programs are modules that can be integrated with the core **Basic Parenting Foundations** program. The core program covers a broad area, while **PLUS** programs examine a single issue in greater depth. Each **PLUS** program will have four components: additional **Insights** (principles and skills), corresponding **Cards** to add to the core deck, a *Leader's Guide* for at least one two-hour workshop session, and a set of workshop resources. Each **PLUS** program will draw from one or more **Insights** in the **Foundations** program.

**Art Awareness**, the first *PLUS* program, is now available. The program will help parents and professionals better understand children by becoming aware of the developmental changes in artistic growth during their early years.

A program titled **Nurturing Conscience in Young Children** is the second *PLUS* program.

The third *PLUS* program will examine **Parental Anger Management**.

For more information or to order materials go online to The Wonderwise Parent ([www.ksu.edu/wwparent/](http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent/)), or contact BASIC PARENTING  
343 Justin Hall, Kansas State University,  
Manhattan, Kansas 66506-1411  
PHONE: (785) 532-5773  
FAX: (785) 532-6969

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## TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR TV

Taking charge of your television is defined as control over what you and your children watch on television. Being television aware will be demonstrated by critical viewing skills and suggesting media literacy techniques that can change your relationship to TV, thus changing the potential impact of television on your children—and you.

1. **TV programs and their messages are created to achieve specific results.** Viewers participate in creating television by interpreting what's presented and "making sense" of it for themselves.
2. **Each person interprets programs and messages differently.** A common assumption about television is that all people watching a given show interpret or "read" its messages in a similar way or receive the same impression from it. For parents, it is particularly important to recognize that children receive and interpret messages differently at different ages.
3. **Television violence takes many forms. Violence grabs viewers' attention.** Forms of violence include realistic and unrealistic; justified and unjustified; and humorous, irrelevant, evil, thrilling—even sexy. The American Medication Association says, "TV violence is a risk factor threatening the health and welfare of young

Americans, indeed our future society. Choose your child's TV images wisely."

4. **All TV programs have an underlying economic purpose.** The television industry is in business to make money. When watching television, it's important to recognize the reason why television exists—to deliver audiences to advertisers. It's a commercial operation in every sense of the word, and it's important to teach children that commercial television is not "free" entertainment; it makes money by selling viewers to advertisers.



### Suggestions for Taking Charge of Your TV Viewing

1. Make TV watching a conscious, planned-for activity. Children should ask your permission to watch TV, not be allowed to just casually "channel surf" to see if anything sparks their interest.
  - Establish family guidelines for selecting programs.
  - Set limits on how much TV your family watches.
2. Choose programs together. Take time one day each week to review TV program guides for the week ahead. Decide together how your children will "spend" their number of TV viewing hours.
3. Make TV watching an interactive family event.
  - Watch together, and use every opportunity to talk about what you are seeing and hearing. Television can stimulate conversation about topics that can be difficult for some families to discuss, such as feelings about divorce or appropriate sexual behavior.
  - Make a particular point of responding to sexism, racism, and unnecessary violence, but remember to point out positive portrayals on television as well.
  - Plan special viewing times to watch with your child and let TV expand and enlarge your world.

4. Use TV as a springboard for other learning experiences.
  - TV can create interest in a new topic or idea, thus providing opportunities to learn more about these subjects in other ways.
  - When a topic on TV sparks your child's interest, get to the library or museum and explore the subject further.
  - During program breaks, ask children what they think might happen next. This helps develop verbal skills and creative thinking.
  - Use TV shows to inspire creative expression through drawing or writing.
  - The schedule of TV shows can be a good way for children to learn how to tell time.
  - Having your child tell you about a program you missed will help develop valuable communication skills.

#### **Five Things to Teach Your Children About Commercials**

1. Incredible, indestructible toys—Many toy commercials show their toys in life-like fashion, doing incredible things. This would be fine, if the toys really did these things.
2. Playing with our emotions—Commercials often create an emotional feeling that draws you into the advertisement and makes you feel good.
3. Pictures of ideal children and teens—The child and teen actors in commercials are often a little older and a little more perfect than the target audience of the ad.
4. Products in the very best light—Selective editing is used in all commercials. Commercials show only brilliant and perfect images. That is not the way most children experience these toys.
5. Big names, big bucks—Sports heroes, movies stars, and teenage heartthrobs tell our children what to eat and what to wear. Children and teens listen, not realizing that the star is paid handsomely for the endorsement.

## **TV ACTIVITIES FOR THE FAMILY**

### **TV Programs and Their Messages Are Created to Achieve Specific Results**

*Children aren't expected to know that TV programs are "constructions," but they will have ideas about how television shows are made. Ask them for ideas, and use these activities to help your children "make sense" of what they see.*

1. Discuss TV's Point of View. All shows carry underlying messages about who and what is important. Some people are cast as victims; others as heroes. Who's telling this story? What would have been different if someone else had told the story?
2. Keep telling children that TV is pretend, that it tells stories someone made up for them to watch. Play "Real or Make Believe" with young children, asking whether a character is made up or "real life." Could an inanimate object move by itself or an animal talk?
3. Have elementary-age children think about their favorite TV shows. What if one or two main characters switched gender? Would it work, given the way the show is written? In what ways would it be fine? What does the switch say about our images of men and of women?
4. Ask how did they make this program. "What seems real? What doesn't? Is anything left out? How does it make you feel?"

### **Each Person Interprets Programs and Messages Differently**

*These activities will help your children interpret what they see on TV.*

1. In non-threatening ways, talk back to your TV. Question what you see and hear on TV while watching with your children. Challenge or support ideas presented. Express opinions about storylines and characters. Sharing your opinions lets your children know what you think and what you consider important.

2. Discuss how conflicts on TV frequently are resolved. Respond to unnecessary violence, and point out characters who use positive behavior. Praise them as good examples for your children. Use TV programs as a chance to introduce your own values on topics such as drugs, alcohol, appropriate sexual conduct, and bullying.
3. Ask your children who is being stereotyped in a program. Are people made to act or talk a certain way because of their age, gender, race, religion, or cultural background? Who's wealthy, who's poor? Who's powerful, or intelligent, or obnoxious, or kindly, and how are they presented? What messages are being sent by the way people look and act?
4. Relate TV to real-life situations. The way TV characters find simple solutions to complicated problems in a half-hour show can leave young people feeling frustrated with their own inability to solve problems. Help them sort it all out.

### Television Violence Takes Many Forms

*These activities will help your children interpret TV violence.*

1. Re-sensitize your children to TV violence by asking how the victim might feel. "How do you think you would feel if the violent act happened to your or someone you cared about?" If your child is old enough, talk about real-life encounters with violence which you or other members of your family have experienced.
2. Ask your children if violence is ever funny, as in cartoons. Point out how real life doesn't work that way. Remind them that if a person gets hit on the head with a piano or falls off a cliff, he/she will be seriously hurt, even killed. Ask your child why violence is funny in cartoons but not in real life.
3. Help children interpret what they see. Many young children cannot filter or differentiate between what is real and unreal. Sometimes the best solution is simply to turn off the TV and talk.

### All TV Programs Have an Underlying Economic Purpose

*These activities will help children recognize that TV producers want to help advertisers sell products and services to viewers.*

1. Ask young children why they think certain commercials are placed (or aired) on certain programs: for example, toy ads during the cartoons.
2. Try to predict the kinds of commercials that will appear in a selected show. See how program content connects with commercial intentions.
3. Use the activity above, "**Five things to teach your children about commercials.**"



### WAYS TO PROMOTE POSITIVE PARENT-CHILD CONNECTIONS

1. Send a questionnaire home to parents asking them to identify their concerns in dealing with their children. Examples of concerns might include:
  - Discipline
  - Talking and communicating with children
  - Drugs and alcohol abuse prevention
  - Talking with their children about sex education
  - Choosing a career and planning for the future

Leave room in the questionnaire for the parents to list any other concerns.

2. Using the results of the questionnaire, plan a year-long program on topics that focus on the concerns indicated. Ask the school counselor and/or other school staff members to serve on a committee to help find the needed resources and speakers.
3. Invite students and parents to plan a series of discussion sessions using topics of their choosing.
4. Sponsor workshops on normal child development concentrating on age groups that are of interest to the parents.
5. Visit the National PTA Web site at [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) for additional resources.

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### **WAYS TO PROMOTE POSITIVE PARENT-TEEN RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Survey the parent community to identify the concerns members have in dealing with their teenagers. Topics mentioned in the survey could include how to use positive discipline, how to talk/communicate with your teenager, building self-esteem, teenage sexuality, alcohol and drug abuse, bullying, etc. Leave room in the survey for parent suggestions. When possible, follow up with phone calls to parents who do not respond.
2. Based on survey results, plan a year-long program covering topics on the parents' lists of concerns. Ask the school counselor, other staff members, and community resource people to serve on a committee to line up appropriate speakers and find needed materials.
3. For additional resources visit the National PTA web site at [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) and the California State PTA Web site [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org).
4. Set up discussion sessions for secondary students and their parents, using topics chosen by the parents and students themselves.
5. Consider sponsoring monthly open forums for junior and senior high school students during the student lunch hour. Choose topics based on a survey of student interests and concerns.

## DETECTING ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE AT STUDENT SOCIAL EVENTS

One of the most difficult problems facing young adults is the peer pressure to use alcohol and drugs. Parents and guardians need to be aware of the devastating results of drug and alcohol use by teenagers. The following information may be provided to parents of middle school and high school students in an orientation packet (either from the school or the PTA):

Dear Parents or Guardians,

All use of alcohol and other drugs by students is illegal and is dangerous for both users and non-users.

- It is against the law for minors (under 21) to purchase alcohol, be drunk in a public place, or carry alcoholic beverages in a vehicle.
- More than half of all fatal injuries to 16–19-year-old drivers and passengers occur at nighttime as a result of drinking and driving, according to the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety.
- Accidents involving alcohol are the number one killer of our youth.

As parents and guardians, we need to become a significant part of the solution to this problem. When your children attend social events, know where they are being held and who is chaperoning the party, if not you. You should be present at any event held in your home. If you are not present and your children serve alcohol you may be found guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine or jail or both. You may also be subject to civil lawsuits, if the minors' activities after drinking in your home result in damage or injury to another person.

Thank you for your ongoing concern about your student's health and safety and for the well-being of each of our students.

Sincerely,

Principal or PTA/PTSA President

## Asset Building Ideas for Parents and Guardians

Research shows that an effective approach to raising healthy, competent children is to concentrate on building *developmental assets*. These assets form the foundation people need to make healthy choices and to succeed in life. The more assets your children have, the stronger their foundation will be.

You undoubtedly build assets already—even if you don't use this term. Here are some things you can do regularly to strengthen your children's developmental assets:

- **Post the Asset Checklist on your refrigerator door.** Each day, do at least one thing to build assets for each family member.
- **Connect with other parents who are interested in asset building.** Form relationships in your neighborhood, on the job, through a congregation, or through a parent education organization.
- **Regularly do things with your child,** including projects around the house, recreational activities, and service projects. Take turns planning activities, and service projects. Take turns planning activities to do together as a family.
- **Eat at least one meal together** as a family every day.
- **Negotiate family rules and consequences** for breaking those rules.
- **Develop a family mission statement** that focuses on building assets, then use it to help you make family decisions and set priorities.
- **Talk about your values and priorities** and live in a way that is consistent with them.
- **Give your children lots of support and approval** while also challenging them to take responsibility and gain independence.
- **If you are parenting alone, look for other adult role models** of both genders who can be mentors for your children.
- **Nurture your own assets** by spending time with people who care about you and are supportive. Also, take opportunities to learn new things, contribute to your community, and have fun. You'll take better care of your children if you take care of yourself.
- **Think about the way you were parented** and how that affects your relationships with your children. If there are parts of your relationship with your parents that were very difficult or that get in the way of your parenting, consider talking with someone about these issues.
- **Don't let anyone in your family (including you) watch too much television.** Find other interesting and meaningful activities for your children to do—some with you, some with their friends, some by themselves.
- **Learn as much as you can about what your kids need at their current ages.**
- **Recognize that children need more than just financial support.** They also need emotional and intellectual support. Balance family time with other priorities like work, recreation, and hobbies.
- **Don't wait for problems to arise before talking with your children's teachers.** Keep in regular contact with them about how your children are doing and what you can do to help your children learn.
- **Think of teenagers as adults in training.** Teach them something practical, such as how to change a tire on the car, prepare a meal, or create a monthly budget.
- **Be aware of differences in how you relate to your children.** Are you more comfortable with one gender? If so, why? What impact does that have in your family?
- **Talk to your children about the 40 developmental assets.** Ask them for suggestions of ways to strengthen their assets.
- **Do intergenerational activities** with extended family and with other neighborhood adults and families.
- **Be an asset builder** for other young people in your life.
- **Remember that you are not alone.** Other asset builders in your children's lives include coaches, childcare providers, religious education teachers, club leaders, and neighbors. Work with these people to give kids consistent messages about boundaries and values.

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## An Asset Checklist

Many people find it helpful to use a simple checklist to reflect on the assets young people experience. This checklist simplifies the asset list to help prompt conversation in families, organizations, and communities. NOTE: This checklist is not intended nor appropriate as a scientific or accurate measurement of developmental assets.

- |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. I receive high levels of love and support from family members.                                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. I go out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights each week.      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. I can go to my parent(s) or guardian(s) for advice and support and have frequent, in-depth conversations with them. | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. I want to do well in school.                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. I know some non-parent adults I can go to for advice and support.                                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 22. I am actively engaged in learning.                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. My neighbors encourage and support me.                                                                              | <input type="checkbox"/> 23. I do an hour or more of homework each school day.                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. My school provides a caring encouraging environment.                                                                | <input type="checkbox"/> 24. I care about my school.                                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. My parent(s) or guardian(s) help me succeed in school.                                                              | <input type="checkbox"/> 25. I read for pleasure three or more hours each week.                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. I feel valued by adults in my community.                                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> 26. I believe it is really important to help other people.                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. I am given useful roles in my community.                                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> 27. I want to help promote equality and reduce world poverty and hunger.                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. I serve in the community one hour or more each week.                                                                | <input type="checkbox"/> 28. I can stand up for what I believe.                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. I feel safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> 29. I tell the truth even when it's not easy.                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. My family sets standards for appropriate conduct and monitors my whereabouts.                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> 30. I can accept and take personal responsibility.                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. My school has clear rules and consequences for behavior.                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> 31. I believe it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring my behavior.                                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 32. I am good at planning ahead and making decisions.                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.                                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 33. I am good at making and keeping friends.                                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15. My best friends model responsible behavior.                                                                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 34. I know and am comfortable with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16. My parent(s)/guardian(s) and teachers encourage me to do well.                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> 35. I can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17. I spend three hours or more each week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> 36. I try to resolve conflict nonviolently.                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18. I spend three hours or more each week in school or community sports, clubs, or organizations.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> 37. I believe I have control over many things that happen to me.                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19. I spend one hour or more each week in religious services or participating in spiritual activities.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 38. I feel good about myself.                                                              |
|                                                                                                                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 39. I believe my life has a purpose.                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 40. I am optimistic about my future                                                        |

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## Fifty Ways to Show Kids You Care

"Excerpted from 150 Ways to Show Kids You Care"

By Jolene L. Roehlkepartain, Search Institute

Everyone in a community can make a difference in the lives of children and youth. Even if you don't think you can tackle tough problems such as violence, alcohol and other drug use, or school problems, you can make a difference by being a caring, responsible friend for young people. Need some ideas for what you can do? Here are 150 of them:

1. Notice them.
2. Smile a lot.
3. Acknowledge them.
4. Learn their names.
5. Seek them out.
6. Remember their birthdays.
7. Ask them about themselves.
8. Look in their eyes when you talk to them.
9. Listen to them.
10. Play with them.
11. Read aloud together.
12. Giggle together.
13. Be nice.
14. Say yes a lot.
15. Tell them their feelings are okay.
16. Set boundaries that keep them safe.
17. Be honest.
18. Be yourself.
19. Listen to their stories.
20. Hug them.
21. Forget your worries sometimes and concentrate only on them.
22. Notice when they're acting differently.
23. Present options when they seek your counsel.
24. Play outside together.
25. Surprise them.
26. Stay with them when they're afraid.
27. Invite them over for juice.
28. Suggest better behaviors when they act out.
29. Feed them when they're hungry.
30. Delight in their discoveries.
31. Share their excitement.
32. Send them a letter or postcard.
33. Follow them when they lead.
34. Notice when they're absent.
35. Call them to say hello.
36. Hide surprises for them to find.
37. Give them space when they need it.
38. Contribute to their collections.
39. Discuss their dreams and nightmares.
40. Laugh at their jokes.
41. Be relaxed.
42. Kneel, squat, or sit, so you're at their eye level.
43. Answer their questions.
44. Tell them how terrific they are.
45. Create a tradition with them and keep it.
46. Learn what they have to teach.
47. Use your ears more than your mouth.
48. Make yourself available.
49. Show up at their concerts, games, and events.
50. Find a common interest.

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**150 Ways to Show Kids You Care** is available from Search Institute as a colorful pamphlet that doubles as a poster. See their catalog at [www.search-institute.org/catalog/index.htm](http://www.search-institute.org/catalog/index.htm).

## Parenting for Busy Parents

A close, supportive relationship between parent and child is critically important for healthy development. Although loved ones' contributions during the first three years of their children's lives are especially critical for the acquisition of conscience and compassion, their relationship can continue to be important across a child's life-span. Relationships are created around a loved one's devotion and willingness to sacrifice. Feeling and intention are not sufficient. Children at all ages must have tangible demonstrations of devotion. A relationship cannot be bought. The price of gaining a relationship with a child is the sacrifice of time. The best gift is a loved one's presence. In a busy world, this purchase price has become more difficult to pay. The following suggestions may be helpful in using the time you have wisely.

1. **Consider the time you spend with a child as an investment.** Every friendly, caring moment is a deposit in the relationship account. Everything in the relationship that is discouraging, from a discipline consequence to a separation, is a withdrawal from that account. Some deposits are small, some are big, just as are the withdrawals. A bankrupt account will cause a child to drift, to slip away from caring. The result: indifference toward a parent who has lost the capacity to influence.
2. **Think carefully about your priorities.** We sometimes complain about not having "enough time." But we have sufficient time to invest in our top priorities. Are we using the most precious thing we have – time – to serve the most important priorities in our lives? The challenge is to use time effectively. If we must work to provide food, clothing, and shelter for our children, then that makes sense as a high-ranked priority. Keep in mind that fancy clothes, fine foods, and a big house are not important to children at all. If our children are a priority and we have to face distractive "time pulls," then time management is critically important.
3. **Create "time islands."** Accept the fact that we have 24 hours in a day, no more and no less. Take a good look at your schedule and that of your child to find segments of time when you can come together without being distracted by others or by other activities. What matters on these **time islands** is the relationship...not household chores, driving to the store, or adult worries. Sitting and talking with a child as soon as he or she comes home from school, reading a story and tucking a child in at night, or taking a teenager to lunch every Monday and Friday are examples of **time islands**. The best **time islands** are predictable, something the child can count on in a regular way. Even small amounts of time can become a nurturing **time islands** in which children discover that they are the central focus of the parent's attention.
4. **Be a "tuning fork."** During these moments, set aside all your adult worries and other mental distractions. Be responsive to the child. Listen, do not criticize. Encourage the child to talk and take the lead, do not push and direct. Listen for the meaning behind the words, behind the play. What are the stories our children are trying to tell us? What are their hopes and aspirations, worries and fears? When you talk, express your own feelings and ideas in words the child can understand. When you play, let the child take the lead and then "play above" to add a slight challenge. Have fun. Build a relationship one step at a time. Keep in mind that real love always finds time.

Charles A. Smith, Ph.D.  
 Professor and Parent Educator, Kansas State University  
 Web site: The WonderWise Parent ([www.ksu.edu/wwwparent/](http://www.ksu.edu/wwwparent/))

## Helping Your Child to Grow and Learn

You are the key to your child's learning the life skills needed to be successful in school and in adult life. You provide the setting for your child to learn that he/she is responsible for himself/herself; that he/she can do what is hard to do; that everything will not be handed to him/her, but that he/she will have to earn things; that he/she will feel good when he/she accomplishes his/her goals through his/her own efforts; that life can be fun as well as work; and that loving and sharing are very important parts of what families do.

**BUILD A HEALTHY FOUNDATION** so that your child starts life physically and emotionally healthy:

- **Make sure that each day your child eats balanced and nourishing foods**—protein (fish, beans, meat, chicken), grains (bread, rice, cereals, pastas), fresh vegetables and fruits, and milk (or milk alternative).
- **Make sure he/she sleeps enough and gets the physical exercise he/she needs each day.** He/She needs to be ready for a full day of activities.
- **Appreciate him/her as a unique individual.** Help him/her learn to like himself/herself, feel good about what he/she can do and the kind of person he/she is—without comparing him/her with other children. This helps develop his/her self-esteem and helps him/her understand that he/she is a capable, responsible individual.
- **Learn to value yourself.** When you can appreciate yourself for what you can do and who you are, it becomes easier to be a role model for your child.



**EXPAND THE FOUNDATION** by spending time with your child having fun and doing things together...and learning together.

- **Play together.** Family outings, such as going to the beach or park, enrich your child's experience. Games are fun and can be educational as well, especially when adults play, too.

- **Work together.** You and your child both benefit when daily activities—yard work, shopping, cooking, working on the car, doing home repairs—become shared activities.
- **Talk together.** Discuss what you've both been doing. Let him/her know how you handled an unpleasant or unsuccessful situation—he/she needs a model to learn from, and he/she needs to know how you handle bad days. Talk about ideas, talk about dreams, talk about everyday happenings at school or at work, but no judgments or negative comments, please!

**ADD TO THE FOUNDATION** by letting your child develop a sense of responsibility and by helping him/her learn from the world around him/her.

- **Let your child begin making his/her own decisions at an early age.** Make sure the decisions are within limits that fit his/her age and that you have set. Don't shield your child from the consequences of his/her own actions, his/her own decisions; help him/her understand how his/her decisions affect what happens afterwards—  
—If he/she is late because of his/her own behavior, let him/her be late and then talk about the result...what the consequences were.  
—If he/she keeps forgetting his lunch, tell him/her that you will not bring it to school the next time and stick to it! He/She will not starve to death!  
—If he/she has not done his/her homework, don't make excuses for him/her.
- **Discuss things with your child.** He/She needs help in interpreting the meaning of what he/she sees and experiences, and you are the one who can help him/her understand. Don't assume he/she understands—check to see if he/she does.
- **Help him/her to see the connection between school and life.** You take such connections for granted, but your child may not be aware of the everyday applications of learning unless you point to them.  
—Take advantage of home activities to point out how math is necessary to double a recipe and useful in calculating how to saw a piece of wood to fit a particular space, or how reading is needed to follow directions, etc.

- **Talk with your child about what he/she is watching on TV.** Talk to your child about the difference between real life and what's on the screen, so that fantasy doesn't become reality in his/her mind. You don't have to be negative about what he/she is watching, but keep reminding him/her that the people he/she sees living and dying on the screen take off their makeup at the end of the day and go home to different lives.

**BUILD FOR THE FUTURE** by telling your child that you think education is very, very important.



- **Make sure your child does his/her homework every day.** Don't do it for him/her. He/She needs to work independently, with your support. Practice with your child when he/she needs to memorize spelling words, multiplication tables, and other rote learning. Help him/her understand how such information can be used in his/her everyday world.
- **Make sure he/she knows that you expect him/her to do well.** Let him/her know you're concerned if he/she does not do as well as you think he/she can—but do not ask for perfection.

(From the California State PTA Parent's Notebook, Papers #1-8)

- **Send him/her to school every day;** he/she cannot learn if he's not there. If you don't care whether he/she goes to school, he/she won't either and school won't be important. Stay in touch with his/her teacher so that he/she sees your interest in what he/she is doing.
- **Let him/her know that it is a "given" that he/she will graduate from high school.** Help him/her see that he/she needs at least a high school education and, probably, additional training beyond that in order to have career choices with a future.

## Self-Esteem: 15 Ways to Help your Children Like Themselves

1. Reward children. Give praise, recognition, a special privilege, or increased responsibility for a job well done. Emphasize the good things they do, not the bad.
2. Take their ideas, emotions, and feelings seriously. Don't belittle them by saying, "You'll grow out of it" or "It's not as bad as you think."
3. Define limits and rules clearly and enforce them, but do allow leeway for your children within these limits.
4. Be a good role model. Let your children know that you feel good about yourself. Also let them see that you, too, can make mistakes and can learn from them.
5. Teach your children how to deal with time and money. Help them spend time wisely and budget their money carefully.
6. Have reasonable expectations for your children. Help them set reasonable goals so they can achieve success.
7. Help your children develop tolerance toward those with different values, backgrounds, and norms. Point out other people's strengths.
8. Give your children responsibility. They will feel useful and valued.
9. Be reasonable. Give support when children need it.
10. Show them that what they do is important to you. Talk with them about their activities and interests. Go to their games, parents' day at school, drama presentations, and awards ceremonies.
11. Express your values, but go beyond "do this" or "I want you to do that." Describe the experiences that determined your values, the decisions you made to accept certain beliefs, and the reasons behind your feelings.
12. Spend time together. Share favorite activities.
13. Discuss problems without placing blame or commenting on a child's character. If children know that there is a problem but don't feel attacked, they are more likely to help look for a solution.
14. Use phrases that build self-esteem, such as "Thank you for helping" or "That was an excellent idea!" Avoid phrases that hurt self-esteem: "Why are you so stupid?" "How many times have I told you?"
15. Show how much you care about them. Hug them. Tell them they are terrific and that you love them.

## Communicating with Your Child

Communication is the key to effective parenting. It requires constant effort, but the rewards are great. When you communicate your feelings honestly and openly—your feelings of caring, respect, love, as well as unhappiness and anger—a stronger relationship develops between you and your child. This gives your child a model for communicating his/her own feelings, and your home is where he/she can do so safely.

### COMMUNICATION IS A TWO-WAY STREET—

- LISTEN**
- Let your child know that what he/she has to say is important to you.
  - Listen to him/her daily.
  - Look and act and be interested without interrupting or being distracted.
  - Show respect for his/her feelings and opinions without being judgmental.
  - Ask him/her to do all of the above when *you* are talking.
- REFLECT**
- Make sure you understand what he/she means by repeating back what you think you heard and asking if you understood his/her correctly.
  - In a positive manner, rephrase what you thought he/she said until you both agree that *now* you understand what he/she meant.
  - This feedback process doesn't necessarily mean you agree, but it shows that you understand what he/she is saying and that you are really listening.
  - Ask him/her to do the same when you are expressing yourself.
- SHARE**
- Since communication is a two-way street, your feelings and opinions and those of your child must both be stated without criticizing or lecturing.
  - Every single exchange does not need to be balanced, but make sure your communication is a genuine two-sided sharing.
  - Besides creating a warm and caring environment, this process gives your child practice in developing communication skills.
- DISCUSS**
- Talk about issues. Sometimes if you do not agree, you simply can agree to disagree.
  - When a solution is needed, work together to solve the problem.
    - Define the problem.
    - Set out the options.
    - Look at the pros and cons of each and at possible consequences.
    - Make a decision.
    - Plan to reexamine the decision after a certain time has passed.

### EFFECTIVE PRAISE—Tells your child, “I like what you did.”

- **Should immediately follow the desirable behavior.** The closer the praise is to the desired action, the more effective it will be.
  - Example:** A mother tells her daughter, who has struggled for several minutes with a stubborn zipper, “You worked hard to zip that zipper!” Don't wait until the next day and then say, “You did a good job of zipping your zipper yesterday. Can you do it again today?” Some children may not remember yesterday's experience.
- **Must be sincere.** False praise is damaging, but you can always find something to praise sincerely, if you work at it.
  - Example:** When your son asks, “How do you like my picture?” and you don't like it, you can say, “I like the colors you used. It looks as though you enjoyed painting that picture.”

- **Is specific.** Children need to know exactly what you mean when you give praise or discipline.  
—**Example:** “I am really pleased you made your bed without my reminding you to do so.” You can praise the completed task or the effort of trying. “You worked hard trying to get the wrinkles out of your bed.” Don’t just say, “good kid,” which suggests that the child is the issue rather than the action being the issue.

**EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE—Tells your child, “I like you, but I dislike that action.”**

- **Is specific and immediately follows the undesirable behavior. It should help your child understand to what action you objected and give a positive model for next time.**  
—**Example:** “I don’t like how you treated Jeff,” does not give enough information, nor does it give a model. Saying, “When you laughed at Jeff’s drawing, he was hurt,” states the action you didn’t like and opens the door for a solution.
- **Gives your child the chance to be part of the solution.**  
—**Example:** “If you did not like Jeff’s drawing, what could you have said or done that would be honest but still kind?”
- **Must be consistent and fair.** If you object to a certain kind of behavior one day, your child needs you to object to the same circumstances on other days. The behavior you are requiring must be within your child’s ability. Don’t expect the same abilities—attention span, memory, or eye-hand coordination—from a three-year-old that you expect from a six-year-old.

On the other hand, if a child thinks that a brother or sister is getting away with behavior that is forbidden to him/her, the discipline standards must be examined carefully. If there are genuine reasons for the difference, they must be explained, and the child who feels unfairly treated needs the opportunity to say so. You don’t help your child, if you do not require lovingly that he/she live up to the best he/she can do.

## Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Adult

- **Start early.** Even toddlers can put away their toys if helped by parents.
- **Set household rules.** They help children develop responsibility. For instance, very young children can put their clothes in the hamper; older children can wash their clothes.
- **Enforce rules with established consequences.** For instance, clothing not placed in the hamper might not be washed.
- **Set rules that are important to the quality of your family life.** Don't set too many rules; they may become impossible for children to remember and for you to enforce. Explain the reason for rules, and follow them yourself. Develop rules appropriate to the ages of your children.
- **Help your children meet their responsibilities.** If youngsters have trouble getting up in the morning for school, buy them an alarm clock. Show children how to keep lists, make a calendar, or use reminder notes.
- **Give your children guidelines to help them meet certain responsibilities.** For instance, if you give your children an allowance from which they are expected to take daily expenses such as lunch, let them know how you expect them to spend the money. Also, let them know the penalties for mis-spending money.
- **Reward your children's efforts to act responsibly.** A reward can be a simple "Thank you!" or a special treat.
- **Show your children how much you care about them.** Give them support, even when they fail. Let them know that even though you may disapprove of their behavior, you still love them.
- **Show your children that you have confidence in their abilities.** Consider allowing your children to choose their own household responsibilities or rotating responsibilities among family members. Doing so will help in developing a cooperative spirit among parents and children.
- **Start a family council.** Family councils give children practice in making decisions, understanding family rules, and developing cooperation and responsibility. Family councils can make decisions such as where to go on a family vacation. To start a family council, pick a regular meeting time and place where all family members can come together. The council should be devoted to positive efforts to solve family problems and make rules and decisions. Name-calling and scolding should not be allowed. Although complaints can be aired in a family council, efforts should be made by all members to prevent council meetings from becoming gripe sessions. Determine how decisions will be made in the family council. Expect all members to abide by decisions. If strong feelings are making finding the solutions to a problem impossible, delay discussion until the next meeting.
- **If you find your children cannot live up to certain responsibilities,** think about whether they are too young to do what is expected or consider ways to assist them.





## Healthy Discipline Tips for Parents

Every parent experiences stressful moments when a child misbehaves. What are the best ways to express your disapproval and correct their behavior without hitting your child? Here are some things you can do:

1. **Recognize that your feelings are high and wait before punishing your child.** Don't do anything if you are angry. An angry parent is more likely to use physical punishment. Allow yourself and the child a cooling-off period before you take any action.
2. **Take another look at your child's misbehavior by sharing it with other adults.** In moments of anger, we tend to lose our ability to see things clearly. Find a friend, spouse, or other trusted adult with whom you can discuss your child's behavior. If possible, talk to someone who wasn't involved in the situation. He or she may be able to help you understand the child or help find practical ways to handle the situation.
3. **Learn about child development and parenting.** Studies show that the more you and your spouse know, the more likely you are to be good parents. Find out about books and courses in parent education, child development, and family relationships.
4. **It is important to communicate your child-rearing concerns and beliefs with your spouse.** Parents should agree on the type of discipline used with their children. Presenting children with conflicting methods may confuse and magnify problems between you and your children.
5. **Make your values clear to your child and be consistent in maintaining them.** In order to define limits, children are likely to test their parents at each stage of development. This is often taxing to parents, but it is a child's way of asking for guidance. The trick is to remain open and flexible, so that your child will continue to trust you without sacrificing the values in which you believe.

## Twelve Alternatives to Hurtful Physical Discipline

When the big and little problems of everyday life pile up to the point where you feel like lashing out – STOP. Take time out. Don't take it out on your child. Try any or all of these alternatives – whatever works for you.

1. Stop in your tracks. Step back. Sit down.
2. Take five deep breaths. Inhale. Exhale. Slowly, slowly.
3. Count to 10. Better yet, 100. Or say the alphabet out loud.
4. Phone a friend, a relative, or go visit someone.
5. Still mad? Hug a pillow. Or munch an apple.
6. Thumb through a magazine, book, or newspaper.
7. Do some sit-ups.
8. Pick up a pencil and write down your thoughts.
9. Take a hot bath or a cold shower.
10. Lie down on the floor or just elevate your feet.
11. Put on your favorite music or radio station.
12. Close your eyes and try to visualize something beautiful and peaceful.



## Discipline Tips

- Set a good example. Children learn more from how parents act than from what they say.
- Set limits on behavior, but be careful not to make too many rules. Generally, young children need more rules than do older ones.
- Avoid constant criticism and nagging. Try to ignore unwanted behavior, unless it is destructive or dangerous. Instead, offer praise and positive suggestions, which foster self-esteem.
- Take time to listen to your child, especially if there is a problem or a rule he or she wants to discuss.
- Encourage your child's independence. For example, let him/her select his/her own clothes and dress himself/herself. Help him/her realize that he/she can cope without you.
- Let your child help make family rules and decisions, since he/she will be less likely to break rules that he has helped to make.
- Be consistent and fair. A few rules that are always enforced are more effective than many rules that are enforced sporadically.
- Act quickly when your child misbehaves. Don't let the problem fester.
- Be flexible. Some rules need to be changed. Be especially careful to eliminate rules that are no longer necessary as your child grows older. This will encourage independence.
- Make sure your child understands all rules and the penalties for breaking them. Give your child a chance to be part of the solution.
- Avoid power struggles with your child. Discipline is not a game in which there are winners and losers.
- Keep your sense of humor. It can work wonders with your child and help you keep your perspective about what is really important.
- Treat your child as you would your best friend—with respect, courtesy, and love.
- As children grow older, invite them to decide among options you have selected. Eventually help your children create an appropriate list of options from which to choose.
- Remind yourself that children are different. What works with one child may not work with another. What works well at one age may not be appropriate for an older or younger child.
- Never punish in anger. Remember that punishment does not mean abuse but rather, restriction of activities or reduction of privileges.

## Responsive Discipline

Most parents, at some time, struggle with appropriate, constructive discipline. Easy-to-understand, practical help is now available on-line. The *Responsive Discipline* on-line course at [www.ksu.edu/wwparent/courses/rd/index.htm](http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent/courses/rd/index.htm) will lead you through a series of lessons about discipline for your own personal study. All the information you need is contained in the linked pages to the course. There is no cost to participate, no tests or grades. You proceed entirely on your own, at your own pace. Come back as often as you wish.

As the author states, "The Responsive Discipline course is not a cattle chute. We are not interested in herding you to adopt a single strategy or perspective on discipline. The focus here is on making decisions based on alternatives. These alternatives are called tools. Effective discipline means blending intuition and knowledge about a child and the circumstances to shape a flexible response that teaches and strengthens the child's capacity for self-control. The more tools parents have available, the more effective they can be."

The *Responsive Discipline* on-line course should not be viewed as a substitute for professional assistance. If your child has severe or continuing emotional problems, contact your local mental health center for a referral. Some problems require professional help.

### Lesson Topics

*Lesson 1. What is Responsive Discipline?*

*Lesson 2. The Discipline Sequence*

*Lesson 3. Establishing Priorities and Setting Limits*

*Lesson 4. Why Children Misbehave*

*Lesson 5. Thirteen Tips for Managing Discipline Effectively*

*Lesson 6. The First Tool Set: Thinking Prevention First*

*Lesson 7. The Second Tool Set: Guidance as the Primary Focus*

*Lesson 8. The Third Tool Set: Consequences as a Last Resort*

*Lesson 9. Some Thoughts About Spanking*

In addition to *Responsive Discipline*, the award-winning WonderWise Parent web site created by Dr. Charles Smith of Kansas State University, offers a wide variety of other resources for parents. Web site: The WonderWise Parent Homepage: ([www.ksu.edu/wwparent/](http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent/)).

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## Helping Children Like Themselves

- **Be a good role model.** Let your teens know that you feel good about yourself. Be human with your children. If they see that you, too, can make mistakes and improve yourself because of them, they will be able to accept their own mistakes and then use those as learning experiences.
- **Clearly define and enforce limits and rules.**
- **Show respect and allow for individual action** on the part of your pre-teens and teens within these given limits.
- **Reward teens** when you can. Give praise, recognition, a special privilege, or increased responsibility and freedom for a job well done.
- **Accept your children as they are.** Don't expect them to fit your mold for them.
- **Take their ideas and emotions seriously.** Your teens see their problems as being as real as you see yours. Don't belittle them by saying, "You'll grow out of it" or "It's not as bad as you think it is."
- **Make a wide range of activities available** for your children, so that they can find the talent or activity that they enjoy and do well. Success in this talent or activity will help compensate for the times during adolescence when they feel inadequate in other areas.
- **Encourage activities** that make your children feel good. These might include photography, handicrafts, working in the garden. At times they need to do something not as obviously productive as the above activities to make themselves feel better. Allow them time for activities such as skipping stones, playing games, talking on the phone, making paper airplanes, reading sports magazines, and people watching.
- **Teach your pre-teens and teens how to deal with money.** Help them budget the money they have now, so that they can budget larger quantities when they're in college or working. Teach them to spend their allowances wisely, balance their bank accounts, fill out tax forms, and take care of the odds and ends of budgeting.
- **Have reasonable expectations** for your children. Give them goals they can accomplish. Success breeds success!
- **Concentrate on improvement,** not perfection. Give encouragement with each step.
- **Help your children develop tolerance** toward those with different values, backgrounds, norms, etc. Help them appreciate other people's strengths.
- **Give your children the responsibility** of helping someone else. They will feel more useful and more valued.
- **Be available.** Give support on a task when they ask for it. Make sure they know that you will help, if they want you to help.
- **Let them know that you value and care about them.**
- **Show them that what they do is important to you.** Talk about their activities with them. Go to their games, parents' day at school, drama presentations, and their award ceremonies.
- **Remind them of the special things they have done.** It is more important that they be reminded of the good things than the bad.
- **Tell your children they're terrific, and that you love them.** Sometimes, especially during adolescence, they don't hear that from anyone else.



## Talking Skills/Listening Skills

- **Accept your children's feelings.** All feelings can be accepted; it is only the actions that sometimes must be controlled.
- **Accept your children's individuality.**
- **Give praise openly and without reservation.**
- **Spend time together.** Take your children with you on a job. Introduce them to your co-workers. Walk around the block together. Share a favorite activity.
- **Show you care** about them and want to protect them. Hug them. Touch them. Continue to be supportive. More than at any other time, adolescents need to be sure of their parents' love.
- **Respect their privacy,** and show that you recognize their growing independence.
- **Listen without prejudgment.** Make the effort not to let preconceptions or the need to talk or defend yourself and your views interfere with your ability to hear what your children say.
- **Listen to the underlying meaning of your children's concerns.** Sometimes pre-teens and teens are trying to tell you something but can't seem to find the words. Don't read imaginary problems into your children's conversation. Never insist your children mean, or are concerned about, something they deny.
- **Resist giving advice,** even if it's helpful, unless your pre-teens or teens ask you for it. They often just need someone to listen to them so that they can work out their own solutions.
- **Don't overreact!** This can't be overemphasized. If teens think their parents are too concerned, they'll close themselves off. Give them the opportunity to talk, and they'll work things out.
- **Express your values,** but go beyond "You should do this" or "I want you to do that." Describe the experiences that determined your values, the decisions that led you to accept certain beliefs, and the reasons behind your feelings.
- **Hold family meetings.** Make this a time to discuss serious topics with the whole family, as well as a time to keep the household running smoothly by airing concerns.
- **Describe a problem without placing blame or commenting on the children's character.** If children see a problem and know they are not being attacked, they are more likely to help with a solution.
- **Keep rules sensible, enforceable, few in number, and well explained.**
- **Give pre-teens and teens rules,** but be flexible. Compromise over issues such as clothes, hairstyles, or school activities that aren't of "life or death" importance.
- **Use books, magazines, and newspaper articles** to start communication, especially for delicate or complex topics. Your local library has a selection of books. Discuss them after you and your children have read them.
- **Use movies, TV, and plays** as springboards for discussion. If something is mentioned in the movie that is important to you or that you think is important to your pre-teen or teens, explore it with your children.
- **Some good resources** for learning more about communicating with your pre-teens or teens: *Talking with Your Teenager: A Book for Parents* by Ruth Bell and Leni Zeiger Wildflower from Random House Publishers, and *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish from Avon Books.



## Helping Your Child Make Decisions

- **Give your children opportunities to practice making decisions**—for example, choosing the site of a family outing or dividing the chores fairly.
- **Show your children how to weigh their options**, gather necessary information, and consider alternatives and potential outcomes of their decisions. You can show these skills to your children even in simple decision-making situations such as deciding what clothing to wear.
- **Help children understand that decisions have consequences, both for themselves and others.** For instance, a teen might decide to take up smoking because it looks “mature” without considering that smoking carries with it a variety of consequences including yellow teeth, smoker’s breath, having to support an expensive habit, and increased risk of cancer and heart disease.
- **Show your children that not making a decision when one is needed can be as bad as making a wrong decision.**
- **If you are not sure what kinds of decisions your children are mature enough to handle, give them the chance to try making some decisions.** Be supportive, friendly, and ready to save the day, if necessary. This will help both you and your children know what they are ready to do for themselves.
- **Accept your children’s decisions.** Remember, no decision is perfect. Support your children’s ability to make decisions.
- **Understand that many of your children’s decisions will be based on their personal tastes and needs** and, therefore, may not match the decision you would have made for them.
- **Lay ground rules or limits for decision-making.** If a child wants to do something that clearly is harmful or unacceptable, explain why you cannot allow him/her to act on that decision.
- **Remember, the ability to make decisions helps improve self-esteem.** Children who can exercise some control over their lives are being prepared to be more responsible and happier adults.

Issue or Concern

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options

1 

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2 

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3 

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Positive possibilities of each option

1 

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2 

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3 

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Drawbacks of each option

1 

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2 

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3 

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How will I evaluate my decision and when

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My decision

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## Evaluating TV and Electronic Media Violence

### DOES VIOLENCE DRIVE THE STORYLINE?

- ☐ In this program, there wouldn't be much of a story without the violence.
- ☐ In this program, the hero is never safe (or never seems to feel safe).
- ☐ Do the violent acts seem to be a showcase for special effects by the media makers?
- ☐ It would be difficult to sum up what happens in this program without describing at least one act of violence.

### DOES THE VIOLENCE PORTRAYED INCLUDE THE REAL-LIFE CONSEQUENCES?

- ☐ The leading "good guy" character in the story survives the episode with few serious injuries.
- ☐ When people die in this program, they seem to simply disappear.
- ☐ No one is shown mourning when a person is killed or seriously injured.

### DOES THE STORY DESCRIBE A WORLD OF ALL GOOD AND ALL BAD?

- ☐ The "good guys" in this story have few bad qualities.
- ☐ The "bad guys" in this story have few good qualities.
- ☐ The "good guys" are, in some way, the "winners" in this program.
- ☐ The "bad guys" seem to have no family or friends who will care if they get hurt.



## Recommended Guidelines to Discourage Alcohol and Drug Use

1. Parents will not allow, or make available alcohol or other drugs to be used by minors (California State Penal Code, Section 25658; minors are persons under age 21). Parents will supervise any gathering of youth in their homes; parents will be visible frequently during the entire event.
2. Parents will agree in advance with their children that parties and other gatherings should be by invitation only. Open, drop-in, "cattle call," or party crashing will not be allowed.
3. Parents will feel welcome calling the "host" parents at any home where a party is to be held to talk about their expectations that no alcohol or other drugs will be permitted. Students will be responsible for obtaining the phone number for their parents. Parents hosting a party should expect phone calls from other parents.
4. Parents and their children will establish an agreed-upon time for returning home. When special circumstances occur, children will telephone home.
5. Parents will emphasize to their children that if alcohol or other drugs are present, if there is no responsible adult supervision, or if the children are with a driver who has been drinking, the children can call the parent, and the parent will pick them up without question or comment. Children need to know they can call to request a ride home from an unsafe situation without being punished.





## What You Can Do to Stamp Out Bullying

Bullying, some say, is just a normal part of childhood, but most experts believe it is a serious problem with long-lasting effects that can be the root cause of criminal behavior, depression, academic failure, and lack of self-esteem later in life.

### What are the signs that my child is being bullied?

Look for:

- Torn clothing
- A loss of appetite
- Lack of desire to go to school
- Mood changes

### What are the signs that my child is a bully?

Look for:

- Impulsive behavior
- A desire always to be in control
- Showing little or no empathy for others

### Characteristics of bullies

- Tend to have problems at home
- May be the victim of aggressive behavior or abuse at home
- Receive inconsistent discipline and/or poor supervision at home
- Tend to be aggressive, self-confident, and lacking in empathy

### Characteristics of victims

- Tend to be quiet, passive children who don't have many friends
- Tend to be smaller in size and/or physically weaker than the bully

The problem of bullying is widespread and is often cited as a contributing factor in the recent cases of school shootings. According to the National Resource Center for Safe Schools in Portland, Oregon, 30% of American children are regularly involved in bullying, either as bullies or victims, and approximately 15% are "severely traumatized or distressed" as a result of encounters with bullies. Researchers agree that children who bully in childhood are more likely to become violent adults and engage in criminal behavior; victims of bullies often suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression as they grow into adulthood.

### When is it teasing, and when is it bullying?

One of the common myths about bullying is that it is just a normal part of childhood. Everyone gets teased now and then without a great deal of harm, but bullying, characterized by repeated, intentionally hurtful acts, can have long-term effects on both the bully and the victim. These acts can be physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual, and there is generally an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim.

### Statistics on bullying

- One in three children in the United States is affected by bullying.
- Sixty percent of students identified as bullies in grades 6 to 9 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24.
- Bullies are at even greater risk of suicide than are their targets.
- About two thirds of students involved in school shootings said they had felt persecuted, bullied, or threatened by others.
- School-based intervention programs can reduce bullying by 30% to 50%.

### As a parent, what can I do about bullying?

The most important thing you can do is listen to your child. Ask how things are going at school. Ask if your child has had any experience with bullies or has seen other children experience bullying. Often children are too embarrassed or scared to bring up the topic on their own. You can bring it up by discussing sympathy and respect for others and asking such questions as "Why do you think she said those hurtful things?" or "How do you think it feels to be bullied?"

You'll want to have a discussion about how to handle bullying situations and warn your child never to resort to violence, even as a reaction to a bully. Stan Davis, a Maine school guidance counselor and trainer in bullying prevention, advises encouraging the majority of students who are not victims or bullies to stand up to bullies, to ask adults for help, and to reach out as friends to isolated students.

You may be tempted to intervene by confronting the bully and his/her parent yourself, but most experts advise against doing so. If you confront the bully, you will only verify for him/her that your child is a weakling. Many bullies come from homes lacking in parental involvement, so confronting the parent might not prove productive. Besides, it will probably be difficult for you to talk to the bully's parent in a calm and rational manner, and that inability might only exacerbate the problem.

Your instincts may tell you to let your child learn to handle the situation himself/herself, but in actuality, he/she may need an adult (either a teacher or a parent) to intervene when bullying takes place because of the imbalance of power. Alert your child's teacher or principal when bullying occurs, and work with your school to make sure the atmosphere is safe and that there is effective monitoring. Ask to be notified should your child be involved in a bullying incident. To know what really goes on at school and to help create a positive atmosphere, volunteer to be a playground or classroom assistant.

**Myths about bullying**

- Victims are responsible for bringing bullying on themselves.
- Bullying is just a normal part of childhood.
- Bullies will stop, if you just ignore them.
- Victims need to learn to stand up for themselves.

**What should my child's school be doing to address bullying?**

Look for a positive, supportive atmosphere where students know that bullying will not be tolerated, where students know they can go to adults for help, and where there are clear consequences for bullying. An ongoing commitment to promoting this kind of school environment is key. An effective technique used in many schools is to have each class develop its own code of conduct.

**The following is the code of conduct that one class wrote:**

- We don't want any hitting, punching, or kicking.
- We don't want any name-calling or put-downs.
- We include everyone when we do group activities.
- We help others when they are bullied.

Teachers and staff should be on the alert and should intervene when they see bullying occur. They should be aware that bullies often try to operate in places that are not in direct public view, such as school bathrooms or locker rooms. Some schools hold assemblies to present the topic of bullying, but these one-shot efforts have not been proven as effective as a consistent, ongoing, school-wide effort to combat bullying.

*Written by Lisa Rosenthal, GreatSchools.net*

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT (Birth-5 Years)

From the United States Department of Education.

### Learning Begins Early

The road to success in school begins early. Good health, loving relationships, and opportunities to learn all help preschool children do well later in life, but many parents wonder, “How can I give these things to my child?”

This information is for all of you who have asked this question. It’s for parents, grandparents, and others who want to know what to do to help young children get ready for school. Throughout the preschool years, you can do many simple things to help your child grow, develop, and have fun learning.

### *Birth to 1 Year*

#### WHAT TO EXPECT

**Babies grow and change dramatically during their first year. They begin to:**

Develop some control over their bodies. They learn to hold up their heads, roll over, sit up, crawl, stand up, and, in some cases, walk.

Become aware of themselves as separate from others. They learn to look at their hands and toes and play with them. They learn to cry when parents leave, and they recognize their own names.

Communicate and develop language skills. First, babies cry and make throaty noises. Later, they babble and say “mama” and “dada.” Then they make lots of sounds, and begin to name a few close people and favorite objects.

Play games. First, they play with their hands. Later they show an interest in toys, enjoy “putting in and taking out” games, and eventually carry around or hug dolls or stuffed toys.

Relate to others. First, they respond to adults more than to other babies. Later, they notice other babies but tend to treat them like objects instead of people. Then, they pay attention when other babies cry.



#### WHAT THEY NEED

##### **Babies require:**

A loving caregiver who can respond to their cries and gurgles;

Someone who gets to know their special qualities;

Someone to keep them safe and comfortable;

Opportunities to move about and practice new physical skills;

Safe objects to look at, bat, grab, bang, pat, roll, and examine;

Safe play areas; and

Opportunities to hear language and to make sounds.

## 1 to 2 Years

### WHAT TO EXPECT

#### Children this age are:

Energetic (walk more steadily, run, push, pull, take apart, carry, and climb on and grab things.)

Self-centered; and

Busy (like to flip light switches, pour things in and out of containers, unwrap packages, and empty drawers.)

#### Between their first and second birthdays, they:

Like to imitate the sounds and actions of others (by pretending to do housework or yard work, for example);

Want to be independent and do it themselves (and express this by saying “No!”);

Can be clingy;

Can have relatively short attention spans if not involved in an activity;

Add variations to their physical skills (by walking backwards or sideways, for example);

Begin to see how they are like and unlike other children;

Become more sensitive to the moods of others;

Play alone or alongside other toddlers; and

Increase their vocabularies from about 2 or 3 words to about 250 words and understand more of these things people say to them.



### WHAT THEY NEED

#### Children this age require:

A safe environment for exploring;

Opportunities to make their own choices (“Do you want the red cup or the blue one?”);

Clear and reasonable limits;

Opportunities to use big muscles (in the arms and legs, for example);

Opportunities to manipulate small objects, such as puzzle pieces and stackable toys;

Activities that allow them to touch, taste, smell, hear, and see new things;

Chances to learn about “cause and effect”—that things they do produce certain results (when a stack of blocks gets too high, it will fall over);

Opportunities to develop and practice their language skills; and

Chances to learn about kindness and caring.

## 2 to 3 Years

### WHAT TO EXPECT

#### Children this age are:

Becoming more aware of others and their own feelings;

Often stubborn and may have temper tantrums;

Developing a great interest in other children and enjoy being near them (although they are usually self-centered);

Able to jump, hop, roll, and climb;

Developing an interest in pretend play—playing at keeping house, for example, or pretending to cook food and care for a baby;

Expanding their vocabularies (from about 250 to 1,000 words during the year); and

Putting together 2-, 3-, and 4-word sentences.

### WHAT THEY NEED

#### Children this age require opportunities to:

Develop hand coordination (with puzzle pieces or large beads to string or by scribbling, for example);

Do more things for themselves, such as putting on clothing;

Sing, talk, and develop their language;

Play with other children;

Do things in the community, such as taking walks, and visiting libraries, museums, informal restaurants, parks, beaches, and zoos; and

Try out different ways to move their bodies.

## 3 or 4 Years

### WHAT TO EXPECT

#### Children this age:

Start to play with other children, instead of next to them;

Are more likely to take turns and share;

Are friendly and giving;

Begin to understand that other people have feelings and rights;

Like silly humor, riddles, and practical jokes;

Like to please and to conform;

Generally become more cooperative and enjoy new experiences;

Are increasingly self-reliant and probably can dress without help (except for buttons and shoelaces);

May develop fears ("Mommy, there's a monster under my bed") and have imaginary companions;

Are more graceful physically than 2 year-olds and love to run, skip, jump with both feet, catch a ball, climb down stairs, and dance to music;

Are great talkers, speak in sentences, and continue to add more words to their vocabularies; and

Have greater control over hand and arm muscles, which is reflected in their drawings and scribbles.

### WHAT THEY NEED

#### Children this age require opportunities to:

Develop their blooming language abilities through books, games, songs, science, and art activities;

Develop more self-help skills—for example, to dress and undress themselves;

Draw with crayons, work puzzles, build things, and pretend;

Play with other children, so they can learn to listen, take turns, and share; and

Develop more physical coordination—for example, by hopping on both feet.

## 4 to 5 Years

### WHAT TO EXPECT

#### Children this age:

Are active and have lots of energy;

May be aggressive in their play;

Can show extremes from being loud and adventurous to acting shy and dependent;

Enjoy more group activities because they have longer attention spans;

Like making faces and being silly;

May form cliques with friends and can be bossy;

May change friendships quickly;

May brag and engage in name-calling during play;

May experiment with swear words and bathroom words;

Can be very imaginative and like to exaggerate;

Have better control in running, jumping, and hopping, but tend to be clumsy;

Are great talkers and questioners; and

Love to use words in rhymes, nonsense, and jokes.



### WHAT THEY NEED

#### Children this age need opportunities to:

Experiment and discover within limits;

Use blunt-tipped scissors and crayons and put together simple jigsaw puzzles;

Practice outdoor play activities;

Develop their growing interest in academic things, such as science and mathematics, and activities that involve exploring and investigating;

Group items that are similar (for example, by size);

Stretch their imaginations and curiosity; and

See how reading and writing are useful (for example, by listening to stories and poems, dictating stories, and talking with other children and adults).

## Read to Me!

The single most important way for children to develop the knowledge they need to succeed in reading is for you to read aloud to them – beginning early.

### ***What You'll Need***

- Good books
- Children's dictionary (preferably a sturdy one)
- Paper, pencils, crayons, markers

## Nine Tips to Encourage Reading

**1**

Read aloud to your child every day. From birth to six months, your baby probably won't understand what you're reading, but that's okay. You can get your child used to the sound of your voice and used to seeing and touching books.

**2**

To start out, use board books with no words or just a few words. Point to the colors and the pictures and say their names. Simple books can teach children things that later will help them learn to read. For example, they learn about the structure of language, that there are spaces between the words, and that the print goes from left to right.

**3**

Tell stories. Encourage your child to ask questions and talk about the story. Ask your child to predict what will come next. Point to things in books that your child can relate to in his or her own life. "Look at the picture of the penguin. Do you remember the penguin we saw at the zoo?"

**4**

Look for reading programs. If you aren't a good reader, programs in your community like Even Start can provide opportunities for you to improve your own reading and to read with your child. Friends and relatives also can read to your child, and senior citizen volunteers are available in many communities to do the same.

**5**

Buy a children's dictionary – if possible, one that has pictures next to the words. Then start the "let's look it up" habit.

**6**

Make writing materials available.

**7**

Watch educational TV programs such as "Sesame Street" and "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood" that help your child learn the alphabet and the sounds they represent.

Visit the library often. Begin making weekly trips to the library, when your child is very young. See that your child gets a library card as soon as possible. Many libraries issue cards to children as soon as they can print their names (you'll have to countersign for the card).

**8**

Read yourself. What you do sets an example for your child.

**9**

*This information is provided by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Brought to you by the First Five California Children & Families Commission, Funded by Prop. 10. For more information, please call (800) KIDS-025.*

## Pressures on Youth

Children of all ages feel the pressure of today's fast-paced society and the push to mature socially much earlier. Adolescence brings on even greater stress, as the child realizes that he/she will soon be leaving the security of the family; that now grades are of more importance—especially for college admission; that there is increased pressure to conform to the group; and that, when the norms of friends conflict with those of parents, the pressure increases.

### WHAT PARENTS CAN LOOK FOR AS SIGNS OF UNDUE STRESS:

- Temper tantrums
- Cheating in school
- Delinquent behavior
- Secretive behavior or staring into space by a usually-carefree, boisterous child
- Inability to study, or conversely, total absorption in studying to the exclusion of all other activities
- Sudden dullness or apathy in a normally bright, alert child
- Unusual restlessness, agitation, poor eating, nail biting, twitching, or stuttering

### WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

- Provide guidance for dealing with pressure. Your child can take one of three general approaches to reduce the stress: retreat, give in, or take action. The last approach is most consistent with sound mental health. You can help your child determine what action would be most effective in a given situation.
- Let your child know you care. When a child has the security of parental love and respect, pressures can be met with self-confidence. Be available; be supportive—but not smothering (the more children feel they have solved problems themselves, the more assurance they will feel the next time they are called on to solve a problem).
- Be a positive force in your child's life, not a major pressure point. Throughout the school years, avoid making unrealistic demands. It is fine to start education early, but don't pressure children to learn before they are ready. Don't push children into early social experiences—they will mature emotionally and physically at their own rates.
- Instill in your child to live with limitations. No one excels in everything; no one is perfect. It is not your child's particular limitations that are crucial, but his/her attitude toward them. Children should know their limits and their strengths. They should have opportunities for success, but when they fail, they should meet failure honestly and view it as a learning experience.
- Help your child find time to be alone—to think, to dream, to plan, to make decisions.
- Teach your child a system of "values." Even if pressure is overwhelming, you do not want your child to seek ways of dealing with situations that are unacceptable to the values that the family holds. Students who have cheated in school report a desire for stronger parental direction, firm rules, and guidance in determining right and wrong.
- Encourage your teenager to develop self-responsibility. Volunteer service such as community work is a valuable way for adolescents to learn about independence, cooperative rather than competitive activity, and useful and socially necessary work.



## Tips for Parent, Pre-Teen, and Teen

### TIPS FOR THE PARENT:

- Don't be afraid to be a parent.
- Provide limits that will cut down on some of the stresses of unlimited choices. For example, tell your children they need to be home for dinner, then let them decide from a list of choices what the consequences will be if they are late—warming up their own dinner, making a sandwich, or doing without the meal.
- Help your children limit or expand the number of their activities and responsibilities based on their capabilities. Pre-teens and teens should have challenges, but you should help them avoid becoming overwhelmed with all that they may want to do.
- Set a good example. Practice ways to reduce stress that your teen will be able to follow as well, such as aerobic exercise, proper nutrition, yoga, meditation, deep breathing, relaxation exercises, sleep, massage, sauna, and FUN.

### TIPS FOR THE PARENT, PRE-TEEN, AND TEEN:

- Avoid unnecessary worry. Thinking about a problem in order to arrive at a solution can be positive, but constant and unconstructive worry doesn't accomplish anything. That usually just makes situations more stressful.
- Become better organized. Plan large projects a step at a time, so you have a feeling of accomplishment when each part is accomplished. This gives you more reasonable deadlines, and you feel better about what you can do.
- Recognize the symptoms of stress, such as:
  - ☐ Moodiness
  - ☐ Insomnia or other sleeping disorders
  - ☐ Lowered body resistance to colds, flu, or other diseases
  - ☐ Preoccupation with negative or angry thoughts or feelings
  - ☐ Unusual behavior patterns
  - ☐ Experimentation with alcohol and other illegal drugs
  - ☐ Loss of appetite or eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia
- When you know you have a problem with stress, try to solve it one step at a time. Part of the problem could be trying to do too much at once. Take it in easy stages.
  - ☐ Practice relaxing your body.
  - ☐ Decide what is causing you unnecessary stress.
  - ☐ Analyze the causes of the stress and deal with them one step at a time.
  - ☐ Remove or reduce these stressful situations, if you can.
  - ☐ Find ways for friends, family members, or co-workers to help you by assuming some responsibilities that have been yours.

*(from Parenting: The Underdeveloped Skill, reprinted with permission from the National PTA)*

## Assessing Whether a Teen Is Violent

By Barbara F. Meltz,  
The Boston Globe  
(Reprinted with permission)

For most parents of teenagers, the revelations about a Columbine-esque plot at a Massachusetts high school boils down to a simple yet heart-wrenching question: What about my child? Is he or she on a trajectory that could lead to a catastrophic conclusion?

This is not a far-fetched worry. Not when you consider that most teens can be moody, uncommunicative, independent, defiant, self-absorbed, hypersensitive know-it-alls. Not when you consider that many parents feel largely clueless about the emotional life their teenager leads behind the bedroom door or on the other side of the front door.

Rest assured: even with all this, the answer is most likely “no.”

Teens angry enough to want to kill teachers and blow up a school “are well beyond the normal adolescent freakiness where they paint their hair green or get a tattoo,” says developmental psychologist William Damon, director of the Stanford Center on Adolescence.

Neil Bernstein, a psychologist in Washington, D.C., who specializes in difficult teenagers and their families, says, “As long as behaviors come and go, flare up and then dissipate, as long as parents have some points of connection and conversation, this is normal teenage stuff.”

Knowing when and how the line gets crossed is not as complicated as parents might think. Bernstein says teenagers typically fall into one of three categories:

- **The not-at-risk teen** looks like the one above: He’s moody and occasionally testing the limits, but there is always what Bernstein calls a “coming up for air” period when you connect.
- **The at-risk teen** is pushing limits often, violating curfews, underachieving but not failing, expressing anger at the world and sounding alienated, reading hate literature and *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, having a weapons fetish. Coming-up-for-air periods are few and far between.
- **The “downright dangerous” teen** breaks laws and rules; cuts school or is failing; keeps a list of enemy kids and teachers; spouts messages of hate groups; collects images of weapons and weapons themselves. “He is not connecting with the family,” says Bernstein, whose most recent book is *How to Keep Your Teenager Out of Trouble and What to Do If You Can’t* (Workman).

### When changes occur

Behavior usually progresses from one category to the next, but “kids can get (from one extreme to the other) fast. It can fall apart in three months,” says educational consultant Carol Maxym of Annapolis, Md., who also works with troubled teens.

Change in behavior is the first hint your child is at risk – not just one change but a clump of them: changes in grades, clothes, attitude, and, especially, expressions of antisocial intentions. Kids this age do things to shock, says Damon. “I want to get a tattoo on my forehead” is within the normal range; “I hate my teacher, I want to stick a knife in him/her and watch him/her die” is not.

Another tip-off is not only what a teenager says, but the way she says it. “There’s an angry look in his/her eyes,” says Maxym, co-author of *Teens in Turmoil* (Viking). “You know in your gut that something has changed. Something is wrong.”

This is typically where parents make mistakes, backing off because:

- **We rationalize, justify, or excuse**, not just to other people, but to ourselves: “He’s had a bad day.” “She’s really a good kid.” “We don’t know the whole story.” If you do this habitually, it’s a problem. Bernstein suggests talking to the school guidance counselor or a psychologist.
- **We’re afraid of him/her**. Many parents fall into this category. “They’ll admit they’re scared *for* their child,” says Maxym, “but admitting you are scared *of* your child is a sign that you are not in control of your family. It’s an embarrassing admission.” She also recommends professional help.
- **We’re overly respectful of his/her privacy**. This is a huge conundrum for parents. If a teenager is firmly planted in the not-at-risk category, it’s reasonable to allow him/her room or belongings to be sacred. The right to privacy, however, is a privilege a teenager earns, says Damon. If you have reason to be suspicious, you have license to search, including using supervising software on the computer.

### Dealing with suspicions

If you have a mild to moderate suspicion, Bernstein would give a teenager some warning: “I’m concerned you’re into some dangerous stuff. I’d like you to show me your room and (computer) bookmarks and show me there’s nothing to worry about.”

If he/she stonewalls, Damon would say simply, “It’s my house; I’m responsible for what goes on here.” If the relationship has deteriorated so much that you can’t even say that, that alone is reason to err on the side of over-reacting. If what you find is a problem (and assuming it’s not weapons), Damon would seek outside help, starting with someone the teen respects, such as a coach, relative, or teacher.

Bernstein says that top on the list of factors that put a teen most at risk is a lack of meaningful family connection. The two other largest contributors are a history of inadequate parental supervision and a history of having been either the bully or the bullied.

The complaint Maxym hears most often from teenagers around the country is that schools have a double standard of not holding athletes accountable. “Schools too frequently turn a blind eye to cruelty, teasing, hazing,” she says, “and parents aren’t vigilant about holding schools accountable.”

“There needs to be a zero tolerance policy for cruelty in every classroom. I don’t know what else any PTA has to worry about that’s more important than that.”

## Helping Your Teen Get Organized

<b>Expect responsibility.</b>	Encourage your teen to plan out a daily routine and stick to it.
<b>Schedule study time.</b>	Post a family calendar that schedules study time and school project deadlines, activities, mid-term dates, exam periods, and report card deadlines.
<b>Keep track of assignments.</b>	Turning in assignments on time is essential, and an assignment book is the key. Encourage your teenager to write down all assignments and due dates and check this regularly to keep the work on schedule.
<b>Help with homework.</b>	Giving help does not mean doing but rather helping to understand assignments, listening to oral reports, and proofreading first drafts or discussing a problem.
<b>Provide a study place.</b>	If possible, provide your teenager with a desk or table in a quiet place with a bright light and a comfortable chair. Keep a supply of paper, pencils, pens, a ruler, tape, and stapler on hand to avoid lost time. Handy paperback reference books are an asset—dictionary, thesaurus, and almanac.
<b>Provide materials for organizing.</b>	Successful students keep materials for each subject separate. Some use notebooks with folders or color-coded notebooks. Whatever system your teenager likes, provide the supplies and work with your teen to make certain the system is used.

## It Takes Teamwork

The school can send newsletters and notes home, but teachers also need to hear from parents, if the best job is to be done for a student.

<b>Help is nearby.</b>	Urge your teenager to seek individual help from his/her teachers whenever a difficulty arises.
<b>Ask about special services that are available.</b>	
<b>Call teachers.</b>	When you have a question or comment about school or your teenager's work, call his/her teacher. Teachers want to hear from you. It's important to call, if something your child says about school doesn't ring true. Call and check out the story.
<b>Get involved. Attend school activities—open houses and parent-teacher conferences.</b>	When your teenager sees you involved, he or she will also see education as a high priority. Another way to demonstrate your commitment to education is to become a school volunteer.

## Preparing for Life After High School

**GRADUATION DAY** is not the time to say, “What’s next?” It’s never too early to start planning for the future. Ideally, planning should begin during your child’s elementary school years. Whether your child chooses a job, college, vocational school, or the military after graduation, these suggestions are designed to help you support and guide your child in his/her chosen “career path” through school.

### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Minimum requirements for high school graduation were set by the California Legislature, but you need to know the complete set of graduation requirements adopted by your local school district. The district may require additional classes, satisfactory citizenship, or even community involvement for graduation from high school. Whether your child plans to go to college, vocational school, or directly into the job market, classes should be chosen that further his/her chosen career goals. To be sure that your child will graduate as planned, check with the counselor at least once a year.

### LIFE SKILLS

Even as you help your child with his/her career goals, you need to make sure your child understands the demands and responsibilities of living independently. Talk about how important it is to be able to make productive, effective decisions about his/her life. Follow up by allowing your child to make decisions appropriate to his/her age and accept the consequences of those decisions. Items to discuss might include how he/she will make choices about housing (rent); paying for utilities; the cost of owning a car (including insurance, maintenance, gas); providing food and clothing; costs of health and life insurance; starting a family; and so forth. Decision-making can begin with living within an allowance or clothing budget.

### CAREER GOALS

Along with your child, meet with the counselor to begin exploring your child’s interests, abilities, and career goals. Discuss the various program options with your child and the school counselor, using other resources available at the high school such as career “labs,” materials on various occupations, or the services of special “career counselors.” Both of you and your child should attend “Career Days” and “College Nights,” when they are offered in your school and community. Encourage vacation time employment and volunteer activities that might help to determine career goals.

### VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

There are opportunities for your child to take career-vocational education classes starting at the junior high school level. Such classes often support and reinforce the academic curriculum. They may be offered through the regular school, through Regional Occupational Programs, or at special schools called Regional Occupational Centers. Community colleges offer two-year vocational/technical programs, and many are providing programs (referred to as a 2+2 program) that are an extension of the classes taken in high school. In addition, there are private schools that offer a variety of training programs, but it is important to make sure that they are “accredited” schools.

## COLLEGE ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS AND TESTS

There are several types of colleges: community colleges, private institutions, the California State University system, and the University of California system. Check with your child's counselor well before your child's 9th grade to learn what entrance requirements and tests are needed for the colleges your child is interested in attending. Requirements do change, so stay current.

If he/she is in doubt about future plans, encourage your student to meet the requirements for the most rigorous possible choice, so he/she will have the most options when he/she is ready to choose.

It is possible to "practice" taking college entrance tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) as early as junior year in high school, so students can become familiar with the format and more aware of the need for additional study in high school. If the test is taken several times during high school, most colleges only look at the highest test score, so students are not penalized for taking the SAT more than once.

The National Educational Development Test (NEDT) may be taken in 9th grade and the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) in the 10th grade. When taken in the 10th grade, the results of the PSAT are returned and can be used to indicate areas for future study. The PSAT, taken in the 10th or 11th grade, is needed for National Merit Scholarship consideration. Results can be a factor in determining eligibility for some college scholarships and placement. The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), required by all California public universities, is usually taken in the spring of the 11th grade and again in the fall of the senior year, if needed.

## FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

You may be unaware of financial aid that could be available to help your family meet the expenses of vocational school or college. Scholarships often are based on more than academic achievement. Family or student need, ethnic background, career goals, extracurricular activities, and parent's employer can be factors that appeal to specific scholarships or grant programs. Work closely with your high school counselor as well as the college financial aid office to explore all possibilities for student support in both the public and private colleges. Many service clubs such as Rotary and Soroptimists award scholarships as do large and small businesses and corporations. At times, attending a local community college for the first two years can be a financial saving that enables a student to continue on to the four-year college of his/her choice.



**It is important to:**

**Plan for the future by setting goals.**

**Know what skills are needed for a chosen career.**

**Work to achieve the skills to make it happen.**

# Student Learning

Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning. To connect the school to the home, PTA members must work with educators to develop programs that focus on the success of all students, that serve the whole child, and that share the responsibility with parents for student success.

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## ACCOUNTABILITY

When used in education, accountability typically refers to an individual or group taking responsibility for the performance of students. States and school districts have been working to develop reliable and valid indicators for accountability, including indicators of how schools are doing in helping all students achieve high standards. These indicators make up the state and district accountability system and are generally used to report progress to the public and to build school improvement plans. The term “accountability” is central to efforts in standards-based reform.

### Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999

The purpose of the California public school system is to provide for the academic development of each pupil and prepare each pupil, to the extent of his or her ability, to become a lifelong learner, equipped to live and succeed within the economic and societal complexities of the 21st century.

## LEARNING STYLES: HOW DOES A CHILD LEARN?

### Children Learn in Different Ways

Some children learn best by seeing, some by hearing, some by touching. Does he/she seem to understand better when he/she only **hears** the words or when he/she only **sees** the words? Or, if he/she is a pre-reader, does he/she seem to follow the story better when he/she can **see** the pictures, too? Does he/she need to say things out loud in order to learn them? Does he/she like to know how his/her story or game or project will come out at the end before he/she begins it (global learner), or does he/she prefer to start by setting up the steps to accomplish it (analytical learner)?

Whatever a child's learning style, the important thing for parents to know is that different children do have different styles, and **the child's style may not be the same as the parent's**. At home and at school, adults need to recognize and respect the child's style and, rather than trying to change him/her, help him/her find ways to utilize his/her learning style.

Teachers use various methods to reach all types of learners. Parents who know their children's learning



styles know what method to use when, for instance, assisting with a homework assignment.

### Learning Styles

Learning styles describe the various ways people gather and process information.

About 65 percent of us are **visual learners** who gather information best by looking, reading, and watching. Visual learners may tune out spoken directions and favor illustrated explanations or charts. They “see” ideas in the mind's eye, remembering visual details from places they've visited.

**Auditory learners** are the listeners—and often the talkers. They learn well by discussing ideas. Easily distracted by noises, auditory learners often like background music to muffle interrupting sounds.

**Kinesthetic learners** gather meaning through touch and movement. These learners want to “see” by touching. About 5 percent of the population holds onto this style throughout their adult lives, continuing to learn best through physical interaction.

Besides visual, auditory, or kinesthetic strength, people lean toward one of two styles for processing information: analytic processors and global processors.

**Analytic processors or learners** examine information by breaking it down bit-by-bit and arranging it logically. Analytic processors or learners are able to see the trees through the forest, which helps keep them (and those around them) rooted and productive.

*Global processors or learners* organize by clustering information into wholes, with broad, sweeping strokes. They focus on the larger ideas underpinning the details. Global thinkers can appear disorganized because of their impatience with minutiae and their willingness to jump between ideas in seemingly random ways. They'll bend rules—including schedules and deadlines—to fit what they see as a greater purpose.

### **Non-visual Learners Need Other Methods of Teaching**

Schoolwork is largely based on reading. If a child learns best by hearing or touching, or if he/she learns best in a setting that is different from the standard classroom arrangement, he/she may run into some difficulty. Parents can encourage school districts to offer workshops that help teachers develop the understanding and skills needed to teach the same material in more than one way. Parents also can provide other learning experiences – going to a hands-on museum for a kinesthetic learner or listening with their auditory-focused children to recorded books on tape.

### **Parent Tips**

- Find out your child's learning style. Observe him/her while he/she is learning, talk to his/her teacher, and talk to him/her.
- Find ways, with his/her help, if he/she is old enough, that he/she can gain the academic information needed to stay up with his/her classes and allow him/her to be successful. Slow readers or non-readers may need a great deal of support.
- If he/she works best quietly and alone, the family needs to find a place where he/she can work. During study time, the family may have to do without TV or music.
- If he/she works best with background music, consider letting him/her use earphones, so he/she can work without interfering with the rest of the family.

## **LEARNING DISABILITIES**

### **Trouble with Learning May Be a Clue**

A learning disability is defined as a condition that interferes with the ability of a person of normal intelligence to store, process, or produce information.

**Learning disabilities create a gap between a person's true ability and his day-to-day performance.** Many learning-disabled children are very bright, but they perform poorly in school. Any unexplained trouble in learning a basic skill (reading, writing, computing) which continues over a period of time may be a clue that a child has a learning disability.

Some of the more common types of learning disabilities are dyslexia, minimal brain dysfunction, attention deficit disorder (ADD), and hyperactivity. Sometimes a learning disability is really a learning difference. At times, a different classroom setting or approach to teaching can help a child overcome a problem. For instance, reading a book while listening to a tape at the same time may support a slow reader, and an easily distracted child may be better able to concentrate by using a designated study area.

There are many strategies for helping the student with even severe learning disabilities. **For this child, it is essential that everyone at school and at home works to protect the child's self-esteem.** Typically, a learning disabled child's sense of self-worth is badly damaged by the repeated message that he/she is a failure, stupid, or not trying.

## **DOING HOMEWORK IS BEING RESPONSIBLE**

### **First Steps First**

Doing homework is often the first time a child is given an important responsibility. The child must understand and remember directions the teacher has given, take the work home, complete it, take it back to school, and hand it in by a particular deadline. This can be scary to a young person as well as difficult to carry out satisfactorily.

While learning to do this, parent support and motivation are essential. **Parental interest in homework shows they believe what the child is doing is important and that school is an important priority for the family.**

### **More Than Just Homework**

During the early years of a child's life, parents usually do most of the planning and decision making. Even when the child makes decisions, they are most often made within boundaries set by par-

ents or teachers. Now the child is expected to follow through independently on doing homework. This requires a new set of decision-making skills and knowledge about making choices: *when* to do homework, *how* to do homework, *where* to do homework, and even *if* homework will be done. Homework provides students with an opportunity to accept the responsibility for doing a task – taking directions, managing time, completing the work, and doing the work as well as one can.

### Parents Can Help Prepare Children for Homework

By asking daily how school is and what homework has been assigned, parents find out how their child feels about school, the teacher, his/her friends, and even how he/she feels about himself/herself. Asking may clue a parent into subject areas in which the student may be having difficulty. It also lets parents know how the teacher uses homework. Is it corrected and returned in a timely way, and is it part of the grade? **Asking about homework in a positive way gives parents a key opportunity to talk with and listen to their child.**

It is important that parents provide an appropriate setting for studying. When parents know a student's learning style, they know whether to provide a quiet place to study, away from family and noise, or whether the kitchen table is the best place for their student to study. From the first time students have homework, parents can:

- review the work,
- ask if the student understands the assignment,
- ask what materials the student needs, and
- check in with the student to see if the work is understood and completed.

Time management is an increasingly important element in homework. Parents can talk with their children to help them understand that planning is critical to having enough time to participate in the activities students need and want to do.

## THE VALUE OF HOMEWORK

### Students Do Better

Student achievement rises when teachers regularly assign homework and students conscientiously do it. Homework is only useful when it is reviewed and returned promptly to the student and when it *supplements* what is learned in the class. It should

not be boring “busywork” or punitive, since this destroys the idea of homework helping and supporting a child’s work in the classroom.

### Good homework assignments help students:

- Practice newly-learned skills
- Do more in-depth work
- Expand their interest in the subject

**Note:** *When there is no homework assigned on school nights, parents can set the expectation that time will be spent reading or working on an upcoming assignment.*



### Homework Policies and Practices

At the beginning of a school year, teachers often provide parents with a written statement about homework. This statement may include how often homework is assigned, how it is used in evaluating a student’s performance, and what happens if a student misses assignments. If a teacher does not provide this information, it is appropriate for a parent to request it. For middle school, junior, or senior high school students, parents should make sure their child has this information and understands what is expected in each class. Parents can ask the school office for a copy of the district’s homework policy to see whether the teacher and the school are following district policy.

### Parent Tips

**When supervising homework, parents need to see that:**

- assignments are appropriate for the grade level. Parents can ask for a copy of the adopted school board grade level standards.
- the child is able to do the work at home.
- the teacher has set up a regular way to communicate with parents regarding homework expectations and how to assist the child with new concepts.
- homework is promptly reviewed by the teacher and then returned to the child.
- homework is never used in a punitive way.
- there is a way to reach the teacher (via phone, note, or e-mail), if the assignment is unclear or the student is having difficulty completing homework.

A child needs parental support and encouragement every day! Parents should find ways to praise a child's efforts, not just focus on grades and not focus solely on academics.

### TIME FOR HOMEWORK

#### How Much Is Enough?

Time for homework varies by grade level and by teacher. The amount of time may be from 15–20 minutes in kindergarten through 3rd grade. It may be an hour a day or more for 4th through 6th grade. In junior and senior high school, it may be as much as two hours per evening. **Each child works at his/her own pace, so the amount of time needed to complete specific assignments may vary.**

#### What Time Is the Right Time?

The following guidelines taken from *Homework Without Tears*, by Lee Canter and Lee Hauser, Ph. D., may help parents in setting aside an appropriate time for homework.

### Parent Tips

#### Choosing the Daily Homework Time

##### Grades K–3:

- It is your responsibility to choose daily homework time for your child.
- Select a time when you or another responsible adult will be available to assist your child.
- Try to schedule the same daily homework time for your children. (This will make it more convenient for you to be available.)
- Write down the homework hours in the designated spaces on a Daily Schedule.

- Go over the Daily Schedule with your child, explaining what it means.
- Post the Schedule in a prominent location so that both you and your child will know exactly when homework is to be done each day.

##### Grades 4–6

- Have your child determine homework hours and write them in the designated spaces on the Daily Schedule.
- Check the Schedule to make sure that the homework times chosen are appropriate. (Does daily homework time conflict with other scheduled activities? Is it scheduled too late in the evening?)
- Post the Daily Schedule in a prominent location, so that both you and your child will know exactly when homework is to be done each day.

##### Grades 7–12

- It is your child's responsibility to determine homework hours, using the already completed Daily Schedule as a guide.

### MOTIVATION MEANS PRAISE AND MORE

#### Praise Can Mean So Much

*Homework Without Tears* authors Canter and Hauser state, "Children need encouragement and support from the people whose opinions they value most – their parents." A child needs parental support and encouragement every day! Parents should find ways to praise a child's efforts, not just focus on grades and not focus solely on academics. A child needs to feel good about his/her own abilities and that trying to do his/her best makes his/her parents proud.

Some children take longer to develop reading, writing, and listening skills. In this case, positive support will be even more critical. Consistent recognition for daily efforts will build the "I can do it" attitude necessary to encourage a child to try even when it is difficult.

**Note:** Find ways to give a hug or a pat on the back when children do homework without being reminded or without fussing. Use specific comments about what you liked. Ask other family members to reinforce what you are doing by complimenting students on their work or work habits.

### The Next Step: Using Incentives

For some children, praise is all it takes to make them want to do what is expected. If praise is not enough, parents may need additional ways to motivate their child. Choose a reward that will appeal to the child and help keep the student on task, so that the goal can be reached and the reward enjoyed. The goal is to have the child become conditioned to doing homework responsibly, in order to phased out the incentive eventually. Be sure to continue to provide plenty of verbal praise.

**Note:** *It is important to remember that offering incentives is appropriate only after a considerable amount of praise has failed to motivate a child to do the homework.*

When setting up a reward system, the parent chooses the reward offered, and it does not have to be elaborate. It can be staying up 15 minutes longer or collecting points toward a special outing. **The child may ask for a better incentive, but parents should not enter into this kind of power struggle.** Set firm limits and stick to them. Keep in mind that a child's age and ability to stay on task should determine what goal is possible to attain.

### WHEN A CONTRACT MAY HELP

Parents whose children are having problems in school can become anxious, unhappy, and often confused about how to help. When they are clear about what they expect and set specific limits with their child, parents feel better about themselves, and the student performs better in school.

Homework Contract	
• Each day that you complete all your homework assignments, check off one square.	
• When you have checked off _____ squares, you will earn a reward.	
• Your reward will be _____.	
PARENTS SIGNATURE _____	STUDENT SIGNATURE _____

A written contract makes expectations clear and helps avoid misunderstandings. It also communicates to your child that you are serious about helping him or her succeed.

### THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL CONTRACT:

#### 1. MAKE YOUR CONTRACT A POSITIVE ONE.

*Ask yourself:*

"How can I turn this undesirable behavior into a positive behavior?"

*For example:*

**Don't say,** "If you don't do your homework, you'll get all F's."

**Instead say,** "When you do your homework, you can watch TV."

**Don't say,** "If you cut classes...."

**Instead say,** "When you go to class...."

#### 2. IS IT REALISTIC?

*Ask yourself:*

"Is this a reasonable request? Can this goal be accomplished?" Keep in mind your child's age, maturity, and abilities.

*For example:*

**Don't say,** "When you finish all your homework tonight...."

**When in fact** he has a full week's work to do.

**Don't say,** "When you get all A's..."

**When in fact** he has never received more than one A in an entire school year.

#### 3. ARE YOU CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT?

*Ask yourself:*

"Have I told my child what I want done as opposed to what I don't want done?"

*For example:*

**Don't say,** "If you go to class, you may use the car."

**Instead say,** "When you go to class, you may use the car."

#### 4. CAN IT BE DONE IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME?

*Ask yourself:*

"Can what I want be accomplished within two or three days, and then the reward provided?"

Just like receiving pay for work completed, students need to be able to complete the contract in a short period of time and earn the appropriate reward.

*For example:*

**Don't say,** "When you complete all your English homework this semester...."

Instead say, “When you complete your English homework this week....”

#### 5. ARE YOU WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE?

*Ask yourself:*

“What does my child like? What does my child want?”

*Ask your child:*

“What reward would you like to work to obtain?”

#### 6. ARE YOU READY TO FOLLOW THROUGH?

*Ask yourself:*

“Am I willing to hold up my end of the contract?”

If the answer is yes, go ahead. If, however, your answer is no, then stop. It will not work. You must be ready to follow through with your part of the bargain – keeping promises regarding discipline and rewards.

#### Some Final Thoughts on Contracts:

- Both parents need to agree to the concept of the contract and the follow-through required. It is inappropriate for one parent to play the *good guy* and the other the *bad guy*. A child with parents who don't agree may play one against the other and cause even more friction.
- You can be understanding and caring, and at the same time be very clear about what will and will not be accepted.
- You can give your child choices and freedom to succeed and make mistakes, and at the same time hold onto those beliefs and values that are important to you.

## HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM

Senate Bill 2X (Chapter 1, Statutes of 1999) requires all students completing grade 12 to pass a high school exit exam in language arts and math, which is aligned to the state content standards adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE), as a condition of receiving a high school diploma, commencing in 2003-04.

Beginning in 2000-01, grade 9 students will be eligible to take the exam. Beginning in 2001-02, grade 10 students will be required to take the exam, and they may take the exam during each subsequent school year, until they pass each section. The exit exam shall be offered to individuals with exception-

al needs in accordance with specified federal laws and shall be administered with appropriate accommodations where necessary. If a school district determines that a pupil does not possess sufficient English language skills to be assessed by the exit exam, the district may defer the requirement that the student pass the exam *“for a period of up to 24 calendar months of enrollment in the California public school system until the pupil has completed six months of instruction in reading, writing, and comprehension in the English Language.”*

The goal of instituting the exit exam is to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in college or the work place. Accordingly, the law does not make the exam a requirement for graduation until 2003-04, thereby providing time for districts to align curriculum and instruction to state standards, so that students are well prepared to pass the exam before graduation.

Under current law, a district must offer summer school instruction programs to students not meeting the district's adopted standards of proficiency in basic skills as determined by local proficiency exams. Since the local proficiency exams will no longer be required, eligibility for summer school funding will instead be based on the failure of students enrolled in grades 7 through 12 to demonstrate sufficient progress toward passing the high school exit exam. Schools will use STAR exam results or the students' grades and other indicators of academic achievement designated by the district to determine eligibility for summer school. Students who do not possess sufficient English language skills to be assessed on the high school exit exam are also eligible for this summer school funding.

## WHAT IS READING? WRITING?

### Communication Is What It's All About

Speaking, reading, and writing are all forms of language. When children learn to **talk**, they learn that words communicate thoughts, emotions, needs, and ideas. When they learn to **read**, they learn communication with printed as well as spoken words. When they learn to **write**, they find out that they themselves can create visual language. A child spends many months making meaning of the sounds he hears before saying anything like a

real word. He/She practices saying sounds, trying them out until his/her parents reassure him/her that the sound means a certain something in his/her growing world of experience. Over a number of months, parents help their children learn to put words together into sentences.

### Can Parents Teach Reading?

Just as speaking begins at home, so does reading. The child goes through similar learning stages with reading as he/she did when learning to speak. The parent's job is to lay the groundwork for the child to develop these skills, not to give him/her formal instruction. **The child needs to feel just as happy and comfortable – and just as unafraid of being wrong – learning to read and write as when he/she learned to talk.**

### Parents Are Natural Teachers

Parents are natural language teachers, says Professor Nancy L. Roser in an October, 1989, article in *Sesame Street Magazine Parents' Guide*. Parents help their children enjoy language in many ways – playing pat-a-cake, saying rhymes, and singing songs and by asking, "What's that?" and answering, "Yes, it is a doggie!" Before long, the child's first sounds become "almost" words, and parents happily accept whatever the child says and then say it back to him/her correctly.

Dr. Roser's article "Read—and Write—All About It!" offers concrete examples of what parents can say and do to help their children develop speaking, reading, and writing skills. The article also describes why the parent's role is so important and what kind of support children need. (See Resources section.)

## THE ROAD TO LEARNING

### Understanding the Meaning

People think of reading as a skill that turns letters on a page into words that are spoken or thought, but reading is much more than that. **Reading is the connection between printed letters and the meaning of spoken words, the connection between printed words and life experience.**

If the words on the page are about something with which a child has no experience, it does not matter how well the child can read the words, because

there is no comprehension. Reading is a process of understanding the meaning of what is printed.

A child's ability to understand a written message depends as much on his/her experience with the world as it does on his/her knowing the alphabet or how to sound out words. She depends on all the language skills he/she has acquired and all the life experience he/she has acquired. Both come from his/her daily life:

- listening to and talking with his/her family.
- expressing himself/herself so that others respond.
- discussing what he/she sees on TV.
- going to the grocery store, the museum, the library, the park or to play with friends and talking about all these experiences.

### The Value of Conversation Between Parents and Young Children

**The most important thing parents can do to prepare and support their child in learning to read and write is to talk with his/her.** When parent and child talk together about the things they each do, and when the child is busy doing a lot of different things, he/she is being given both the language skills and the life experience that form the base for his/her reading skills.

Even routine activities of daily life create a setting where children learn language skills and develop life experience. When parents talk about what they are doing and are patient in encouraging their child to respond, they are teaching!

When parents talk about what they are doing and are patient in encouraging their child to respond, they are teaching!

## WRITING: ANOTHER FORM OF LANGUAGE

### Different Skill, Same Process

Writing skills, like speech and reading skills, develop over a considerable time span. Language skills support one another. As a child is learning to read, the opportunity and encouragement to write strengthens both reading and writing.

A child babbles, and a child scribbles. A child imitates and practices speech sounds, and a child writes what gradually look like letters. A child reads a book, although he/she can't read the words. A child writes a story, although only he/she knows what the pencil marks mean. All of this is practice that, with encouragement, leads to success in the important basic skills of communication.

### Writing Well Requires Thinking Well

The writer must know clearly what he/she thinks and feels, if the reader is to understand his/her thoughts. The words must communicate these thoughts so clearly that there will be no chance of misinterpreting the writer's intent. Only with constant practice can the skill of writing be acquired effectively.

As with talking, listening, and reading, parents can create a setting at home that will encourage their child to write effectively. From kindergarten through high school, when parents model by writing themselves and then provide writing materials for their child, they are laying the foundation for literacy and building upon that foundation.

### Parent Tips

- Let your child see you writing purposefully, e.g., a letter you write that you both put in the mail; a grocery shopping list you write and then use together at the store; a list of things to do that your child helps you cross off as each item is accomplished.
- Suggest that your child do his/her own writing for similar purposes at the same time.
- Have lots of writing materials on hand. Staple together scrap paper or cut up brown grocery sacks to make pads. Have colored paper, lined paper, plain paper, cardboard, a chalk board—any writing surface—as well as pencils, pens, crayons, chalk, and felt pens. Older children like having their own stationery and supplies.

## THE CHANGING LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

### Reading Instruction Is Changing

The California State Department of Education has adopted a new language arts curriculum. Because listening, speaking, reading, and writing are closely related, these four skills are considered different forms of the same subject: language arts.

In *The Changing Language Arts Curriculum: A Booklet for Parents*, the State Department of Education encourages educators and parents to work together to help students:

- See the beauty and power of reading and writing, so that the students will want to learn more.
- Use reading to make sense of the world. In this

way, students will better understand what is happening around them.

- Clarify and communicate cultural values by sharing fine literature with others.
- Apply language arts skills to real life situations, such as:
  - reading an important newspaper article
  - writing a letter to a friend or relative
  - giving a persuasive talk to a peer group
  - listening critically and objectively to a radio advertisement

### The Integrated Curriculum

All of the uses of language—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—support each other. As stated before, they are learned most effectively when they are not presented as separate subjects but are included together in the learning activities.

Learning language in this way is sometimes referred to as “writing across the curriculum.” Students write about what they read not only in the language arts classes, but in history, social studies, science, art, etc. In the language arts classes, speaking and listening take on greater importance as plays, speeches, and oral presentations are studied.

### The Literature-Based Curriculum

One major change in teaching language arts is the shift away from using “basal readers” for learning and practicing reading. Now students will be using literature-based textbooks supplemented by age-appropriate novels and non-fiction. The difference lies in the quality of the writing, the interest and motivation that literature provides, and the excitement and enjoyment of reading which quality literature can produce.

**At all grade levels, students will be guided through a variety of thinking processes as they discuss, write, dramatize, and listen to what they're reading.** Questions about the text will be open-ended, having no right or wrong answer, with the intent of stimulating students to see various points of view and to explore their own ideas. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing will occur in contexts that have meaning for the students and are connected to their lives.

### The Flexible Curriculum

The three reading groups usually found in most classrooms will be replaced by flexible grouping. At all grade levels there will be times the entire class will listen, speak, read, or write together.



Sometimes they will be in one small group, sometimes another; at other times, they will work individually. Most students at each grade level will be working with the same reading material, but different students will be doing different work with the material, taking into account their interests, learning styles, and current level of skill development.

## TIPS FOR PARENTS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN READ AND WRITE

1. With the school district, sponsor or co-sponsor a family reading workshop to show parents the many ways they can build their child's language abilities.
2. Work with the school librarian to provide information through programs and newsletter articles about children's books, how parents can start a home library, and what titles are appropriate for children of various ages.



3. Sponsor a book fair, being sure to provide the same assistance to parents as in #2 above.
4. If sponsoring a magazine sale, be sure information is available to help parents choose the appropriate reading level, keeping in mind this type of reading is for pleasure.
5. Plan a program at your school or with several neighboring schools to present parents with information on your school district's language arts program. Have a speaker or a panel discuss how the curriculum differs at the various grade levels.

6. Work with the school to sponsor a workshop for staff and parents at which they can learn about different learning styles and how to support all children within their particular styles.
7. Start a PTA support group for parents of children with learning disabilities.
8. Have a teacher from the school district or local college of education talk to the faculties of pre-schools in your area to assess their interest in a program for parents on helping their children learn to read and write. Use appropriate hand-outs from this section, and make it clear to the audience that parent education is a major PTA focus. Let them know about the pre-school PTA program.
9. Offer information at your school about local literacy programs for adults. Parents who cannot read cannot help their children learn to read or write. Remember to **talk** with all parents about this program or leave a telephone voice message—a written flyer won't work.

It's much easier and more efficient to do most household tasks alone than it is to have your child do them with you, however the ideas and meanings of words your child develops by helping you and hearing you talk about what you're doing are extremely valuable.

## USING "TEACHABLE MOMENTS"

It's much easier and more efficient to do most household tasks alone than it is to have your child do them with you, however the ideas and meanings of words your child develops by helping you and hearing you talk about what you're doing are extremely valuable. By encouraging him/her to talk with you, you are preparing him/her to be a good speaker; that, in turn, helps him/her become a good reader.

### DOING THE LAUNDRY WITH YOUR CHILD TO DEVELOP CONCEPTS AND LANGUAGE

The following are examples of language and meaning you can teach while you and your child are taking laundry out of the dryer or off the line:

- **Big and little**—"Look at how big my t-shirt is compared to yours. Yours is little, mine is big. Can you find anything else big? Can you find something little?"
- **Same and different**—"These two socks go together. Look, they're the same. Oh, these socks are different; one is pink, and the other is green. These are the same color, but they don't

go together, because one is big, and one is little. So they're the same, if we're matching color, but they're different, if we're matching size. Find two socks that are the same color. Find two socks that are the same size."

- **Colors**—"Let's put all the same color in a pile. Here's a red sock, here's a red shirt, here are red pajamas and a red apron. Is this sock red? No, it's blue. Let's find something else blue. Here's a blue dress. Is there something else blue? That's not far from blue: it's green. And here's a green shirt. We'll put the green things in a separate pile. Do you have on something that would go on one of these piles? Yes, your pants are blue. We don't have a pile that matches your shirt. It's brown. Maybe next time we can make a brown pile."
- **Belonging—and the future**—"This shirt belongs to me—it's mine. Whose is this one? Yes, it's yours; it belongs to you. This dress belongs to Mommy. This shirt belongs to me, but you borrowed it once, didn't you? It belongs to me, but you wore it. Remember how funny it looked? You laughed and laughed. It was too big. But some day you will be big yourself, and it will fit you. Maybe it will even be too small for you by the time you're grown up!"
- **Time**—"We've put the clothes in the dryer; now we'll set the timer for 50 minutes. Here's the 50—do you want to turn the dial? Fifty minutes is how long it takes the clothes to dry. That's a long time. We'll have time to go and pick up Maria from school and come home again, and they still won't be dry. Let's look at the clock in the car when we leave and see how long it takes us to go."

Or: "We've hung up the clothes, now how long will it take them to get dry? Let's see: it's sunny and hot, so they'll dry a lot faster than when it's cold. Let's look at the clock. See the little hand on the 1? When that hand goes all the way to the 3, I think the clothes will be dry, and we can take them down."

#### LANGUAGE AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD TASKS—

keep in mind that more complex thinking can be introduced as the child begins to understand these first lessons.

- **Cleaning**—"Look at the dust on this table! If I just wipe it off, some of it flies in the air and settles back down on the table. If I spray my rag first, the moisture gathers in all the dust. You can see it on the rag. Want to try gathering

in the dust? I'll spray the rag—no, I don't want you to spray, because you might spray it at yourself. Never, never use a spray can without an adult helping you. There, look at all the dust you wiped up!"

"Time to mop the floor. Let's fill the bucket. First I put in a quarter cup of cleaner. Let's find the measure for one-quarter cup. Here's one whole cup, here's a half-cup, here's a quarter cup. Hold the measure for me and I'll pour it in, until it's just even with the top. OK, pour it into the bucket. Now we put in one-half gallon of water. That's two of these bottles full. I'll fill and you pour. There's one—well done! And here's the other—very good job!"

"When we vacuum we have to clear the floor. Let's move the chairs—we can lift them. But we can't lift the table; it's too heavy. The chairs aren't so heavy—they're light. And the wastebasket is very light. What else is heavy? Of course, in the living room, the couch is heavy, and your bed is heavy, but it has wheels on it, so we can move it anyway. Let's go in and move your bed. Now you push it back. Yes, my bed has wheels, too. Want to see? Can you move it? Great! Now move it back. Is it heavy? Yes, it can be heavy even if you can move it. Is there anything in this room that's light?"

- **Setting the table**—"Let's count the spoons as we set the table: one, two, three, four. This one is yours, this one is mine, this one is Daddy's, and this one is Michael's. Now let's count the forks: 1 is yours, 2 is mine, 3 is Daddy's, and 4 is Michael's. OK, knives. We have to be very careful with knives, because a knife can cut. See, this is the edge that cuts. Never, ever put your hand there. You must always hold a knife by the handle. Do you think you're old enough to put the knives at our places, or would you rather wait until you're a little older? OK, I'll do the knives while you count: one, two, three, four. Now the plates. Whose is this? Yes, yours."
- **Adding ingredients while cooking**—"See how this recipe has sections? I know you don't know how to read the words yet, but see how they go down the page? Then there is a bunch of words and then another list. That tells me which things I need to add, and in what order, and what I need to do with them. Climb up on your chair, so you can help add the ingredients. I have to do them in the right order, or it will ruin the cookies. OK, the first thing to put in the bowl is the margarine. It's been sitting out on the counter to get soft, so it will mix with



the other ingredients. I'll measure one-half cup—that's easy; it's one stick. OK, you unwrap it and put it in the bowl. Now I'll help measure one-half cup of sugar. OK, pour it in. Can you measure one cup of flour by yourself?"

Doubling or tripling a favorite recipe is one of the best ways to help your child understand math, including working with fractions. Not only do you reinforce language, but you use language as it is used in another subject such as a math word problem—a task that many children find difficult.

## THE JOY OF READING ALOUD

Reading aloud to a child stimulates interest, emotional development, and imagination. There is a fourth area stimulated by reading aloud that is particularly vital in today's world—the child's language. Children will speak the language primarily as they hear it, whether from television commercials, street jargon, or slang.

The words of literature, unlike electronic media, offer a wealth of language. Good literature is precise, intelligent, colorful, sensitive, and rich in meaning. It offers the child his/her best hope of learning to express what he/she feels. Parents can be an essential part of their child's learning through the joy of reading aloud.

## Parent Tips

- Begin reading to children as infants. The younger they are when you start, the better.
- Use Mother Goose rhymes and songs to stimulate an infant's language. Simple but boldly drawn picture books will help arouse the child's sense of sight and curiosity.
- Read as often as you and the child are able. Fifteen minutes a day is a reasonable minimum.
- Remember that the art of listening is an acquired one. It must be taught and cultivated gradually—it doesn't happen overnight.
- Set aside at least one traditional time each day for a story—e.g., before bed.
- Start with picture books and build to storybooks and novels; vary the length and subject matter of your readings.
- Follow through with your reading. If you start a book, it is your responsibility to continue it, unless it turns out to be a bad choice.
- Avoid long descriptive passages until the child's imagination and attention span are capable of handling them. There is nothing wrong with shortening or eliminating an overly long passage. (Pre-reading a selection will help you do this.)
- Allow time for discussion after reading a story. Thoughts, hopes, fears, and discoveries are aroused by books. Allow them to surface, and help the child deal with them. Ask open-ended questions about the story, including what the child thinks will happen next.
- Reluctant readers or especially active children frequently find it difficult to just sit and listen. Paper, crayons, and pencils allow them to keep their hands busy while listening.
- Fathers should make an extra effort to read to their children. Young boys often associate reading or schoolwork with women, so a father's early involvement with books and reading can do much to impact how boys view reading.

### When reading aloud:

- Do remember that reading aloud comes naturally to very few people. To do it successfully and with ease, you must practice.
- Do use plenty of expression when reading. If possible, change your tone of voice to fit the dialogue and characters.
- Do adjust your pace to fit the story. During a suspenseful part, slow down, draw your words out, bring your listeners to the edge of their chairs. The most common mistake in reading aloud is reading too fast. Read slowly enough for the child to draw a mental picture.

**But...**

- Don't read stories you don't enjoy yourself. Your dislike will show in the reading, and that defeats your purpose.
- Don't continue reading a book, once it is obvious that it was a poor choice.
- Don't read above a child's emotional level.
- Consider the intellectual, social, and emotional level of your child. Challenge him/her, but don't overwhelm him/her.
- Don't be fooled by awards. Just because a book won an award doesn't guarantee that it will make a good book to read aloud.
- Don't be unnerved by questions during the reading, particularly from young children. Answer the questions; don't put them off. Don't rush your answers. Foster that curiosity with patient answers, then resume reading.
- Don't use the book as a threat—"If you don't pick up your room, no story tonight!" As soon as the child sees that you've turned the book into a weapon, he/she will change his/her attitude about books from positive to negative.
- Don't equate reading and television. If you say, "Which do you want, a story or television?" they will usually choose the latter. Since you are the adult, you should do the choosing. "The TV goes off at 8:30 in this house. If you want a story before bed, that's fine. If you don't, that's fine, too. But no television after 8:30."

*(Adapted with permission from The New Read-Aloud Handbook by Jim Trelease, Penguin Books, 1989)*

**MATH REALLY MATTERS****Math Is Key to Many Things**

The world is full of math! Without math, you can't follow a recipe, tell which box of laundry detergent is the best buy—the giant size or the jumbo size, know whether you have been overcharged, or know if you have received the right change. It is estimated that at the present time, sixty percent of college majors require a background in math. As our society becomes increasingly technological, more jobs will require math skills.

While most parents want their children to be good readers, fewer parents worry about whether their child will excel in math. Many parents often say, "I wasn't good in math myself!" or, "I still can't even get my checkbook to balance, so no wonder



John isn't good in math!" Worse yet is the commonly accepted idea that "Girls don't have to understand math anyway!"

**Children Are What We Think They Are**

Parents who undervalue math often have students who underperform in math. **If parents feel their child is not really good in a particular subject, the child will begin to live down to those expectations.** Instead of diminishing the role of math in our high-tech world, it is critical for parents, teachers, and counselors to promote math proficiency for all students.

The elementary school years are the time when children develop confidence in their ability to do math. Today, instead of teaching math through rote drills, memorizing multiplication tables and pages of worksheets, math instruction emphasizes building skills in problem solving. Teachers now assign **problem-solving** using geometry, measurement, probability and statistics, patterns and functions, logic, and algebra. Colleges and employers want students who can *apply* knowledge.

## HOW CAN PARENTS HELP WITH MATH?

### Young Children Are Ready to Learn

Parents can start working on math with their children long before the start of school. **Young children are naturally curious, so take advantage of their eagerness to find out about their world and how it works.** Talk about differences in shape, size, and color. Provide them with blocks, and help them make different shapes out of the blocks. Give them building sets and puzzles appropriate for their age level. Let them help measure ingredients for cooking or use a ruler for a project around the house.

Parents can always talk with their child about what they are doing together. **By hearing, seeing, and doing, a child can use all of his/her senses to understand, learn, and remember what is taught.** Help him/her see and understand “bigger than” and “smaller than;” help him learn to count by singing songs or rhyming. Card games and board games are fun ways to learn to recognize numbers, how to count, how to compare, and how to make sets.

Parents *are* the best teachers, when they let their child know how much they love him/her, how proud they are of his/her ability to learn, and that they expect him/her to do well, because they will be there to help.

### Teachers Need to Work with Parents

Once a child starts school, parents need to talk with the teacher to find out exactly how to help reinforce math skills and concepts at home. Ideally, the teacher will send information home on a regular basis to let parents know what is being done in the classroom and to give suggestions for specific things parents can do to help the child. If this is not being done, parents need to appeal to the teacher to put this type of communication in place. If it seems that this is a school-wide issue, it can be a project for the PTA and school staff to work on together. PTAs, on their own or in cooperation with the school, often sponsor workshops on math, using the National PTA's *Math Matters* kit or *The Equals Family Math Program*.

As the child gets older, you may find it is beneficial to encourage him/her to study with friends by opening your home for informal study sessions. Work with your child to help establish guidelines (how long students will be there, where they will

study, how they will get home). Children working together often can assist each other in learning new and difficult concepts. Timely assistance provided by an older student to a younger student may help and may prevent that child from feeling forever defeated by math.

## PUT READING FIRST

### Success in school starts with reading.

When children become good readers in the early grades, they are more likely to become better learners throughout their school years and beyond.

Becoming a reader involves the development of important skills, including the ability to:

- Use language in conversation
- Listen and respond to stories read aloud
- Recognize and name the letters of the alphabet
- Listen to the sounds of spoken language
- Connect sounds to letters to figure out the “code” of reading
- Read often so that recognizing words becomes easy and automatic
- Learn and use new words
- Understand what is read

### IF YOUR CHILD IS JUST BEGINNING TO LEARN TO READ

#### At school, you should see teachers...

- Teaching the sounds of language.
- Teaching the letters of the alphabet.
- Helping children learn and use new words.
- Reading to children every day.

#### At home, you can help by...

- Practicing the sounds of language.
- Helping your child take spoken words apart and put them together.
- Practicing the alphabet by pointing out letters wherever you see them and by reading alphabet books.

### IF YOUR CHILD IS JUST BEGINNING TO READ

#### At school, you should see teachers...

- Systematically teaching phonics—how sounds and letters are related.
- Giving children the opportunity to practice the

letter-sound relationships they are learning.

- Helping children write the letter-sound relationships they know by using these in words, sentences, messages, and their own stories.
- Showing children ways to think about and understand what they are reading.

#### At home, you can help by...

- Pointing out the letter-sound relationships your child is learning on labels, boxes, newspapers, magazines, and signs.
- Listening to your child read words and books from school.

## READY OR NOT?

### A Personal Timetable

Each child develops at his own pace. When he is ready for the next step in reading, he'll respond. If he isn't ready yet, he won't. **It's important not to push a child who is not ready to read.**

When a parent tries a new reading or pre-reading activity and the child joins in enthusiastically and successfully, he's ready! If the child doesn't want to try, he may just need gentle encouragement. If he really doesn't want to try or is very unsuccessful, he's probably not ready. The parent can try again after a few weeks.

### Parent Tips to Encourage Reading Readiness

- **Read to your child** regularly and from a very early age. Make this activity time a special, warm, sharing, and loving time. Children who are read to are more successful in reading and learning in general. These children also read more independently and for pleasure.
- **Have books and other reading materials** in your house for him and for you. Let him see you read regularly from all kinds of materials—news-papers, magazines, fun books, serious books.
- **Take him to the library** regularly with his own card. He will come to regard it as his library and will consider books an essential part of his normal life.
- **Help him develop the physical and mental skills** children need for reading readiness by talking about everyday events and helping him/her respond.
- **Play sound games and word games** at different times—traveling in the car, waiting in the doctor's office, etc.

## CONNECTING READING AND LIFE

### Making Sense of Words

When parents help, a child soon discovers that she is surrounded by printed words. She finds them in books, in the grocery store, outside the car window, on the TV screen, on food shelves at home—everywhere. As a child finds that printed words have meanings that he/she can understand, the road toward reading gets very exciting! When parents point out words as they appear around their child—traffic signs and signs on stores, her brother's school, and the church—she will gradually sort them out. **Parents should routinely point out words that connect to their child's life.**

### Connecting the Story to the Child

When a child sees herself in a story she and her parent are reading, it creates a strong desire to read more. Saying, "Look, he has a blue shirt like yours!" adds meaning for her. Even at the picture book stage, a child's ability to think can be encouraged, as she and her parent read together: "What is she doing?" "Do you think she's happy?" "Have you ever felt like that?" "What do you think will happen next?" "Tell me about it." It is important to have the child discuss what she reads.

### Parent Tips

- Make the discussion of the story with your child personal by connecting the story to your child.
- Ask a lot of open-ended questions. An open-ended question requires a thinking answer; it cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no."
- Accept your child's answer, even if it's not the one you would give.
- When asking a child's opinion, you present opportunities for her to create meaning.

## HELPING CHILDREN LEARN TO READ AND WRITE

Reading and writing are both forms of language. Just the way speech begins at home, so reading and writing begin at home. From a very early age, worthwhile experiences with activities that lead to **reading and writing readiness** have proven to be a key factor in children's success with their school careers.

As a child finds that printed words have meanings that he/she can understand, the road toward reading gets very exciting!

### Activities to Help Reading Readiness

Reading readiness is learning how to use words to express and understand thoughts, and learning the importance of the printed word.

- **Helping your child talk to you is a key factor.** So is talking to your child about everything you see, everything you do.
- **Listen to your child and answer questions, even the silly ones.**
- **Tell your child stories, and have your child tell *you* stories.** Make up fairy tales and stories to tell your child. One of the best ways to talk with your child is by telling him about when you were a child, about things that happened to your parents and grandparents, about your happiness when he was born. Make a scrapbook of pictures that you cut out from old magazines. Have him tell you about the pictures.
- **Read to your child regularly from a very early age.** Make reading time a treat—don't insist on reading when your child wants to do something else. In fact, don't insist, period!
- **Let your child see you reading frequently.** Have a variety of good reading materials around for your child and for yourself.
- **Show your child how printed language is related to life all around her: in the supermarket, in the car, in the kitchen.**
- **Regularly take your child with you to the library.** The librarian will be glad to help you choose books that will fit your child's age and interests. When your child becomes old enough, take him to the children's story hour, if they have one. Encourage him to choose books to take home.
- **Give your child books that are of special interest to her.** Encourage grandparents, aunts, and uncles to give her books or magazine subscriptions for birthdays and special holidays.

### Activities to Help Your Child as a Reader

After your child is in school, you will want to talk to the teacher about activities you can do at home to help him read effectively and with pleasure.

- **Encourage your child to read everything that is printed:** signs, posters, cartoons, newspaper headlines, advertisements, menus, words on the TV screen, etc.
- **Have your child read to you regularly, and continue to read to your child, even when he can read well for himself.**
- **Accept the way your child reads with the same pleasure you showed when your child first talked.** As she reads, provide the words

she doesn't know without criticizing. Just as you did not expect your child to be perfect when she was first learning to talk, don't expect your child to be a perfect reader right away.

- **See that your child visits the library regularly and has his own library card.**
- **Play sound games and word games, at home or when traveling in the car.**

### Activities for Writing Readiness and Writing Practice

Writing is another form of language. Reading and writing are related skills, and learning them at the same time makes each skill stronger. Follow the same steps in working with your child on writing as you did when working with him on talking and listening.

- **Make sure your child has writing materials available.** Scribbles are like early babbling and first words; children play with writing, they explore it, they experiment with it. Some materials you might have on hand are chalk and chalkboard or magic slate, felt pens, crayons, pencils, and scratch paper stapled together to make a writing "pad."
- **Encourage your child to write and respond to the meaning of what he writes, not the form.** Even if you can't read it, have him write and then tell you the meaning of his scribbles.
- **Write notes to your child frequently.** Put them on her pillow, her dinner plate, stick them on her toothbrush, in her shoe, or...
- **Make sure your child sees you writing.** When you have reason to do some writing, suggest that your child do his writing at the same time and for the same purposes that you write: notes to parents, letters to relatives, a list of things to do that day, a birthday card, a story, a notice to put on the refrigerator.

**Accept the way your child reads with the same pleasure you showed when your child first talked.**

As she reads, provide the words she doesn't know without criticizing. Just as you did not expect your child to be perfect when she was first learning to talk, don't expect your child to be a perfect reader right away.

## STEPS TO READING

"Steps to Reading" identifies seven skills children need in order to be ready to read. It also describes simple activities to help a child develop and reinforce each skill. The activities are written for parents of pre-schoolers and primary school children, but many can be adapted for older children who need further skill development. The following are examples of activities adapted from the booklet.

**Developmental Skill #1—Coordination**

The ability to move one's body in a controlled manner—walking, hopping, jumping, skipping, balancing

**Activities:**

- Let your child crawl over, under, and around chairs or tables.
- When you're on walks with your child, ask your child to walk backwards or sideways.
- Face your child, then hold hands and jump together while both of you count to ten.
- With your child, practice walking along a line. Then practice it with eyes closed.

**Developmental Skill #2—****Visual Motor Control**

The ability to control movements of small muscles—cutting, stringing beads, copying shapes and letters, and forming sequences

**Activities:**

- Have your child make scrap pictures from material, string, buttons, beads, shells—anything lying around.
- Tracking, to follow where attention is directed, is an important skill. While your child sits in one place, name objects in the room. Have your child look at each object and then look back to you.
- Draw a circle, square, and triangle on a piece of paper. Have your child copy the shapes with a pencil or with a piece of string.
- Drop a clothespin, paperclip, or penny into different bottles with your child. Choose bottles with different-sized openings.

**Developmental Skill #3—****Visual Perception**

The ability to match colors, shapes, sizes, letter forms, and words

**Activities:**

- Place some objects, such as buttons or blocks, on the floor. Have your child arrange them according to size or color.
- Play "I spy something yellow." Have the child guess what it is.
- Play "smaller but larger." Example: find something smaller than your head but larger than your hand. Then have your child take a turn doing the same.
- Make two sets of numbers on cards. Have your child match the numbers.

**Developmental Skill #4—Visual Memory**

The ability to reproduce letters or other objects from memory

**Activities:**

- In the car, have your child look at license plates and try to repeat the letters or numbers on them.
- Arrange three shapes in a certain order. Mix them up and have your child arrange them in the original order.
- Have your child name a row of objects from left to right. Then have the child close his or her eyes and do the same.
- Play "What's Missing" with a collection of things on the floor. Take turns closing your eyes while one person removes something. Tell what's missing.

**Developmental Skill #5—****Auditory Perception****Activities:**

- Listen for sounds. Have your child point out the location and direction of the sound.
- Have your child cover his or her eyes. Ask your



child to uncover them each time he or she hears you clap.

- Say four words, three with the same beginning sound and one with a different sound. Have your child name the different one. Example: some, sun, see, boat.
- Say two words that rhyme, and have your child say as many more as he can. Nonsense “words” are fine.

## Developmental Skill #6— Auditory Memory

### *Activities:*

- Give your child two simple directions to follow. Example: go to the door and then bring me the newspaper. Make the directions more complicated as your child is successful. (This can be difficult for a child who is easily distracted.)
- Give your child three crayons. Call out the colors and have the child arrange the crayons in that order.
- Make up a sentence and have your child repeat it word for word.
- Play “I Went To New York.” You say, “I went to New York, and I took a doll.” The child says, “I went to New York, and I took a doll and a...” Each person adds an object, then the next person says the whole sentence and adds yet another object.

## Developmental Skill #7— Oral Language Production

### *Activities:*

- Ask your child to retell in his own words a story you’ve read together.
- Use a play or pretend telephone. Call your child and have a conversation.
- Put something in a sack. Ask your child to reach in and feel it and describe what he or she feels. Example: “It’s soft, it’s round, and it’s big” (a stuffed ball).
- After your child has watched a TV program, ask him to describe what happened.

## SUPPORTING READING AT HOME

1. Encourage children to use literacy in meaningful and purposeful ways, such as helping make shopping lists, drawing and writing thank-you

notes, clipping coupons for family use, writing grocery lists, and creating menus for meals.

2. Visit libraries and bookstores frequently, and encourage children to check out materials such as toys, tapes, CDs, and books from libraries. Participate in activities held by libraries and bookstores, such as story time, writing contests, and summer reading programs.
3. Set aside time every day for reading alone or together as a family. Read a wide variety of materials including books, magazines, signs, and labels with and to children.
4. Keep reading and writing materials such as books, magazines, newspapers, paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glue, and stickers accessible to children.
5. Read books and rhymes and play language games such as tongue twisters and puzzles with your children.
6. Practice the alphabet by pointing out letters wherever you see them and by reading alphabet books.
7. Point out the letter-sound relationships your child is learning on labels, boxes, magazines, and signs.
8. Keep a notebook in which to write down stories your children tell you, so that the child may see the connection between oral language and text.
9. Be a reader and writer yourself. Children observe and learn from people around them.
10. Be patient and listen as your child reads books from school. Let your child know you are proud of his/her reading.

Resources for parents to support young children’s literacy learning:

American Library Association  
50 E. Huron  
Chicago, IL 60611  
[www.ala.org/](http://www.ala.org/)

Children’s Research Center  
51 Gerty Drive  
Champaign IL 61820  
[www.ericcece.org](http://www.ericcece.org)

National Center for Family Literacy  
325 West Main Street, Suite 200  
Louisville, KY 40202-4251  
[www.famlit.org/index.html](http://www.famlit.org/index.html)

Reading is Fundamental, Inc.  
1825 Connecticut Ave, N.W. Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20009  
[www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org)

## HELPING PARENTS TEACH THEIR CHILDREN MATH

1. Work with the principal and school staff to present a program for parents on how math is taught at each grade level. Explain how this ties in with the state and school district curriculum for mathematics.
2. Work with the school staff to make sure parents are informed by each teacher as to how to support their child when math comes home as part of an assignment.
3. Prepare a set of materials to be given to parents as they register their child for kindergarten, describing the math readiness skills that can be taught before a child comes to school. Work with kindergarten faculty to prepare these materials.
4. Using qualified parents or willing staff members to do the teaching, set up a series of workshops at which parents learn how to work on math with their children. **Family Math**, a highly acclaimed program for instructing parents as to how to work with their own children, can be used for this training. (See *Resources* section.)
5. Establish a Parent Shelf—a resource center—where parents can take or borrow materials about helping their child with math. Some books or games are too expensive for individual families to buy. PTA can serve parents and students by providing a way for these helpful materials to reach all families.
6. Purchase a membership for your school in the **Young Astronaut Program**. The small cost is money well spent when considering the excellent math and science materials that the school will

receive. (Young Astronaut Council, 5200 27th Street N.W., Washington, DC 20036)

7. Contact **KIDS NETWORK**, an excellent math-science program using computers and networking around the world by modem. Check to see what the costs are and what equipment is needed to participate. (NGS KIDS NETWORK, National Geographic Society, Washington, DC 20036; toll free 800-368-2728)
8. At the Middle/Intermediate/Junior High School level, look into sponsoring the after-school math incentive program **Math Counts**, a states and national-level math competition which is sponsored by the National and California Society of Professional Engineers Education Foundation. Materials are provided without cost to the school. (Math Counts, 1005 12th Street, Suite J, Sacramento, CA 95814; 916-422-7788)

Remember to praise your child for a job well done when homework is completed and when you see improvement.



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## HANDOUTS/ARTICLES



## Homework Without Tears Checklist

### Have you:

- \_\_\_ set up a proper study area in your home?
- \_\_\_ established Daily Homework Time?
- \_\_\_ taken steps to encourage your children to do their homework independently?
- \_\_\_ encouraged your child to be responsible for getting homework to school?
- \_\_\_ consistently praised your children's efforts?
- \_\_\_ used additional incentives, if necessary?
- \_\_\_ communicated so that your children really listen?
- \_\_\_ taken a firm stand?
- \_\_\_ contacted your children's teachers, if necessary?



## Homework Survival Kits

Have the following supplies all together in one box so they may be taken wherever the child likes to study—desk, kitchen table, etc.

### Homework Survival Kit Grades K–3

_____	crayons	_____	markers
_____	pencils	_____	pencil sharpener
_____	erasers	_____	glue or paste
_____	tape	_____	writing paper
_____	construction paper	_____	hole punch
_____	stapler	_____	scissors
_____	children's dictionary	_____	paper clips
_____	assignment book (third graders)		

### Homework Survival Kit Grades 4–6

_____	pencil	_____	pens
_____	colored pencils	_____	crayons
_____	markers	_____	pencil sharpener
_____	erasers	_____	glue or paste
_____	tape	_____	writing paper
_____	construction paper	_____	hole punch
_____	stapler	_____	scissors
_____	paper clips	_____	White Out®
_____	assignment book	_____	folders for reports
_____	index cards	_____	intermediate dictionary
_____	atlas	_____	thesaurus
_____	almanac	_____	rubber bands

### Homework Survival Kit Grades 7–12

_____	assignment book	_____	writing paper
_____	pencils	_____	erasers
_____	pens	_____	markers
_____	tape	_____	hole punch
_____	scissors	_____	glue or paste
_____	ruler	_____	stapler
_____	colored pencils	_____	paper clips
_____	index cards	_____	dictionary
_____	compass	_____	atlas
_____	protractor	_____	calculator
_____	thesaurus	_____	almanac
_____	rubber bands		

## Homework Contract

- Each day that you complete all your homework assignments, check off one square.
- When you have checked off \_\_\_\_\_ squares, you will earn a reward.
- Your reward will be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT'S SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT'S SIGNATURE


## Using Daily Schedules

By using a daily schedule, you and your children can see clearly what time is available for homework. Follow these guidelines for completing the schedule:

- Grades K-3** Fill in the Daily Schedule with your child. Be sure to share the information, letting your child see how activities fit into the day.
- Grades 4-6** Have your child fill in the Daily Schedule. Check it for accuracy.
- Grades 7-12** Give your child a copy of the Daily Schedule to fill out independently.

**Determine the length of time needed each day for homework.** Homework time may range from fifteen minutes for younger children to two or more hours for high school students.

**Determine the best time period each day to set aside for daily homework time.**

After you have blocked out all scheduled time on the Daily Schedule, consider all non-scheduled hours as eligible to be used for Daily Homework Time. Write down the daily homework time for each night of the week in the designated space on the schedule.

If repeatedly there are not enough non-scheduled hours to schedule the necessary daily homework time, sit down and talk with your child about time management and cutting out some extracurricular activities.

DAILY SCHEDULE	
<b>MONDAY/HOMEWORK TIME:</b>	
3:00 PM	7:00 PM
4:00 PM	8:00 PM
5:00 PM	9:00 PM
6:00 PM	10:00 PM
<b>TUESDAY/HOMEWORK TIME:</b>	
3:00 PM	7:00 PM
4:00 PM	8:00 PM
5:00 PM	9:00 PM
6:00 PM	10:00 PM
<b>WEDNESDAY/HOMEWORK TIME:</b>	
3:00 PM	7:00 PM
4:00 PM	8:00 PM
5:00 PM	9:00 PM
6:00 PM	10:00 PM
<b>THURSDAY/HOMEWORK TIME:</b>	
3:00 PM	7:00 PM
4:00 PM	8:00 PM
5:00 PM	9:00 PM
6:00 PM	10:00 PM
<b>FRIDAY/HOMEWORK TIME:</b>	
3:00 PM	7:00 PM
4:00 PM	8:00 PM
5:00 PM	9:00 PM
6:00 PM	10:00 PM



## What's Happening This Week?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Week From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

### WEEKLY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

8 AM \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3 PM \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### AFTER-SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Monday	Tuesday
PM 3:00 _____	PM 3:00 _____
4:00 _____	4:00 _____
5:00 _____	5:00 _____
6:00 _____	6:00 _____
7:00 _____	7:00 _____
8:00 _____	8:00 _____
9:00 _____	9:00 _____
10:00 _____	10:00 _____

### AFTER SCHOOL

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
PM 3:00 _____	PM 3:00 _____	PM 3:00 _____
4:00 _____	4:00 _____	4:00 _____
5:00 _____	5:00 _____	5:00 _____
6:00 _____	6:00 _____	6:00 _____
7:00 _____	7:00 _____	7:00 _____
8:00 _____	8:00 _____	8:00 _____
9:00 _____	9:00 _____	9:00 _____
10:00 _____	10:00 _____	10:00 _____

### Saturday

AM 8:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 9:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 10:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 11:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 PM 12:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 5:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 6:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 7:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 8:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 9:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 10:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 11:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 12:00 \_\_\_\_\_

### Sunday

AM 8:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 9:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 10:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 11:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 PM 12:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 5:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 6:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 7:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 8:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 9:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 10:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 11:00 \_\_\_\_\_  
 12:00 \_\_\_\_\_

## Ten Ways to Help Your Child Do Better in Math

1. **Be positive.** If you let your child know that you believe everyone can be successful in math, your child will believe it, too. Realize that your children reflect your attitudes and aspirations.
2. **Play family games** that use math and are lots of fun. Card games like “Go Fish” or “War” teach children to count, sort, and use strategy. Many games use “play money” and teach how to make change. Games played in the car that estimate distance or identify specific shapes along the road help build mathematical thinking.
3. **Avoid stereotypes that set limits on what any child can be.** Regardless of a child's race or sex, we know that anyone with the right encouragement and training can excel at math. Early success in mathematics is essential for all learners.
4. **Choose gifts** for birthdays or holidays that are fun and develop problem-solving skills. Puzzles are great for young children, and games such as Monopoly® that require decision-making or use strategy are fun for students in the upper elementary grades.
5. **Expand your child's horizons in terms of possible career choices.** Kindergarteners may want to be doctors, nurses, or firefighters. You can also expose them to other exciting jobs such as weather forecasters, astronomers, airline pilots, or forest rangers—all jobs requiring a sound base in mathematics. Ask the school to host career days, so children can see the range of options available if they have a solid foundation in math.
6. **Borrow from the library or buy books that use math.** Counting books or books about shapes and colors are just as important as books on the alphabet.
7. **Connect math to the real world.** As you and your child go to the store, bank, restaurant, etc., point out ways math is used on bills, deposit slips, menus, or tipping.
8. **Visit museums, libraries, and other community centers often** to see what materials and resources they have available. Notice what interests your child.
9. **Talk with teachers and other school staff.** Learn more about your child's studies, and see what you can do to help reinforce math skills.
10. **Encourage children to solve problems.** As a child is trying to solve a problem, ask helpful questions—but let him find out how to do it. Learning how to find answers is a lifelong skill.



## Everyday Math Skills

**Connect math to the real world: use everyday chores and events to show your child how you use math.**

### AT HOME

- Have your child help you make a favorite recipe, and let him do the measuring. Next time, ask him to help you double the recipe, and talk about how important using fractions is in cooking.
- Use paper napkins to talk about fractions. Fold napkins into halves, fourths, eighths, and sixteenths. Use marking pens to label the fractions.
- Use paper napkins to talk about shapes by folding them into squares, rectangles, and triangles. Ask your child to set the table and fold the napkins in a special way.
- Estimate how much things weigh, and then check it out on the bathroom scale. Does a cup of water weigh more or less than a cup of flour? A cup of rice or beans? A cup of tacks or nails? Who weighs more – the dog or the cat—and how can I find out the cat's weight while holding it?
- Use cards to teach numbers, how to match pairs of numbers, and which numbers are less than or greater than other numbers.
- Guess how tall people or household objects (doors, windows, rugs) are, and then use a ruler and tape measure to see who is closest in estimating the size.

### AT THE STORE:

- Help your child pick six oranges or apples and see how much they weigh. Help him estimate the cost, and then use the scale to see how close he came.
- Have your child pick a special dish to make, and help him list what has to be bought at the store. Have him find the ingredients, estimate how much they will cost, and see how close the estimate was to the total on the checkout tape.
- Show your child how much gas costs at different stations, how many gallons you have to buy, and then how much you can get for \$5.00 or \$10.00. Figure the miles per gallon your car gets in town or if you take a trip.
- Help your child measure himself for clothes, and find the sizes he will need at the store. Have him find which store ads show the best prices for favorite shoes or pants.

### IN THE CAR:

- Using maps of your area, help your child find the safest way to school, and chart the way to the library or the shopping center. Plan a special outing to the museum, the beach, or the park, and have your child show the way on the map. Estimate the distance, and then check to see how close you came.
- On a trip, use the map and highway signs to figure the distance from point to point; also, check the speed limit signs, and see what the speedometer reads. Count the number of certain cars or trucks, and count to see which colors are used more than others.



## Math Myths—A Quiz for Parents

Please circle whether you think the following statements are true or false.

- |      |       |                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TRUE | FALSE | 1. The United State ranks among the top five nations in students' mathematics achievement.                                                                              |
| TRUE | FALSE | 2. Three out of four students in the U.S. stop studying math before they complete career or job prerequisites.                                                          |
| TRUE | FALSE | 3. One of every four college freshman in the U.S. is taking a remedial math course.                                                                                     |
| TRUE | FALSE | 4. The number of students taking math after eighth grade drops on average by half each year through graduate school.                                                    |
| TRUE | FALSE | 5. Boys are naturally better at math than girls.                                                                                                                        |
| TRUE | FALSE | 6. Few college majors require advanced mathematics.                                                                                                                     |
| TRUE | FALSE | 7. Arithmetic and mathematics are the same thing.                                                                                                                       |
| TRUE | FALSE | 8. Twenty-seven percent of nine-year-olds in the U.S. watch more than six hours of television a day, compared with eighteen percent four years ago.                     |
| TRUE | FALSE | 9. Of the 739 math doctorates granted in 1986-87, half were awarded to citizens of other countries.                                                                     |
| TRUE | FALSE | 10. Most jobs do not require algebra or geometry.                                                                                                                       |
| TRUE | FALSE | 11. More than any other subject, mathematics filters students out of programs leading to scientific and professional careers.                                           |
| TRUE | FALSE | 12. Math is not a part of everyday life, unless you are a scientist.                                                                                                    |
| TRUE | FALSE | 13. Learning mathematics requires special abilities, which most students don't have.                                                                                    |
| TRUE | FALSE | 14. Currently, 95 percent of scientific degrees are earned by white and Asian students.                                                                                 |
| TRUE | FALSE | 15. During the last 15 years, the total number of African-American and Hispanic students receiving doctoral degrees in mathematics has averaged less than ten per year. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 16. I did OK without a lot of math, and so will my children.                                                                                                            |
| TRUE | FALSE | 17. Early use of the calculator will prevent children from learning the basic facts of arithmetic.                                                                      |

*(continued)*

## Math Myths—Answer Sheet

The following numbers are true: 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 14, and 15.

1. **False.** In a recent international study of student math achievement, the United States ranked 19th among 20 countries. All the major industrialized nations ranked higher than the U.S.
5. **False.** To the extent that parents and counselors perpetuate this myth, it may be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Girls who come from homes where they are expected to do well and where gender stereotypes do not exist can perform equally as well as boys, assuming they exert equal effort.
6. **False.** About 60 percent of all college majors now require college-level mathematics.
7. **False.** Arithmetic is only a small part of mathematics—adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. Math requires much more than calculation. Math teaches students how to clarify a problem, decide the consequences, suggest alternatives, and develop tools to find solutions. These skills, aided by calculators and computers, have changed the world of work. Rote memorization alone is not valued by employers.
10. **False.** Over 75 percent of all jobs require proficiency in simple algebra and geometry as a prerequisite to a training program or as part of a licensure examination.
12. **False.** The everyday world is full of math. Without math, a voting citizen cannot understand articles in the newspaper on the impact of political polls, the federal budget deficit, acid rain, or pollution of air and water supplies; consumers cannot tell whether a sale is valid, how many miles they can go on a tank of gas, whether they have been overcharged on sales tax, or whether the Jumbo or Giant box of detergent is the best buy. The loan interest on your charge account or on your house is a mystery, if you cannot apply mathematics.
13. **False.** In other countries, parents and teachers expect that all students will study and be successful at math and that they must work hard at it. It is a challenge to set high expectations and then teach to reach them.
16. **False.** Today's world is more mathematical than yesterday's, and tomorrow's will be even more so. Even with the availability of calculators and computers, the ability to solve increasingly complex problems often requires training in mathematics.
17. **False.** Children learn to solve arithmetic problems by a variety of ways, just as adults do. We figure mentally what a tip should be. We estimate when buying groceries. We calculate with a pencil in carpentry, and we use a calculator in preparing taxes. Learning basic arithmetic requires a child to learn all these approaches and also learn when to use them. Like any math skill, students should learn to use calculators correctly as well as when to use them, if at all.

## Using Numbers for Fun on Vacation

1. Ask your children questions that require them to do simple addition or subtraction in their head. "What's 2 less than 17? Eighteen is twice as big as what number?" Play math "Jeopardy" (give a child a number and have the child find a question for which the number is the answer). [P/UE]
2. Give children a map and a magic marker to follow the route you are traveling. Watch for street or road signs showing where you are. Using the mileage scale on the map, check approximately how far you have gone, and estimate how much farther you must go to the end of the trip. [UE]
3. Keep a list of car license plates by state, and see who can spot the most states. How many license plates spell out a word or name?
  - On a pad of paper, keep a record of the number of cars you see of one color or made by a single manufacturer.
  - Add the numbers on each license plate, and see who can find the one adding up to the largest number. [P/UE]
4. Ask your children how fast you are traveling, then check the speedometer. Practice counting by 5's and 10's by reading the speedometer. Help children read highway and speed limit signs. [P/UE]
5. Before you travel, ask the family to draw up a list of items you might see on your trip. To develop both math and observation skills, see who can spot the greatest number of these items. Examples might be a woman wearing a hat, a man on crutches, someone walking more than one dog, a fire engine, a bridge, etc. [P]
6. Have the tallest family member lie on wet sand at the beach and draw his or her outline. Have smaller members do the same inside the first outline or next to it. Estimate height (about 11 sand shovels tall, for example). [P]
7. In wet sand, compare the depth of big and small footprints due to weight differences. [UE]

[P - Primary; UE = Upper Elementary]



# California State PTA

## Parents Empowering Parents

# Volunteering

*Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.*

Parents can enrich the learning environment at school by contributing their knowledge and skills and providing services and support to students and teachers. Volunteer service is a key component in a successful parent involvement program.

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Faculty Survey

Teachers Volunteer Needs Assessment (survey)

Helping Our Kids—Helping Our School

A Code of Ethics for Volunteers

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## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Research over the past 20 years has shown consistently that parent involvement increases student achievement and self-esteem. When families are involved in their children's education in positive ways, their children:

- achieve higher grades and test scores,
- have better attendance at school,
- complete more homework, and
- demonstrate more positive attitudes and behavior.

The results have been consistent in large and small communities, from pre-school through high school, in poor and affluent areas, in urban, rural, and suburban communities.

Children whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school score higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved.

### What Parent Involvement Means Today

Parent involvement means becoming an active partner in the education of children and youth. Many parents become involved with their student's education when they attend a parent-teacher conference or a school open house. For some parents, this leads to volunteering at the school. Although many people think of parent involvement and volunteering as synonymous, it is important to include communicating, parenting, student learning, decision making/advocacy, and community involvement as aspects of parent involvement.

### The Challenge

Over the past two decades, the number of single-parent families, blended families, households where both parents work, families from different cultures, and children living in poverty has increased markedly. Because fewer parents are available to attend daytime school activities, PTAs and schools must identify and/or create alternative opportunities for participation and expand their outreach activities to recruit volunteers. At times, parents would like to play a more active role in their student's education, but they don't know how.

## BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR STUDENTS

- Show more positive attitudes toward school,
- Display higher achievement in reading,
- Are assigned higher quality and more grade-appropriate homework,
- Complete more homework on weekends,
- Observe more similarities between family and school,
- See parents, school, and the larger community contributing to their education,
- Demonstrate improved achievement, and
- See the link between schoolwork and future careers.

## BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

- Receive ideas from school on how to help children,
- Become more supportive of children,
- Become more confident about ways to help children learn,
- Develop more positive views of teachers,
- Become partners with schools in the education of children,
- Become a vital force in the development of the future of education, and
- Gain insight and give input into curriculum, programs, and expectations.

Because fewer parents are available to attend daytime school activities, PTAs and schools must identify and/or create alternative opportunities for participation and expand their outreach activities to recruit volunteers.

## BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

- Teacher morale improves,
- Parents rate teachers higher,
- Teachers rate parents as more helpful,
- Student achievement improves,
- Parents support schools and bond issues,
- Teachers receive feedback from parents, and
- Schools receive additional experience and resources from parents.

## FATHERS' INFLUENCE IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Today, fathers are being challenged to alter their parenting roles to accommodate new norms for fathering. Fathers, like mothers, are expected to take on multiple roles: provider, nurturer, caregiver, teacher, and promoter of family values.

The number of single fathers has grown 25 percent, from 1.7 million in 1995 to 2.1 million in 1998. Men now comprise one-sixth of the nation's 11.9 million single parents.



*Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools* is an October 1997 report from the National Center for Education Statistics. According to the report, children whose fathers participate in classroom activities and school meetings and events receive higher grades, enjoy school more, and are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities than children whose fathers don't participate—regardless of the level of maternal participation.

Children are more likely to get mostly As and less likely to repeat a grade or be expelled if fathers are involved in their children's schools.

## VOLUNTEERING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The variety of opportunities for volunteers includes:

- **In the school office.** Clerical work, grant writing, Web site design.
- **On the bus.** Bus monitors or aides to assist regular riders or during field trips.
- **In and around school buildings.** Furniture and playground equipment repair, help with plumbing or electrical problems, landscaping. Check your school's guidelines.
- **On the playground.** Teach sports and games, or lead motor sensory exercises, or help build fencing or playground equipment, such as a sandbox.
- **At special events or programs.** Plan parties; provide child care; conduct arts and crafts activities; direct school plays or variety shows; tutor students; help with science projects; assist in the after-school program; or organize toy libraries, parent resource centers, and clothing and food drives.
- **In workshops.** Speak on a variety of topics to other parents and community groups, service clubs, Girl or Boy Scout troops, etc. Participate in Career Days, share hobbies, teach an adult class.
- **In the kitchen.** Plan menus, make snacks, serve meals, and conduct cooking projects with classrooms.
- **At home.** Prepare mailings; sew costumes or make sets for plays; create learning materials; record stories, music, or educational TV; design forms, newsletters, and flyers; coordinate the class telephone chain; or collect household items such as fabric, egg cartons, and magazines.

## RETENTION OF VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers want to feel appreciated for both their donation of time and the skills they bring to the position. Providing ongoing supervision of volunteers and volunteer recognition events will help retain volunteers. If the experience is satisfying and rewarding, volunteers will want to continue.

### Successful retention strategies:

- Clearly describe the role of the volunteer to avoid unrealistic expectations and possible misuse of the volunteer's role.
- Recognize the tremendous potential value of volunteers as well as the limits of their participation (volunteers aren't staff).

- Use personal phone calls and informal conversations to help identify, recruit, and retain volunteers.
- Pair a new volunteer with an experienced volunteer to learn the job and build confidence.
- Treat volunteers as professionals, personalize the job, and emphasize its value.
- Provide volunteer training, support, and positive feedback.
- Provide a forum for volunteers to make suggestions. Listen and welcome new ideas.
- Provide volunteers with business cards.
- Create opportunities to socialize with other volunteers and staff.
- Provide ongoing public recognition, e.g., appreciation awards, dinners, small gifts, certificates.
- Write thank-you letters to the families of volunteers, acknowledging their support of the volunteer's efforts. Provide some examples of how the assistance of volunteers impacts others.
- Encouraging a strong partnership between home and school, not a "body count" or a fundraising body.
- Helping some parents overcome negative memories of their own schooling.
- Training parents regarding how the educational system works.
- Resolving conflicts successfully, and retaining volunteers.
- Welcoming all volunteers regardless of educational or economic status.

### Breaking Down Barriers: Reaching out to All Parents

### BARRIERS TO PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

In a survey conducted by the National PTA, parents reported the following barriers to becoming involved:

- Parents do not have the time
- Parents feel they have nothing to contribute
- Parents don't understand the system; they don't know how to be involved
- Parents are hampered by the lack of childcare
- Parents feel intimidated
- Parents are not available during the time school functions are scheduled
- Parents note language and cultural differences
- Parents are stymied by the lack of transportation
- Parents don't feel welcome at school
- Other barriers: feeling overwhelmed, information not shared, children in different schools, and scheduling conflicts/difficulties

### Challenges to Volunteering:

- Identifying ways in which parents can contribute and talents they can share with the school.
- Including representatives of every group within the school community.
- Respecting cultural and language differences within the school community.
- Training educators on the wide scope of possibilities for volunteering.
- Be flexible when scheduling meetings. Try different times of the day or week to allow all parents to take part at least occasionally.
- Schedule a potluck to meet working parents' needs.
- Begin building close relationships with families during school orientation. Families are often the most eager to participate and volunteer at the beginning of a school year.
- Learn about the various ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds of the students in your school, then seek out participants who reflect your school's diversity.
- Make all parents feel welcome and valued. Greet them at meetings, and offer translators for those who speak other languages.
- Communicate regularly with parents in a variety of ways to keep them informed about their children's progress and school activities. Translate materials into other languages, and find staff or parents who can talk to parents in their native languages.
- Conduct a needs assessment and skills survey (see Parent Survey). Encourage parents to share information regarding careers and hobbies. Have workshops for parents and community members on leadership and organizational skills.
- Write a parents' handbook, including the rules, procedures, map of the school, and the locations of staff lounges or restrooms.
- Consider providing childcare and transportation to meetings and events.
- Provide opportunities for parents to visit school, observe classes, and give feedback. Consider building a parent center.
- Help parents secure the services they need, such as job training skills, medical treatment, childcare, etc.

In service learning, students help determine needs, identify resources, develop strategies, and implement plans for volunteering, thus building their sense of ownership.

- Sponsor parenting skills classes.
- Schedule home visits and informal meetings.
- Ensure that school staff is accessible to parents and families.
- Engage parents in decision-making groups.
- Add human relations skills to your leadership development program.
- Check with your school district for a parent involvement policy. Write a school policy statement that defines ways to ensure a positive school climate for family involvement.

### SERVICE LEARNING— STUDENT VOLUNTEERING

In service learning, students help determine needs, identify resources, develop strategies, and implement plans for volunteering, thus building their sense of ownership. In service learning, as in well-led volunteer programs, special care is taken to ensure that the project is valuable for everyone involved—the agency, the community, and the students. Service is often connected to classroom learning, and students may receive academic credit for their participation.



#### Service Learning components involve:

- a thoughtfully organized student service project conducted by and meeting the needs of a community;
- coordination between an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program and the community;

- cultivation of civic responsibility;
- integration into and enhancement of the academic curriculum or the educational components of the community service program;
- structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.

Adapted from  
the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1992

*For more information on Service Learning, see chapter 7, Collaborating with Community.*

### DEVELOPING A PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

There are many ways to achieve or increase parent involvement. The members of every PTA will need to think carefully about the unit's own situation. This model can serve as a guideline; change it to suit your needs.

#### STEP 1

Begin with a broad commitment to parent involvement. Recruit the principal first, as he/she sets the tone for the whole school. Next, ask the PTA, parents, teachers and school staff. Solicit the support of the superintendent and school district for the idea that parent involvement is essential for all children.

#### STEP 2

Choose a parent involvement coordinator. This key person should be willing to serve for at least two years to give your program continuity. Set up a parent involvement steering committee. Include parents, principal, teachers, support staff, PTA representatives, community members and, at the high school level, student representatives. The committee's purpose is to develop and run your school's parent involvement program.

#### STEP 3

Study the effectiveness of school-home communications at your school.

#### STEP 4

Collect information from other schools with successful parent involvement programs. Check with your school to see if there is a parent involvement policy for your district.

**STEP 5**

Encourage your principal to provide in-service teacher training on the importance of parent involvement. Offer to meet with school staff to brainstorm ways to strengthen parent involvement.

**STEP 6**

Survey teachers on their views of parent participation in the classroom and at home.

**STEP 7**

Survey the parents. A sample Parent Survey is included in the handouts for this section. The advantages of the parent survey are that:

- You can reach a large number of parents at minimal expense.
- Parents who might not come to a meeting or discussion group might respond to the written form.
- Everyone has an opportunity to respond.

**STEP 8**

Use your parent involvement survey responses to build your group of volunteers. Reach out to everyone who has offered to help.

**STEP 9**

Using your parent involvement steering committee, examine the results of your surveys and your review of home-school communication. Choose two or three short-term goals for your school that can be accomplished in six to nine months. Also develop two or three long-term goals to be accomplished over a period of two to five years. Put your plans in writing—goals, step-by-step plans, time lines, and budget.

**STEP 10**

Present your parent involvement plan to parents and school staff for their input and support. Revise your plan accordingly.

**STEP 11**

Implement your program.

**STEP 12**

Evaluate your program continually. Keep notes on successes, problems, and ideas for improvement. Look for stories to demonstrate successful parent involvement. Plan for next year based upon this year's evaluation.

## Seven Elements in Successful Parent Involvement Programs

1. The program has written policies indicating the importance of parent involvement in the school experience.
2. The program includes administrative support for materials, space and equipment, and funding.
3. It offers ongoing training for the staff and the parents.
4. The program encourages partnership between staff and parents on planning and goal setting.
5. It thrives on effective communication between home and school.
6. The program presents an opportunity to network and share information and resources with other parent involvement programs.
7. It will improve continuously due to regular evaluation and modification of activities, goals, and programs.

A parent center, designed by the parents with the help of the school staff, helps parents feel welcome at school.

## PARENT CENTERS

**Parents plan the center.** A parent center, designed by the parents with the help of the school staff, helps parents feel welcome at school. In planning the center, parents and school staff should consider:

- How families will use the center, and how they can contribute to it.
- What resources are available in the school and community.
- What the obstacles to establishing a parent center are and how to overcome them.
- What realistic goals should be set.
- Which funding sources can be tapped.

### Key roles of parent centers:

- To assume much of the school's interactions with parents
- To create and distribute vital information
- To recruit and retain volunteers

### Key components of parent centers:

- A central location in the school, to provide good communication between the office and the center;
- A telephone, furniture, and supplies;
- A coordinator who relates well to parents and devotes much time to establishing the center; and
- Established operating hours that meet the needs of the community.

**Hospitality.** The center should be a place where parents feel at home and enjoy themselves, even as they learn. Activities should be a mixture of business and fun. The center can offer light refreshments to encourage parents to stay and talk. When parents connect with other parents and staff through conversation, community is fostered, and the parent center is a success.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING PARENT INVOLVEMENT AMONG CULTURALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES**

- Develop goals, objectives, and an action plan for increasing participation by culturally diverse parents.
- Choose a bilingual person to be responsible for outreach.
- Look at the ethnic and racial composition of your students. Identify groups not represented in parent involvement programs, and focus efforts to include these groups for involvement.
- Find out how your parent involvement program is viewed by a diverse sampling of parents—including those who do not return surveys or participate in events.
- Build trust among parents of all children and teachers through focus groups and small group discussions.
- Set up a telephone tree wherein parents and volunteers call other parents. Initial contact should come from a person of the same language and ethnicity.
- Be aware of ethnic and religious holidays and observances, and include them in your PTA calendar. Avoid scheduling meetings and events on major holidays.
- Identify the strengths of different groups within your community. Focus on aspects of each group's culture, or beliefs that can enrich your parent involvement program.
- Get to know opinion leaders in the community, how they make decisions, and how they communicate. Tap into this network.
- Talk openly about divisions in your school community. Acknowledged differences can be the first step toward better relations.
- Produce publications in other languages. Adapt content to the group you are trying to reach by consulting with ethnic organizations in your community.

### **TOPICS FOR A PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE**

- How are families of special children being served?
- Which families are being reached, and which are not? Why?
- Who are the hardest families to involve, and how might they be included?
- What efforts are you making to include fathers as well as mothers?
- What do the school and PTA do to accommodate working parents?
- Do different families have different expectations of teachers and others at school?
- What do parents/students want the schools to do to inform and involve their families?
- What are some of the barriers that keep parents from becoming involved in school?
- What are some of the barriers that keep teachers from inviting parent involvement in their classrooms?
- What will be the focus/goals of the volunteer program?
- How do you want your school's family involvement practices to look three years from now?
- What costs are associated with the program?

### **REACHING POTENTIAL VOLUNTEERS**

- Talk face-to-face with other parents, civic leaders, and school neighbors.
- Distribute a flyer about volunteering to new parents at the school.
- Use a sign-up sheet at school and community events attended by parents.
- Send out personal invitations.
- Send letters home with students.
- Post notices in the windows of local businesses.
- Hang a banner on the school, or use a big lawn sign.
- Put an announcement in the community affairs section of local newspapers.
- Publicize needs at churches and community social groups.
- Call parents/community members.
- Use e-mail to distribute notices about events and volunteer opportunities.
- Request help from a senior citizen center.
- Conduct events to recruit under-represented groups, including fathers.
- Link with the Red Cross/Family Support Services.



### HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR VOLUNTEERS?

1. Provide an orientation for your volunteers. Include a school handbook and a map of the campus.
2. Develop a brochure for volunteers to use.
3. Include volunteers in workshops and training sessions planned for staff.
4. Interview your volunteers to find out about their skills and things they like to do.
5. Provide time for your volunteers to ask questions and discuss procedures.
6. Train volunteers on working with children in the classroom.
7. Share classroom rules with volunteers.
8. Develop a list of tasks for drop-in volunteers.
9. Always provide something for volunteers to do.
10. Be a good role model to volunteers.
11. Explain how you want something done. Check with volunteers to see if the explanation is clear. Repeat the instructions, if necessary.
12. Put clearly written instructions in each learning center.
13. Don't embarrass volunteers by correcting them in front of others.
14. When conflicts occur, handle them privately.
15. Always let volunteers know how much you appreciate and need their help.

### FORTY-THREE WAYS VOLUNTEERS CAN HELP AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

1. Tell stories to children
2. Listen to children read
3. Provide individual help
4. Assist in learning centers
5. Set up learning centers
6. Help contact parents
7. Reproduce materials
8. Practice vocabulary with non-English-speaking students
9. Make and play instructional games
10. Play games at recess
11. Assist with visual tests
12. Prepare visual materials
13. Grade papers
14. Prepare bulletin boards
15. Help with book fairs
16. Work with underachievers
17. Help select library books
18. Assist with field trips
19. Make props for plays
20. Gather resource materials
21. Help children learn to type
22. Help children with arts and crafts
23. Help with cooking projects
24. Set up science experiments
25. Collect lunch money
26. Escort children to bathroom, library, cafeteria
27. Help students on computers
28. Discuss careers or hobbies
29. Prepare teaching materials
30. Record grades
31. Supervise groups taking tests
32. Help young children with walking on a balance beam, jumping rope, or skipping
33. Reinforce learning of alphabet
34. Reinforce recognition of numerals
35. Drill recognition of colors
36. Play a musical instrument
37. Make puppets
38. Dramatize a story
39. Help with handwriting practice
40. Assist with sing-alongs
41. Share ethnic backgrounds and experiences
42. Discuss holidays and special occasions
43. Share information about local history

## HELPING AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

1. Volunteers who speak a foreign language fluently can give language students extra practice in conversation or discuss the literature that advanced language students are reading.
2. Through guidance offices, volunteers can help students research careers, training opportunities, and colleges.
3. Volunteers can offer their experience or expertise in social science units.
4. Volunteers can assist with research projects and help students use library resources and computers.
5. Volunteers can assist teachers in gathering resources for topics of study.
6. Volunteers can assist in science and math laboratories.
7. Volunteers can help in vocational classrooms and laboratories.
8. Volunteers can help build sets for school plays.
9. Volunteers can arrange field trips into the community to augment class learning.
10. Volunteers can sponsor school clubs and interest groups.
11. Volunteers can share collections and discuss careers, travels, hobbies, and other areas of special knowledge.
12. Volunteers can assist the staffs of student publications, yearbooks, literary magazines, and newspapers.
13. Volunteers can help students with assignments for missed school work.
14. Volunteers can supervise students who are taking tests.
15. Volunteers can assist organizing a college fair or career exploration day/week.
16. Volunteers from various ethnic backgrounds might share their individual life experiences.



17. Volunteers can produce a parent-teacher newsletter to inform parents of students and school achievements and activities.
18. Volunteers can coordinate campus parent patrols.

## WAYS TO SHOW APPRECIATION TO VOLUNTEERS

1. Greet volunteers by name, and encourage students to use a volunteer's name.
2. Thank volunteers personally each day, noting special contributions.
3. Set time to talk with volunteers when children are not present; speak briefly with volunteers each day before departure.
4. Celebrate a volunteer's birthday, and encourage students to write thank you notes.
5. Use a volunteer's special talents, knowledge, and interests in assigning tasks.
6. Give volunteers increasing responsibilities and more challenging tasks.
7. Share items of mutual interest such as articles/books on child development, learning styles, or content area in which a volunteer works.
8. Include volunteers when planning class activities.
9. Include volunteers in staff meetings and in-service training, when appropriate.
10. Send a letter of appreciation.
11. Take a volunteer to lunch.
12. Call or write when a volunteer is absent or ill.
13. Seek training opportunities for volunteers.
14. Write an article on a volunteer's contribution for your volunteer newsletter, school newspaper, or community paper.
15. Ask the volunteer coordinator or school community relations staff person about a feature story on volunteers for the newspaper, radio, or TV stations.
16. Nominate your volunteer for a volunteer award.
17. Celebrate outstanding contributions or achievements.
18. Commend a volunteer to administrators.
19. Ask volunteers to help evaluate the program and suggest improvements.
20. Ask the children to evaluate the performance of volunteers, and share their comments with the volunteers.



21. Help plan a volunteer recognition event, an assembly, reception, or luncheon, and invite the superintendent, administrators, parents, and community leaders.
22. Accommodate a volunteer's personal needs and problems.
23. Enable volunteers to grow on the job.
24. Write a letter of recommendation when the volunteer requests it.





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## HANDOUTS/ARTICLES

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## Parent Survey

The PTA needs your help to plan parent involvement programs at our school. Parent involvement is fun, informative, and most important of all, it helps our children perform better in school. Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey, and return it to:

\_\_\_\_\_

1. What specifically would you like to know about the school?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. From what sources do you get most of your information about school? (Check one)  
☐ Newsletter   ☐ Friends   ☐ Children   ☐ Newspaper   ☐ Teachers   ☐ TV   ☐ Principal   ☐ Other
3. Would you be interested in attending a class or session on how parents can help their children learn at home?  
☐ YES   ☐ NO
4. If you check "yes" for question 3, please indicate below the type of workshops in which you would like to participate in order to help you help your child learn:  
☐ Helping with homework  
☐ Improving reading skills  
☐ Testing programs  
☐ English as a second language  
☐ Improving your child's self-image  
☐ Enhancing your own parenting skills  
☐ Helping your child explore career choices  
☐ Saying NO to drugs  
☐ Explaining HIV/AIDS, and steps to protect your child  
☐ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where would you like these parenting programs to be held?  
☐ In the school  
☐ In the home of a parent in your neighborhood or area  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Would you be willing to host such a session? ☐ YES   ☐ NO
6. When would you like to have these meetings scheduled?  
☐ On a weekday evening  
☐ In the early morning before school starts  
☐ Sometime during a weekday   ☐ MORNING   ☐ AFTERNOON  
☐ On a Saturday   ☐ MORNING   ☐ AFTERNOON   ☐ EVENING  
☐ On a Sunday   ☐ MORNING   ☐ AFTERNOON   ☐ EVENING  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. Would you be interested in participating in a small group coffee discussion hour at the school?  
☐ YES   ☐ NO
8. I feel that I can talk openly with my child's teacher.  
☐ YES   ☐ NO   ☐ TO SOME DEGREE  
  
 I feel that I can talk openly with my child's principal.  
☐ YES   ☐ NO   ☐ TO SOME DEGREE

I am well informed by the school or teacher about what my children is doing at school.

☐ YES      ☐ NO      ☐ TO SOME DEGREE

I feel that the teacher needs to be aware of home problems that may affect my child's work.

☐ AGREE      ☐ DISAGREE

9. How effective are the following toward improving communication with your child's teacher and the school?

Open houses	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
Grade-level orientation sessions	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
Parent-Teacher conferences	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
PTA meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR

10. As a parent, do you have trouble with any of the following?

Your child's homework	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> TO SOME DEGREE
Discipline	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> TO SOME DEGREE
Spending enough time with your child	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> TO SOME DEGREE
Dealing with your child's problems	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> TO SOME DEGREE
Motivating your child	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> TO SOME DEGREE

11. Would you like to volunteer in the following areas?

Clerical or administrative duties for school or PTA ☐ YES ☐ NO

Helping in your child's classroom (e.g., reading aloud, working with individual students) ☐ YES ☐ NO

Organizing a PTA or school event (e.g., open house, holiday program, cultural arts fair) ☐ YES ☐ NO

Participating on an advisory committee (on curriculum and textbooks, for example) ☐ YES ☐ NO

Participating in school-based management ☐ YES ☐ NO

Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. Check the kinds of resources and services you would like to see made available at the school.

☐ Homework hot line  
☐ After-school childcare  
☐ Parent resource center  
☐ Parent support group  
☐ Family use of gym, pool, or school library  
☐ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

13. I have the following hobbies and work experiences that I would be willing to share with the students, school, or PTA:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

14. Parent and community involvement at school should be strengthened in the following ways:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time!

## How Welcome Are Parents in Our School?

**Directions:** Think about the experiences you have had when you visited your child's school. Your PTA and school staff want to make parents feel comfortable and a part of the school.

Please take a few moments to fill out the following brief survey. Be honest. All answers will be anonymous—please don't write your name on the sheet. PTA leaders will collect the surveys.

After the PTA has analyzed the results, a committee composed of PTA leaders and other parents, the principal, and teacher representatives will decide how best to use the information and will make recommendations, if necessary, for helping parents feel more welcome in our school.

- |                                                                                                                                                                | <i>(Circle one)</i> |    |             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----|-------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                | Yes                 | No | Do Not Know |
| • Am I always greeted in a friendly, courteous way when I contact the school, either on the phone or in person?                                                |                     |    |             |
| • Does the school have a reception area for visitors, equipped with information about the school and directions so that I can find my way around the building? |                     |    |             |
| • Did the school conduct some kind of orientation program for my family when I first enrolled my child?                                                        |                     |    |             |
| • Do school staff and parents have informal occasions when we can get to know each other during the school year?                                               |                     |    |             |
| • Does the principal have regular office hours during which parents and students can stop in to visit?                                                         |                     |    |             |
| • If "yes" to the previous two questions, are those hours convenient for me?                                                                                   |                     |    |             |
| • Is there a school suggestion box where teachers', students', and parents' ideas are welcomed, and are those ideas implemented when possible?                 |                     |    |             |
| • Does the school encourage me to visit my child's classroom outside of planned occasions (after checking first with the teacher involved)?                    |                     |    |             |
| • Am I and are other parents welcome to use the building after school hours for community purposes?                                                            |                     |    |             |
| • Does the principal ask for parents' suggestions when making decisions that will affect the running of the school?                                            |                     |    |             |
| • Are limited-English-speaking parents given opportunities to understand the curriculum and participate in the school activities?                              |                     |    |             |
| • Does the school provide written information to parents about the school rules, parent-teacher conferences, and other important items?                        |                     |    |             |

Feel free to write any comments and suggestions here:

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## Faculty Survey

Dear Faculty Member:

The PTA is conducting a survey on parent involvement. The information will enable us serve the entire school community more effectively.

Thank you for helping us on this project. Please return completed survey to the PTA mailbox.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to contact \_\_\_\_\_

Grade(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Subject Area(s) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Would you consider using parent/community volunteers in your classroom? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Do you currently have parents volunteering in your classroom or for other types of activities? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
If yes, what are their tasks?
3. What are your current needs for assistance?
  - ☐ Parents as consultants or presenters: professional, multi-cultural, etc.
  - ☐ Materials: books, magazines, visual aids, art supplies, etc.
  - ☐ Volunteers: field trips, special events, tutoring, clerical, or translators
4. What areas or issues do you feel the PTA needs to address?
5. What ways do you believe parents can be more supportive of the school and their child and of you as the teacher?
6. What methods have you found effective for improving home/school communications? (i.e., phone calls, newsletters, e-mail, notes, e-mails)



## Teacher Volunteer Needs Assessment

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade/Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Room: \_\_\_\_\_

**I would like a volunteer to help with the following teacher support tasks:**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help set up learning centers<br><input type="checkbox"/> Assist with sewing, cooking projects<br><input type="checkbox"/> Set up experiments<br><input type="checkbox"/> Arrange speakers for class<br><input type="checkbox"/> Record tapes for learning centers | <input type="checkbox"/> Gather resource materials<br><input type="checkbox"/> Set up class grocery store<br><input type="checkbox"/> Help with science projects<br><input type="checkbox"/> Arrange field trips<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**I would like a volunteer to help with these one-on-one teaching tasks:**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to a child read<br><input type="checkbox"/> Provide individual help<br><input type="checkbox"/> Supervise computer work<br><input type="checkbox"/> Practice vocabulary with non-English-speaking students | <input type="checkbox"/> Drill spelling words or math facts<br><input type="checkbox"/> Help a child learn another language<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**I would like a volunteer to work with the class or a small group on these teaching tasks:**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play a musical instrument for class<br><input type="checkbox"/> Supervise on a field trip, at parties<br><input type="checkbox"/> Talk to students about career, hobbies,<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Assist children with music<br><input type="checkbox"/> Tell stories to a group<br><input type="checkbox"/> special interests, travels |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**I would like a volunteer to help with these creative tasks:**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make bulletin boards<br><input type="checkbox"/> Make puppets<br><input type="checkbox"/> Dramatize a story<br><input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> Make instructional games<br><input type="checkbox"/> Make classroom aids<br><input type="checkbox"/> Make or borrow props for plays<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**I prefer volunteer assistance at the following times:**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Afternoon	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

**Qualifications and Requirements:**

- Enjoy working with children.
- Attend training on skills needed to tutor in the classroom (e.g., math or reading).
- Notify the school if unable to assist on assigned day.

**Job Confidentiality:**

- Respect confidentiality of information about students and school staff.
- Refrain from discussing individual children outside of the classroom.

## Helping Our Kids—Helping Our School

**Won't You Join Us?** PTA is updating the school volunteer file so parents and community members can work together in support of our school.

**Children learn from adults who care about them.** Giving of your time, your talent, and ability will not only help our school, but your gift will enhance our children's learning. Please join us in volunteering where your time allows.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to be a Room Representative for my child's room:

Student's name \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to work with PTA. Please call me so I can find out what responsibilities I might undertake.

\_\_\_\_\_ I work as a \_\_\_\_\_ and will be happy to talk about my job responsibilities with classes or at the annual school career day.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have lived/traveled in \_\_\_\_\_ and would enjoy sharing my knowledge about this country with our students.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to demonstrate/talk about my hobbies/crafts/special interests in \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to tutor children who need extra help in:

\_\_\_\_\_ Reading (grades \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_ Math (grades \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in coaching \_\_\_\_\_ (indicate sport) after school on \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would be willing to play \_\_\_\_\_ musical instrument in the classroom

\_\_\_\_\_ I would be willing to assist with:

\_\_\_\_\_ computer work

\_\_\_\_\_ filing

\_\_\_\_\_ phoning

\_\_\_\_\_ correcting papers

\_\_\_\_\_ a class project

\_\_\_\_\_ classroom newsletter

\_\_\_\_\_ sewing costumes

\_\_\_\_\_ set building

\_\_\_\_\_ painting scenery

\_\_\_\_\_ art work

\_\_\_\_\_ class party

\_\_\_\_\_ refreshments for a class party

The best time to reach me is \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (work) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### A Code of Ethics for Volunteers

As a volunteer, I realize that I am subject to a code of ethics similar to that which binds the professional in the field in which I work. Like them, I assume certain responsibilities, and I expect to account for what I do in terms of what I am expected to do.

1. I will keep confidential matters confidential.
2. I interpret “volunteers” to mean that I have agreed to work without compensation in money, but having been accepted as a worker, I expect to do my work according to standards, just as the paid staff expects to do their work.
3. I promise to take to my work an attitude of open-mindedness, to be willing to be trained for it, to bring to it interest and attention.
4. I realize that I may have assets that my co-workers may not have, and that I shall use these to enrich the project on which we are working together.
5. I realize also that I may lack assets that my co-workers have, but I will not let this make me feel inadequate and still will endeavor to assist in developing good teamwork.
6. I plan to find out how best I can serve the activity for which I have volunteered and to offer as much as I am sure I can give, but no more.
7. I realize that I must live up to my promise and, therefore, will be careful that my agreement is so simple and clear that it cannot be misunderstood.
8. I believe that my attitude toward volunteer work should be professional. I believe that I have an obligation to my work, to those who direct it, to my colleagues, to those for whom it is done, and to the public.

*Author Unknown*



# School Decision Making and Advocacy

*Parents are full partners in decisions that affect children and families.*

Many parents do not realize how frequently they are effective advocates for their children. Every time parents stand up for their child or look for ways to improve the child's school experience, they are acting as advocates and having an effect, however subtle, on the decision-making process.

When parents link up with other parents with similar objectives, or when parents speak on behalf of more than their own children, they take the role of advocate to higher level. In the collaborator/decision-maker role, parents participate with the school community to help solve problems and develop policies that make the school system more responsive and equitable to all families. By volunteering at school, tutoring, and participating in parent-teacher conferences, parents can learn more about the school's structure and programs. The more experience parents gain in working with school staff, the more effective they will be as advocates.

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HOW TO BUILD A PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUR SCHOOL BOARD

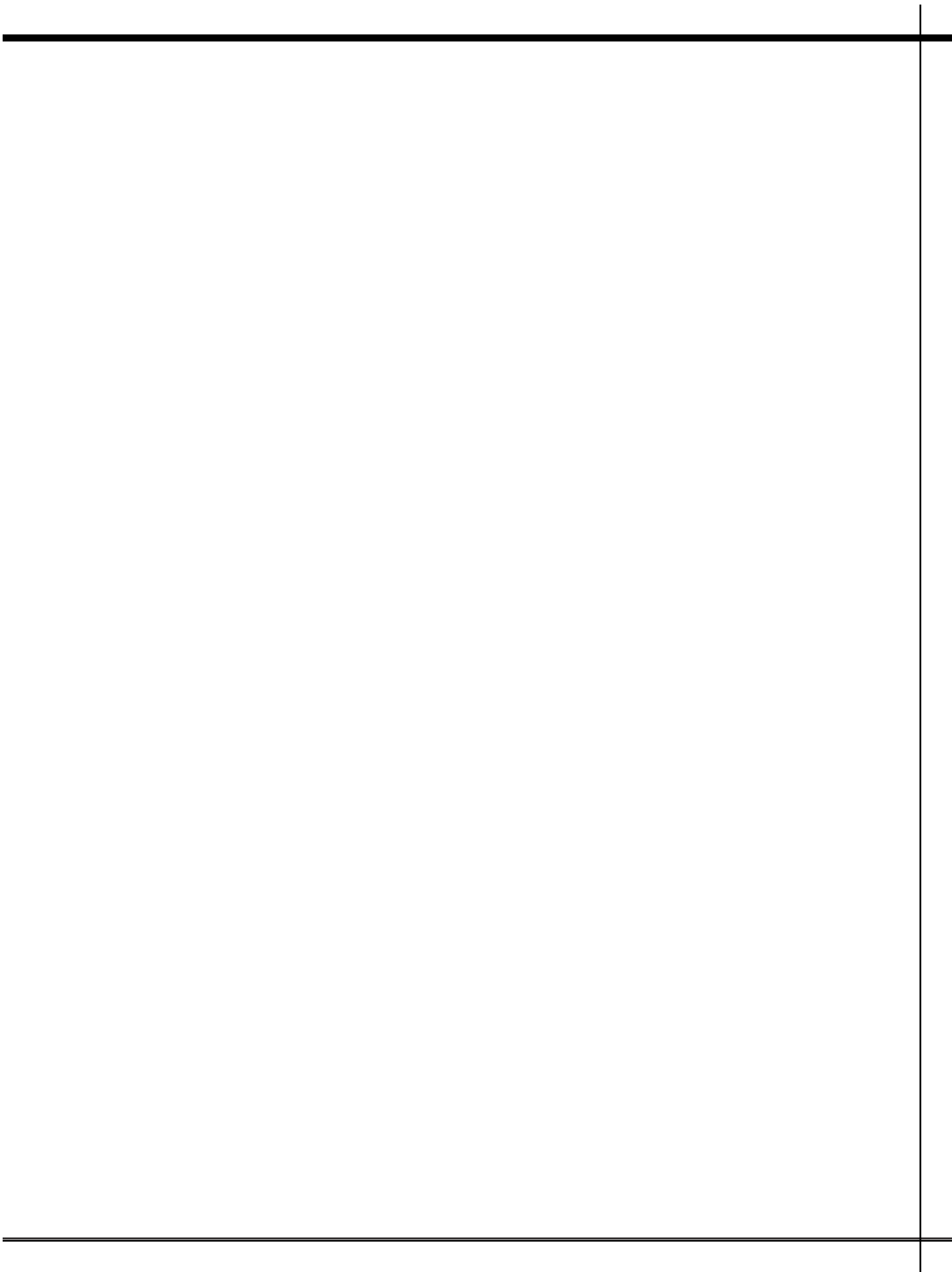
### Handouts/Articles

Frequently Asked Questions About the Family-School Partnership Act

"No Child Left Behind" Legislation for Title I

Building Capacity for Involvement

Educational Acronyms



## PARENTS AS ADVOCATES

Parents can be advocates in many different ways. When an issue affecting children has been identified, parents can:

- research the issue
- disseminate information
- raise questions for discussion at school or community meetings
- propose potential solutions or remedies for the problem
- provide updates on the status of the issue
- train others to be advocates

When organized and united, parents are a powerful voice on behalf of children. Effective advocacy requires that parents develop a plan that includes:

- a strong message
- a strategy for getting that message out to legislators, the media, and community members
- ways to recruit others to participate in the effort
- ways to train others to keep them motivated

## PARENTS' ROLE IN SCHOOL DECISION MAKING AND ITS EFFECT ON SCHOOLS

Parent involvement in discussions and decisions about school operations is a fundamental component of school reform.

Parents can become active advocates, advisors, and decision makers by:

- Attending meetings regularly, sharing their opinions on school-related issues with educators, and exercising their right to participate as partners in the decision-making process.
- Running for election to the school board, serving on a school council, volunteering on a PTA legislative committee, or working on a school task force.
- Keeping other parents informed about specific issues and laws that affect their children's schools.
- Providing meaningful perspective to personnel committees that interview, hire, and/or dismiss school staff.

Educators can:

- Share with parents their insights into the process of education, school operations, child development, and enrollment diversity issues.
- Invite parents to serve on advisory councils and/or committees that are responsible for addressing everything from school safety, curriculum development, and textbook selection to disciplinary policies and dress codes.

When organized and united, parents are a powerful voice on behalf of children.

## DISCOVERING AND BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL DECISION MAKING

Surveys have shown that, although most parents want to play a more active role in making decisions, most teachers and administrators are often reluctant to support this type of involvement. (Lewis and Henderson, 1997) The reasons for this are complex and include:

- **Labeling:** The assignment of personality characteristics based on appearance or superficial behaviors is a normal process inherent to human nature. However, labeling can be harmful or destructive, when it is used to describe people's deficits rather than their assets. For the benefit of the school district and every child in it, site-based management team members must learn to view others in terms of their real strengths and assets rather than in terms of unfair and inaccurate labels.
- **Behavioral Barriers:** Although these may have nothing to do with team composition or conduct, they still can hinder site-based management teams from being productive and successful. The following are some barriers one may encounter from:
  - **Educators and administrators:** They often believe that their training establishes professional boundaries that clearly define a set of responsibilities and a domain that is theirs alone.
  - **School boards:** For a site-based management program to work, it must be supported by the school board. Some boards may be reluctant to do this, because they fear that decentralizing management will lead to problems of focus and responsibility.

- **Superintendents:** Superintendents tend to be strong, decisive individuals who place a premium on efficient task accomplishment. They may be reluctant to share authority.
- **Principals:** Usually considered the chief decision maker in a school setting, they may see site-based management as a threat to their authority, which is already shared with and limited by superintendents and the school board.
- **Teachers:** First, teachers traditionally have been independent in teaching and running a classroom. As a result, they do not always know how to welcome or work with others in their domain. Second, because some teachers belong to unions, site-based management team decisions affecting time requirements, class size, and ancillary duties may conflict with collective bargaining agreements.
- **PTA leaders and members:** Parents actively involved in PTA can be perceived by administrators as insiders, who are interested in school matters. Therefore, they are often the ones invited to serve on site-based management teams. Conversely, parents who are not involved in PTA may be wrongly identified as outsiders, who are not interested in school policies. Therefore, they may not be welcomed or feel welcome to serve on site-based management teams.
- **Parents:** Parents and others who make the effort to get involved in school decisions themselves can become barriers to successful site-based management. If site-based management team members fall into the trap of focusing on inter-team politics, personalities, and egos, the team can lose sight of its mission. Parents may also pose a barrier when they form cliques and, consciously or subconsciously, exclude other parents from participation.

- **Breaking Down Barriers:** Open and honest communication is the key to getting through these barriers and is a necessary component for the establishment of site-based management teams based on mutual trust and respect. All parties—administrators, staff, teachers, community members, and parents—need to overcome their reluctance to listen to views that differ from their own, that come from people with less or more status, or that come from those whose experience may not be seen as relevant.

## SCHOOL SITE COUNCILS

The School Site Council (SSC) is a primary vehicle for parent participation in school decision making. The SSC is a team of the principal (or designee), teachers, other school personnel, parents, students, and community members that develops the mission and goals for the improvement of an individual school community.

Responsibilities of the SSC include:

- To develop, implement and monitor a school plan.
  - Focus the plan on the education of all students.
  - Include a clear statement of school goals, strategies, and programs.
  - Evaluate the current program.
  - Determine funds for staff development.
  - Include a parent education plan.
- To develop, implement, and monitor the plan's budget.

Responsibilities of the individual council members include:

- Regularly attending School Site Council meetings.
- Understanding that authority rests with the council as a whole and not with individual council members.
- Taking collective responsibility for the council's decisions/performance.
- Reading materials distributed prior to the meetings.
- Preparing questions based on materials distributed.
- Actively participating in School Site Council duties, including serving on standing and special committees.
- Serving the full term for which elected.
- Communicating to and getting input from constituent group(s).





## PARENTS' RIGHTS

*Chapter 864, Statutes of 1998*

The California Department of Education, in response to California law, gives parents the legal rights to participate in their children's education.

Parents and guardians of enrolled students have the right to be included in the educational process and to have access to the system on behalf of their children.

Parents have the right to:

- **Classroom Observing:** The time and date of the visitation must be arranged in advance with the school.
- **Teacher Conferencing:** Parents should contact the school to schedule a date and time convenient for all participants.
- **Volunteering:** Parents should contact the school to determine the terms and conditions of this service.
- **Student Attendance:** Parents should be notified in a timely manner if their child is absent from school without permission.
- **Student Testing:** Parents should be notified of their child's performance on standardized and statewide tests and the school's ranking on these tests.
- **School Selection:** Parents can request that their child be enrolled in any school in the district. The district is not compelled to grant the request.
- **Safe School Environment:** Parents are entitled to the assurance of a safe and supportive learning environment for their child.
- **Curriculum Materials:** Parents must be permitted to examine the curriculum materials of the class or classes in which their child is enrolled.
- **Student Academic Progress:** Parents must be informed of their child's academic progress in school and of persons to contact if they wish more information or assistance with their child.
- **Student Records:** Parents must be given access to their child's records and the right to question anything they feel is inaccurate or misleading or an invasion of privacy.
- **Standards:** Parents should receive information regarding the academic standards their child is expected to meet.
- **School Rules:** Parents need to receive written notification of school rules, attendance policies, dress codes, and procedures for school visitations.
- **Psychological Testing:** Parents must receive information on all psychological testing recommended for their child.
- **Councils and Committees:** Parents have the option to participate as a member of a parent advisory committee, school-site council, or site-based management leadership team in accordance with established rules and regulations for membership.
- **Policy Development:** Parents have the opportunity to work in a mutually supportive and respectful partnership with the school to help their child succeed.
- **Beyond High School:** Parents need to be informed of college entrance requirements.

- Being familiar with state laws governing School Site Council processes, including appropriate Open Meetings laws.

The California Department of Education (CDE) developed a handbook to help School Site Councils and school administrators meet the school planning requirements of state and federal programs. A template for a school site plan and the handbook contents can be downloaded at [www.cde.ca.gov/ccpdiv/singleplan](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ccpdiv/singleplan) free of charge.

## FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP ACT

The Family-School Partnership Act is a California law that allows parents, grandparents, and guardians to take time off from work to participate in their children's school or childcare activities. Its provisions were expanded in 1997 to add licensed child day care facilities to the kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade levels included in the original legislation. See [www.ede.gov](http://www.ede.gov).

## GRASS ROOTS ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

*Taken from **Advocacy for Kids Handbook, California State PTA***

### Research the Issue

Do your homework and know the pros and cons of the issue. If you are working on a specific measure, know the bill number, title and sponsor(s). Remember to personalize the issue by preparing arguments regarding how the bill will affect your community. Know the different groups that support and oppose PTA's position on the issue. Be an information resource, and have available the following:

- fact sheets that include background on the issue
- a summary of the legislative proposal
- an analysis of the bill
- facts and statistics that support PTA's view
- surveys or opinion polls of PTA members

### Communicate with Your Elected Officials

#### 1. Visit Your Legislator

Group or individual contacts are among the most effective ways to communicate with legislators. Take the following steps:

- **Schedule an appointment.** If the elected representative you want to see is unavailable, arrange a meeting with the aide handling the issue. When making your appointment, specify how much time will be needed.
- **Draft an agenda,** and be sure to list the issue(s) the PTA wants to discuss. If you are part of a delegation, assign each person a role. For example, one person can open the meeting, another person can be the recorder, someone else can focus the conversation back to the PTA agenda when necessary, and another person can leave literature.
- **Arrive on time for the meeting.** Have the delegation meet together immediately prior to the meeting and then go in together. Once in the meeting, immediately identify yourselves and the PTA unit, council, or district you represent. During your introduction, state the issue(s) of concern. Keep the time frame in mind during your meeting.
- **Be prepared to educate the legislator or aides** about PTA's position. Be open to questions. If you don't know the answer, politely explain that you will do some additional research and get back to them. Never give false information or assumptions. Your credibility and the credibility of PTA are on the line.
- **Ask how the legislator will vote** on the issue. If the legislator is unable to make a commitment, tactfully state that you would like to know, and that you are willing to call at a later time to learn the decision. If the response is positive, respond, "We appreciate your support." If the response is negative, ask, "What are your specific objections?"
- **Develop a positive relationship** with legislators and their staff members. Communication should be a continuing exchange, not sporadic contact. A solid relationship with legislators and their staff members is an important step in building credibility and power for the PTA.

#### 2. Write Letters

Letters alert legislators to your views. A letter-writing campaign also educates PTA members about the issues and publicizes the organization. Begin the campaign by identifying a coordinator, perhaps the legislation chairman or PTA president.

- **Determine your message.** Have sample messages available, as well as fact sheets with PTA's position on the issue. When writing on behalf of your PTA, use letterhead stationery, if possible. State your case succinctly and accurately,

Know the different groups that support and oppose PTA's position on the issue. Be an information resource

citing the following:

- the issue and background facts
  - the PTA's position, and what you want to happen (e.g., change in regulations, new legislation)
  - the number of PTA members you represent
  - your involvement with the PTA and, when applicable, your PTA title (e.g., unit, council, or district president)
- **Send copies of the letter** to other contacts, such as key legislative committee and subcommittee members as well as the California State PTA director of legislation, and, when writing about issues before the Congress, to the National PTA Office of Governmental Relations (National PTA Office of Governmental Relations, 1090 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20005-4905).

When writing:

- be brief, using separate letters on each issue or measure.
- include bill number, author, and brief description of the bill.
- be specific about how the legislation would affect your school district and/or community.
- be willing to share any expertise, and explain your connection with the subject.
- be positive, and do not ask for the impossible.
- address your letter with proper titles.
- sign your full name, and give your complete address including telephone number.

See the Resources section for information on locating your representatives online.

How to address your letters:

#### **GOVERNOR**

The Honorable (fill in name of Governor)  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor \_\_\_\_\_:

#### **STATE ASSEMBLY MEMBER**

The Honorable (fill in name of your Assembly Member)  
California State Assembly  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0001

Dear Assembly Member \_\_\_\_\_:

#### **STATE SENATOR**

The Honorable (fill in name of your Senator)  
California State Senate  
P.O. Box 942848  
Sacramento, CA 94248-0001

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

#### **UNITED STATES SENATOR**

The Honorable (fill in name of your Senator)  
Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

#### **UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

The Honorable (fill in name of your Representative)  
House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_:

#### **3. Faxes**

Faxes are a quick, effective method for making your position known in writing. Many legislative offices have publicly-listed fax numbers.

#### **4. Electronic Mail (e-mail)**

Check your legislator's Web site for an e-mail address. This is the fastest way to communicate PTA positions on legislation.

#### **5. Telephone**

Phone calls are an effective communication strategy, particularly when timing is critical—that is, when a legislator's support or vote is needed within the next 48 hours. Following are some tips on using the phone to communicate your views:

- Phone the legislator's district or capitol office and request to speak with the member or an aide.
- Give information on the bill number, and ask when action on the measure is expected.
- State that you are from the legislator's district, and explain your position on the issue.
- Ask how the legislator expects to vote.
- Urge the legislator to vote for your position.

#### **6. Telephone Trees**

A legislation telephone tree is an efficient way to mobilize many people on a particular issue. When the state president and/or the director of legislation receives information on an issue, they can

activate the “Member-to-Member” network by passing the information to legislation committee members who, in turn, can reach other PTA members.

Through the use of a legislation telephone tree, within a few hours of an “Action Alert” or an SOS, literally hundreds of letters, postcards, phone calls, faxes, or e-mail messages can be on their way to appropriate legislators.

Letters or faxes are best when time permits, but often we must react fast enough for the legislators to feel the impact of the PTA lobby within hours.

- **Establishing a Telephone Tree**

- List the names and phone numbers of all those willing to phone.
- Establish the calling sequence:
  - Select lead callers.
  - Lead caller should make no more than five calls.
  - Last caller in sequence should return call to lead caller.
  - If there is no answer after several tries, caller should go on to next in sequence.
- Do not count on answering machines to deliver messages in a timely manner. Call the next person in sequence.
- Invite telephone tree volunteers to a workshop to build individual confidence and enthusiasm. Distribute a copy of the entire telephone tree for all involved. Duplicate and distribute legislation materials from the California State PTA and your PTA district and council (if in council)

- **Tips on Effective Telephone Trees**

- Have alternate callers, in case a caller is unavailable.
- Have a system to check the effectiveness of your telephone tree. Is the tree functioning efficiently? Are there problems to adjust?
- Make your own calls to your legislators before activating the telephone tree. Your experience in communicating the message will alert you to any problems with the way you are presenting the message.
- Write down the message you are giving callers. Include: bill number, author, subject matter, location of bill in the legislative process, and the PTA position.
- It is important that every caller deliver the same message.

By organizing a telephone tree, you have dramatically increased the number of contacts with your legislators. Legislators benefit from hearing from a large constituent group, reminding them of PTA's position. They may later turn to PTA to poll parents on issues.

## 7. Follow Up

Send your legislator a thank you note, if the vote or action was in your favor, or a polite note expressing your disappointment, if the legislator voted against your position. Your appreciation can be expressed in other, more public ways, such as writing letters to the editor of the local paper. Keep the PTA name visible.

## HOW TO BUILD A PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUR SCHOOL BOARD

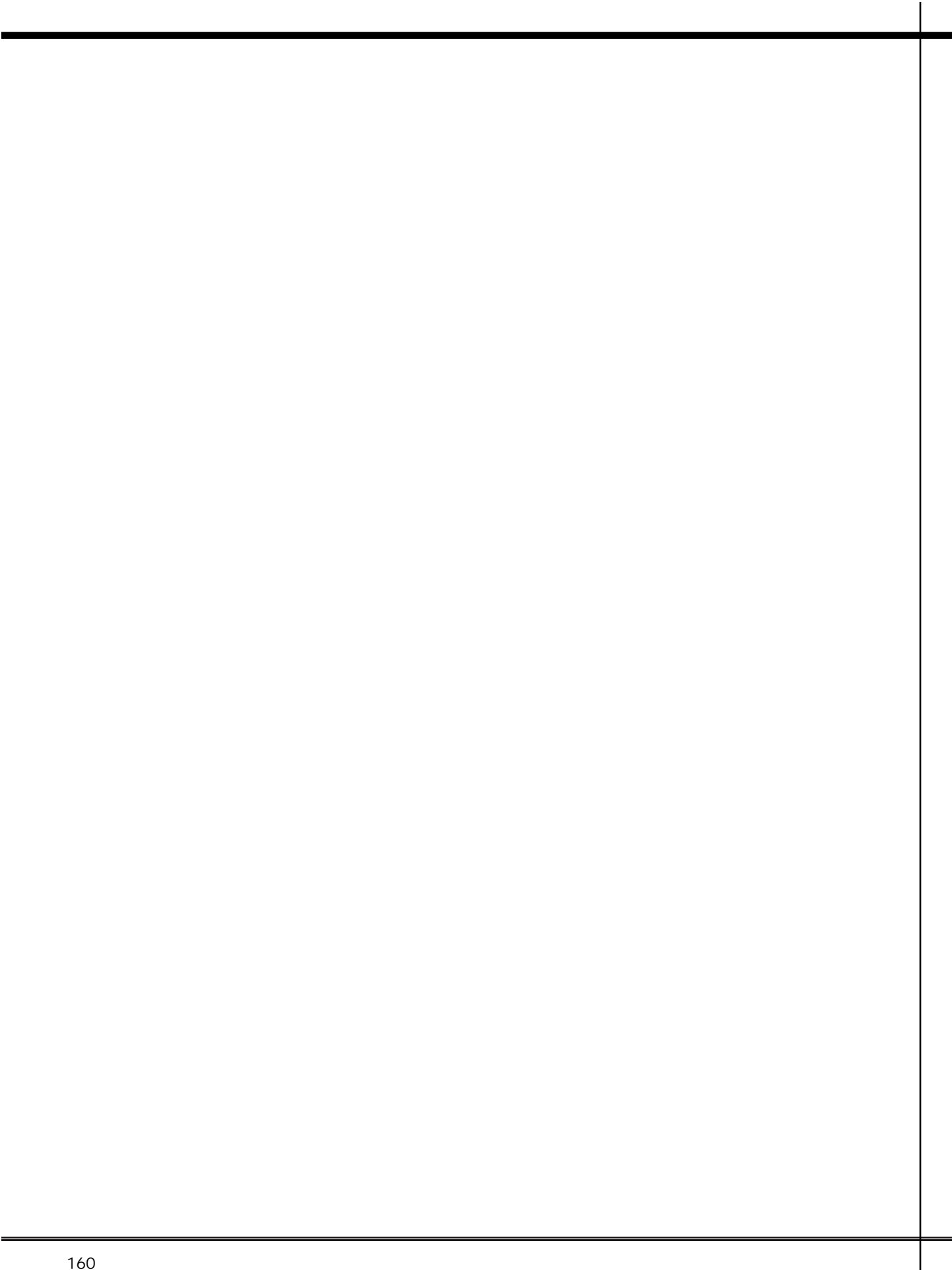
The PTA can be a valuable partner to the school board by:

- Establishing regular two-way communication with the school board.
- Appointing a PTA liaison to attend school board meetings and collect copies of agendas and reports.
- Keeping the PTA abreast of current information about school board activities and actions through newsletters, meetings, and special programs.
- Electing a PTA spokesperson who voices the views of the PTA and presents PTA positions on issues such as class size reduction.
- Reporting PTA concerns, parents' reactions to school policies, and school problems.
- Encouraging the school board to develop and implement a formal, written parent involvement policy.
- Making sure PTA representatives sit on school board advisory committees and task forces.
- Inviting school board members to attend PTA conferences, workshops, and open forums.

For more ideas about forming a relationship with your school board, visit [www.pta.org/programs/edulibr/peschlbo1](http://www.pta.org/programs/edulibr/peschlbo1)

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## HANDOUTS/ARTICLES



## Frequently Asked Questions About the Family-School Partnership Act

The Family-School Partnership Act is a California law that allows parents, grandparents, and guardians to take time off from work to participate in their children's school or childcare activities. Its provisions were expanded in 1997 to add licensed child day care facilities to the kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade levels included in the original legislation.

### ***What opportunities am I offered under this law?***

If the following criteria are met, you may take time off from work up to 40 hours each year (up to eight hours in any calendar month) to participate in activities at your child's school or day care facility:

- You are a parent, guardian, or grandparent who has custody of a child enrolled in a California public or private school, kindergarten through grade twelve, or licensed child day care facility.
- You work for a business that has 25 or more employees at the same location.

### **How can I take advantage of these opportunities?**

Let your employer know in advance that you would like to take time off to participate in activities at your child's school or childcare facility. Although the law does not say how far in advance you should inform your employer, it is likely that rules are in place at your work site regarding reasonable notice for planned absences. If your employer requests, you are required to provide written proof of having participated at your child's school or childcare facility.

### **How should I account for my time off work?**

The law allows you to use vacation time, personal leave, or compensatory time off to account for the time you use participating in your child's school or childcare activities. You also may use time off without pay, if permitted by your employer. The employee, not the employer, chooses from the options that are available.

### **Does the law apply to parents who work the night shift or only to those working the day shift? What about part-time employees?**

All parents working full time, regardless of the shift they work, are allowed up to 40 hours per year. Because a night worker normally sleeps during the day when school is in session, that employee might ask for approval of an absence during the night shift in order to rest adequately for participating in activities at his or her child's school or childcare facility. Part-time workers are allowed a proportionate number of hours.

### **In what kinds of school or childcare activities may I participate with my child?**

Under the law, any activity that is sponsored, supervised, or approved by the school, school board, or childcare facility is acceptable. Examples might be volunteering in your child's classroom; participating in parent-teacher conferences, Back-to-School Night, Open House, field trips, or extracurricular sporting events sponsored by the school, school board, or childcare facility; and assisting in community service learning activities.

### **Does my employer have the right to refuse my request for time off to participate in activities at my child's school or childcare facility?**

If your employer has 25 or more employees at the same location, your employer must comply with the law and allow you to take off up to 40 hours a year to participate in your child's school or childcare activities. At least one of the options—using vacation, personal leave, compensatory time off, or time off without pay—must be provided.

## **“No Child Left Behind” Legislation for Title I H.R. 1, Section 1118. Parental Involvement**

### **Title of Major Sections:**

(See text of legislation for complete information.)

1. Local educational agency policy
2. School parental involvement policy
3. Policy involvement
4. Shared responsibilities for high student academic achievement
5. Building capacity for involvement
6. Accessibility
7. Information from parental information and resource centers
8. Review

*Note: For the purposes of this guide, focus is on Section 5, Building Capacity for Involvement.*

The chart below can be used to help local parent groups and school staff evaluate the quality of various mandatory or optional parent/educator involvement activities, remembering that the intent of each activity is to improve student achievement directly or indirectly, especially for Title I students. The chart entries also could be used as a springboard to encourage PTA units to develop programs, hold work-shops, or provide materials to help parents assist with homework.

### **Possible Categories for Levels of Involvement** (columns on right of chart):

1. Activity is planned so that it aims to increase student achievement
2. Information/program/support is provided by the school
3. Parents participate in the activity
4. Parents are responsible for planning and/or conducting the activity
5. Student achievement increases for the school

Note that one, some, or all of the above may be applicable to each chart entry.





### Building Capacity for Involvement

	1	2	3	4	5
1. <b>SHALL</b> provide assistance to parents of children served by the school or local educational agency, as appropriate, in understanding such topics as the State's academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, State and local academic assessments, the requirements of this part, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children					
2. <b>SHALL</b> provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement					
3. <b>SHALL</b> educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school					
4. <b>SHALL</b> , to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parent involvement programs and activities with Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, the Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters, the Parents as Teachers Program, and public preschool and other programs, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children					
5. <b>SHALL</b> ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parent can understand					
6. <b>MAY</b> involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training					
7. <b>MAY</b> provide necessary literacy training from funds received under this part, if the local educational agency has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for such training					
8. <b>MAY</b> pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental involvement activities, including transportation and childcare costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions					
9. <b>MAY</b> train parents to enhance the involvement of other parents					
10. <b>MAY</b> arrange school meetings at a variety of times or conduct in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend such conferences at school, in order to maximize parental involvement and participation					
11. <b>MAY</b> adopt and implement model approaches to improving parental involvement					
12. <b>MAY</b> establish a district-wide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in programs supported under this section					
13. <b>MAY</b> develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities					
14. <b>SHALL</b> provide such other reasonable support for parental involvement activities under this section as parents may request					

**Possible Categories for Levels of Involvement:**

1. Activity is planned so that it aims to increase student achievement
2. Information/program/support is provided by the school
3. Parents participate in the activity

4. Parents are responsible for planning and/or conducting the activity
  5. Student achievement increases for the school
- Note that one, some, or all of the above may be applicable to each chart entry.

## Educational Acronyms

AB(nnnn)	Assembly Bill (bill number)	CSIS	California School Information Services
ABE	Adult Basic Education	CSLA	California School Library Association
ACE	Assessments in Career Education	CSR	Class-size Reduction
ACI	Academic and Career Integration	CSR	Charter School Research
ACT	American College Testing	CSRD	Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration
ADA	Average Daily Attendance		
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	CTAP	California Technology Assistance Project
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder	CTC	Commission on Teacher Credentialing
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children	CTL	Commission on Technology in Learning
API	Academic Performance Index	CUE	Computer-Using Educators, Inc.
ASP	After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program	CYA	California Youth Authority
ASR	Academic Standards and Resources	CYFS	Child, Youth and Family Services Branch
BTSA	Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment	DBF	Database format
BTTP	Bilingual Teacher Training Program	DHS	Digital High School
Cal-SAFE	California School Age Families Education	EAST	Environmental and Spatial Technology
CalServe	K-12 Service Learning Initiative	EC	Education Code
CalWORKS	California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids	EDGAR	U. S. Department of Education General Administration Regulations
CANEC	California Network of Educational Charters	EH	Emotionally Handicapped
CAROC	California Association of Regional Occupational Centers and Programs	EIEP	Emergency Immigrant Education Program
CASEMIS	California Special Education Management Information System	ELL	English Language Learner
CBEDS	California Basic Educational Data System	ELAC	English Language Advisory Committee
CBEST	California Basic Educational Skills Test	ELAP	English Language Acquisition Program
CBET	Community-Based English Tutoring	ELD	English Language Development
CBO	Community-Based Organization or Chief Business Official	ELIL	English Language and Intensive Literacy Program
CCR	Coordinated Compliance Reviews	EO	English-Only (Monolingual English)
CCSESA	California County Superintendents Educational Services Association	ESEA/IASA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
CDD	Child Development Division	ESL	English as a Second Language
CDE	California Department of Education	ESLRs	Expected Schoolwide Learning Results
CDS	County, District, School	FAN	Family Area Network
CENIC	Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California	FAQ	Frequently Asked Question
CFDA	Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance	FCMAT	Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team
CFIR	Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources	FEP	Fluent-English-Proficient
CIL	Curriculum and Instructional Leadership	FOL	Focus on Learning
CLRN	California Learning Resource Network	FSCP	Family-School-Community Partnerships
CMAS	California Multiple Award Schedule	FTE	Full-Time-Equivalent
CNC	Child Nutrition Consultant	FY	Fiscal Year
COE	County Office of Education	GATE	Gifted and Talented Education
COP	Committee of Practitioners (Title I)	GED	General Educational Development
CPA	California Partnership Academies	GSE	Golden State Exams
CPU	Central Processing Unit	HI	Hearing Impaired
CRP	Content Review Panel	HKPO	Healthy Kids Program Office
CSAC	Charter Schools Advisory Committee	HSASP	Healthy Start and After School Partnerships
CSAM	California School Accounting Manual	HSEE	High School Exit Examination
		HSI	High School Initiatives
		HTML	Hypertext Markup Language
		IEP	Individualized Education Program
		II/USP	Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program
		IMAP	Instructional Materials Advisory Panel

LC	Language Census	SRC	Software Resource Centers
LD	Learning Disabled	SSP	Specialized Secondary Programs
LEA	Local Education Agency	STAR	Standardized Testing and Reporting
LEP	Limited English Proficient	S-T-W	School-to-Work
LRDC	Learning Resource Display Centers	SY	School Year
LSP	Learning Support and Partnerships Division	TICAL	Technology Information Center for Administrative Leadership
MACRS	Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System	Title 1	Federal law, Title 1 of the Improving America's Schools Act, requires schools that receive Title 1 funds to adopt a family-school compact
MSDP	Middle Schools Demonstration Program	Title VII	Title VII for English Learners
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress	TLC	Technology Literacy Challenge
NCE	Normal Curve Equivalent	TSST	Technology Support and Staff Training
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics	UCP	Uniform Complaint Procedures
NPO	Nonprofit organization	U.S.	United States
NRT	Norm-referenced Test	VET	Volunteer E-rate Trainer
NSD	Nutrition Services Division	VI	Visually Impaired
OST	Office of School Transportation	VICA	Vocational Industrial Clubs of America
PDC	Professional Development Consortia	VSO	Vocational Student Organizations
PDF (pdf)	Portable Document Format	W3C	World Wide Web Consortium
PH	Physically Handicapped	WAI	Web Accessibility Initiative
PI	Program Improvement	WASC	Western Association of Schools and Colleges
PL	Public Law	WWW	World Wide Web
PPR	Pupil Promotion and Retention	YEP	Youth Education Partners
PSAA	Public Schools Accountability Act		
PSAT	Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test		
PTA	Parent Teacher Association		
RFA	Request for Application		
R-FEP	Redesignated Fluent-English-Proficient		
RFP	Request for Proposals		
ROCP	Regional Occupation Centers and Programs		
ROP	Regional Occupational Program		
RTF	Rich text format		
S4	Statewide System of School Support		
SABE/2	Spanish Assessment of Basic Education		
SACS	Standardized Account Code Structure		
SARC	School Accountability Report Card		
SAT	Scholastic Achievement Test		
SAT-9	Stanford Achievement Test		
SB(nnnn)	Senate Bill (bill number)		
SBCP	School-Based & CCR5 (c) Coordinated Programs		
SBE	State Board of Education		
SCO	State Controller's Office		
SCORE	Schools of California Online Resources for Education		
SEA	State Education Agency		
SETS	Statewide Education Technology Services		
SFS(D)	School Fiscal Services Division		
SHC	School Health Connections		
SHSD	Standards and High School Development Division		
SIP	School Improvement Program		
SNMP	Simple Network Management Protocol		
SPD	Specialized Programs Division		
SPI	Superintendent of Public Instruction		



# Collaborating with Community

*Community resources are used to strengthen schools,  
families, and student learning.*

Collaborations, coalitions, alliances, associations, and partnerships all can be described as an alliance of groups or individuals who band together to deal with a concern or accomplish a goal.

To serve the needs of our children effectively, parents and PTA must reach beyond the school to other organizations and agencies that serve children. Joining other collaborations or having a PTA representative participate in the meetings of other organizations can accomplish this. PTA can partner with other groups to create new collaborations, when necessary.

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## COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Many people inhabit the same section of town but rarely communicate and feel no real ties to each other. A sense of community develops when its members share a unified purpose and:

- Identify themselves by their joint efforts and with the other people engaged in those efforts.
- Acknowledge their importance to and concern for each other.
- Profess common beliefs and shared values.
- Come together to bond and network.
- Accept mutual responsibility for sustaining and enhancing the quality of interrelationships between members. (Kibel and Stein-Seroussi 1997)

These five points allow the power of partnerships to be unleashed—mutually beneficial and structured to connect individuals, not just institutions or groups. When schools and communities work together, both achieve gains that neither could accomplish alone.

Research proves that effective school, family, and community partnerships benefit the following groups:

### Students

- Gain skills and talents from enriched curricular, co-curricular and, extracurricular activities.
- Develop positive relationships with a broad spectrum of adults.
- Feel a sense of value and belonging to the community.

### Parents

- Gain an awareness of the community's contributions to the school.
- Develop a sense of interconnectedness with other families in the community.
- Learn how to access local resources to obtain needed services and/or improve their skills.

### Teachers and administrators

- Gain knowledge of and become involved in the social and community service referral process for families with specific needs.
- Develop skills for working with business partners, community volunteers, and mentors.
- Gain knowledge and use of community resources to enrich classroom instruction. (Epstein 1997)

### Community agencies, organizations, and businesses

- Gain improved access to community resources.
- Form connections with prospective employees.
- Gain a greater sense of purpose by contributing their wisdom to students. (National PTA 1998)

Administrators and PTA members can support and reinforce each other's goals, strengthening each other while also serving the larger community.

## WHAT PTAs, PRINCIPALS, AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY CAN DO TOGETHER

Working together with school administrators, PTA is a strong and multi-voiced organization that plays a leadership role in forming coalitions. Administrators and PTA members can support and reinforce each other's goals, strengthening each other while also serving the larger community. Regular conversations between the principal, community leaders, and PTA leaders, centered around their mutual concerns, can lead to a strong community alliance.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

To establish effective partnerships that serve the whole community

- Distribute information regarding cultural, recreational, academic, health, social, and other resources that serve families within the community.
- Inform school staff of the resources available in the community and how best to use those resources.
- Use community resources, materials, and presentations to enhance and enrich the school's curriculum.
- Foster student participation in community service.
- Involve community members in school volunteer programs.
- Disseminate information to the residents of the school's community, including those without school-age children, about school programs and performance.

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH BUSINESSES



According to recent statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor, 70 percent of employed parents spend more than 40 hours a week on their jobs, and employees feel that they do not have enough time to be involved with their children and families.

- Initiatives that try to influence employers to be more family-friendly include the U.S. Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, which is a national coalition of families, schools, businesses, and religious communities. (See *School Decision Making and Advocacy* section for more information.)
- PTA members and principals working together can involve business members on partnership teams and help them understand the value of parent involvement at school and its effect on student achievement. Since today's students are tomorrow's employees, employers have a vested interest in forming partnerships with parents and adopting family-friendly policies. These policies also benefit companies, because competent, happy employees are more productive.
- Employers can:
  - Implement family-friendly programs such as flex time, part-time work options, and telecommuting.
  - Offer time off for school meetings and special activities as well as on-site childcare, lunchtime seminars on parenting, and parent training programs (The Conference Board 1997; U.S. Department of Education 1997).
- PTAs and the school community also can form partnerships with businesses to provide resources to enhance the school's curriculum with computers, textbooks, field trips, and tutoring programs. Other examples of school/business partnership activities include career days, mentoring, internships, and school-to-work programs. Parents can check with the

local school district to see what school-to-work programs exist. Together parents and educators can establish guidelines for corporate involvement in schools.

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

- Partnerships between the community and the university can help students enhance their personal and professional development. These partnerships create direct links between the theoretical work in the classroom and real life. College students, in cooperation with local schools, can apply their knowledge and skills in an effort to solve some of the problems schools face, such as violence, truancy, and dropouts. (Palm and Toma 1997)
- The bridge between the university and the community is called service learning, which applies classroom theory to hands-on situations. Community service learning projects allow university, elementary, and secondary students to benefit from interaction with each other by expanding their world views and gaining new skills and interests. Some schools now make participation in community projects or service learning a graduation requirement.
- University students can function as tutors, academic and career mentors, guest speakers, and classroom aides. Some universities also collaborate with middle and high school community service programs and work together with students on projects in areas such as conservation and community outreach.
- Students who have had service learning experiences are more likely to engage in social issues and give back to the community. (Palm and Toma 1997)
- College and university alumni can act as informal advisors, mentors, or community advisory council members. Alumni who are business members can be instrumental in arranging internships and work-study programs.
- Successful long-term partnerships involve coordination, support, and supervision of community projects by both local schools and universities. Lasting relationships should be based on formal, mutually developed, and ongoing agreements that define the duties and responsibilities of everyone involved.



## SERVICE LEARNING

Like everyone else, young people are much more likely to commit to a cause or project when they have a sense of ownership. Service learning harnesses this commitment by involving students from the beginning in determining needs, identifying resources, developing strategies, and implementing plans. Too often, community service or volunteer jobs are “make work” assignments. In service learning, special care is taken to ensure that the project is valuable for everyone involved—the agency, the community, and the students. Students are involved in helping others, but *emphasis is placed on the learning that occurs through the service*. Service is often connected to classroom learning and students may receive academic credit for their participation.

- Can be used in any subject area so long as it is appropriate to the learning goal.
- Works at all ages, even among young children.

Service learning is not:

- An episodic volunteer program.
- An add-on to an existing school or college curriculum.
- Logging a set number of community service hours in order to graduate.
- Compensatory service assigned as a form of punishment by the courts or by school administrators.
- Only for high school or college students.
- One-sided, benefiting only students or only the community.

The distinctive elements of service learning are that it enhances the community through the service provided and has powerful learning outcomes for all of the participants.

Too often, community service or volunteer jobs are “make work” assignments. In service learning, special care is taken to ensure that the project is valuable for everyone involved—the agency, the community, and the students.

## What Is Service Learning?

Service Learning:

- Is a method whereby students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community.
- Is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program and with the community.
- Helps foster civic responsibility.
- Is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled.
- Provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience. (National and Community Service Trust Act of 1992)

## What Are the Characteristics of Service Learning?

According to the National Commission on Service Learning, Service Learning:

- Links to academic content and standards.
- Involves students in helping determine and meet real, defined community needs.
- Is reciprocal in nature, benefiting both the community and the service providers by combining a service experience with a learning experience.

## Service Learning Helps K-12 Students to:

- Increase motivation and desire to know.
- Develop “response-ability” and a series of outcomes and consequences.
- Improve retention of information studied.
- Connect classroom learning to the real world.
- Develop and use critical thinking abilities.
- Become more skilled as writers and speakers.
- Cultivate self-perception and self-worth.
- Develop teamwork through collaboration.
- Experience reciprocity— they both give and receive through their service.
- Replace stereotypes and displace clichés with respect for others.
- Establish working relationships with the adults in the community.
- Explore other parts of their own communities and broaden their knowledge.
- Have the opportunity to become experts.
- Gain experience and reflect upon their experience.
- Reduce likelihood of delinquent behavior.
- Improve academically.
- Learn about job opportunities, especially in public service.
- Contribute to the culture and philosophy of the school.
- Act effectively in the world.
- Identify self as a member of the community.
- Develop a lifelong commitment to public service and to learning.

PTAs can maintain and publicize a list of local committees, commissions, and boards with positions for parent representatives.

Participation in existing collaborations may provide both networking and new program opportunities for your PTA.

### Service Learning Helps Teachers to:

- Recognize students as able participants in community improvement.
- Observe a growing enthusiasm for learning.
- Provide an integrated curriculum.
- Bring classroom and community together.
- Create opportunities to collaborate with peers.
- Establish better communication and understanding with students.

- Report to their peers, faculty, parents, and/or community members.
- Write articles or letters to local newspapers regarding issues of public concern.
- Expand the project to further benefit the community.
- Create a teaching tool based on their own experience.
- Develop skits, posters or murals.

Additional information on service learning can be found at [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org). See *Resources* section.

### Four Steps to Service Learning

#### Preparation

With guidance from their teacher, students:

- Identify a need in the community.
- Draw upon previously-acquired skills and knowledge.
- Acquire new information through a variety of means and methods.
- Identify and collaborate with community partners.
- Develop a plan that encourages responsibility.
- Recognize the interrelationship of service and learning.

#### Action

Through direct service, indirect service, or civic action, students take action that:

- Has value, purpose, and meaning.
- Uses previously learned and newly-acquired academic skills and knowledge.
- Offers unique learning experiences and has real consequences.
- Is in a safe environment to learn, to make mistakes, and to succeed.

#### Reflection

During systematic reflection, the teacher or student guides the process using various methods including role playing, discussion, and journal writing. Participating students:

- Describe what happened.
- Record the difference made.
- Discuss their thoughts and feelings.
- Place their experience in larger context.
- Receive feedback.
- Identify questions.

#### Demonstration

Students demonstrate mastery of skills, articulate insights, and acknowledge the difference they have made. They may:

### PARTICIPATING IN EXISTING COLLABORATIONS

Most counties in California have organizations that address the following issues:

- Child abuse prevention
- Juvenile justice
- Alcohol and drug abuse and prevention
- Tobacco use among youth
- HIV/AIDS
- Recreation and after-school programs
- Gang and violence prevention (civic)
- Literacy
- Voter Responsibility

Every community has formal and informal groups, organizations, and agencies that serve children and youth. Many of these entities seek parent representation and often experience difficulty in finding parents who are willing to serve. PTAs can maintain and publicize a list of local committees, commissions, and boards with positions for parent representatives. Participation in existing collaborations may provide both networking and new program opportunities for your PTA.

### HOW TO TALK WITH BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Develop a list of organizations with whom the PTA wants to collaborate. These can be businesses, civic organizations, community colleges or trade schools, and professional organizations. Any organization can help further the goal of parent,

school, and community partnerships. If you have trouble thinking of organizations, look in the Yellow Pages®, contact the Chamber of Commerce office for a list, or check the local paper's calendar of events and see who's meeting.

Determine contact people for each of the groups you selected. Do your members know someone in the Chamber of Commerce? Do some of your members also participate in Kiwanis?

- When considering individuals as contacts, keep in mind that they needn't be those with the top title within an organization. In fact, sometimes the best contacts are membership chairs or program officers.
- A good community partner is one with access to an audience that is ready to pay attention to what you are saying. While the best venue depends in part on what you hope to achieve, speaking at a monthly luncheon meeting probably will be more effective than trying to get everyone's attention at a more active event, such as a senior center bingo night or the Girl Scouts awards dinner.
- The media can be both a contact for you as well as a great audience. Editors, reporters, talk show hosts, and others are influential and help shape public debate on issues. Letters to the editor are also good ways to reach a large potential audience. Nurture your relationships with members of the media by keeping them informed of your PTA's activities.

Once you've selected organizations you wish to contact, determine how their interests relate to your topic. Use "The Because" worksheet at the end of this section. This information will help you talk with them about their role in the parent/school/community partnership.

## CREATING NEW COLLABORATIONS

Often issues emerge in communities based on events like an earthquake or a crosswalk accident. PTAs often want to respond to such issues by forming new collaborations of both those affected by the situation and those involved in providing solutions.

## Preparing

See preceding section, "How to Talk to Businesses and Community Organizations." Read your local newspaper regularly to be aware of those who are active in your community. These leaders are often your allies in forming collaborations to address issues.

Once your issue has been agreed on by your PTA board and your allies identified, invite all interested parties to a meeting. During the meeting, establish what each organization may bring to the collaboration, including:

- Equipment
- Facilities
- Money to help fund a project
- Staff or volunteers
- Influence, credibility, or media contacts to support a program
- Leaders with vision with whom you can plan as a team

A good community partner is one with access to an audience that is ready to pay attention to what you are saying.

## Brainstorming

When your PTA has identified an issue or project, brainstorm the following:

- What groups might be interested in participating?
- What resources will be needed to do the job (volunteers, equipment, funding, etc.)?
- What potential partners might have those resources to share?
- How will potential partners will benefit from participating?

It also is helpful to go through your list of organizations and consider what each one might contribute to the project and how they might benefit. Then select the best potential partners. Be creative and look beyond the usual organizations.

The following are a few examples of creative community collaborations:

- The local arts association may fund Reflections Program prizes and help judge.
- The contractors' association may donate labor for a construction project.
- The senior citizens' club or faith-based groups may help develop a mentoring program.
- The public library may provide assistance with after-school activities.
- Banks may provide financial literacy programs for teens.

- Hospitals may provide training for babysitters.
- Community colleges may provide a venue for a community forum.

## Seeking Assistance

Asking for help is usually a dreaded task, because we assume that what we are asking is an imposition. Sometimes it is, but often it is an opportunity for people to respond and sometimes to offer their expertise. When an individual or organization joins the collaboration, be sure to show them that you value their participation. Cultivating and nourishing members of your team will increase the opportunities for future collaborative efforts.

## COALITIONS FOR A COMMON CAUSE

Combining forces with other concerned groups in your community will double or triple the visibility and effectiveness of any project your PTA undertakes. In a coalition, each group has the opportunity to:

- Share information and resources.
- Gain by tapping the other members' strengths.
- Develop a network of skilled, knowledgeable, and concerned peers.
- Reach a wider public with information on an issue and the coalition's viewpoint.
- Rally broader community support.
- Gain allies who can present a unified voice.
- Accomplish a goal that could not have been reached alone.



Coalitions can be beneficial, if you are interested in a community event such as a health fair, or if you are concerned about ongoing issues such as youth violence or homelessness. Working with a coalition can translate into practical advantages including sharing of meeting spaces, copier use, and volunteer and/or staff time.

## Joining a Coalition

Before your PTA considers creating a coalition as a way to tackle a community concern or issue, first check to see whether one already exists. If so, follow these steps:

1. Meet with your PTA board or appropriate committee. Discuss the specific coalition. Ask participants what they know about the coalition and its activities. Based on the information shared, decide whether to pursue joining the coalition. (If your committee decides not to join the coalition, you may want to build your own coalition. See the information in the next section.)
2. Set up an appointment to talk with the coalition spokesperson. The point of the meeting is to make sure the coalition's goals and philosophy are consistent with those of the PTA. Make sure the coalition is noncommercial, nonpartisan, and nonsectarian.
3. Call contact people whose organizations belong to the coalition. Ask them to tell you more about the coalition's work and their part in it. This will probably result in an invitation for PTA to join the coalition.
4. If time permits and you are invited, attend a coalition meeting as a potential member.
5. Take the information back to PTA leaders for their consideration. Decide together with your PTA board if your PTA should join. Present a motion to join the coalition at the next association meeting. Allow plenty of time for discussion.
6. If your PTA votes to join the coalition, be a good coalition member—be active and responsive.
7. Share what PTA can contribute.

## Starting a New Coalition

If the only people in your community addressing your concern are commercial, partisan, or sectarian, and there is a strong need for a collaborative response, start a coalition yourself. Bringing diverse groups together to work on an issue can lend credibility and depth to your effort.

1. Meet with your PTA board or appropriate committee. Discuss the benefits of building a coalition to address a specific issue in your community. Develop a list of organizations to approach to serve with you on a steering committee. Select five to seven organizations to approach. Major criteria for selection could be:
  - The organization has a stake in the issue.
  - The organization is respected in the community.
  - You have successfully worked with them in the past.
  - Their approach to addressing the issue fits in with the purpose of PTA.
 Select five to seven organizations to approach.
2. List the names, addresses and phone numbers of the presidents of the organizations you want to approach.
3. Designate two PTA leaders to meet with these potential coalition member organizations. Ask if any members of your PTA are involved in the target organizations, and if so, whether they would be willing to serve as one of the designees.
4. Send a letter requesting a meeting with each president. Tell about your PTA (don't assume they know what a PTA is or about your past activities); discuss your concern or project idea; and discuss your goals, philosophy, and ideas for activities you would like to conduct together. Tell them you'll call shortly to request an appointment to meet with them.
5. Follow through with a phone call. In the conversation, ask for an appointment to meet with them, tell them what you'd like to discuss, and get their initial reaction to your project.
6. Have each organization provide the following at this introductory meeting:
  - Publications, programs, and services the group is conducting, plans to conduct, or could conduct on the issue.
  - Their approach in addressing the issue
  - The general goals and philosophy of their organization.
  - An idea of how their organization works, who they serve, what their capabilities are, whether they are interested in joining the coalition, and how they feel they could contribute to the coalition.
  - Which groups they have worked with, and whether they would object to working with any of the groups with whom you are meeting.
7. Take the information from the meetings back to PTA leaders. Decide which groups to invite to a meeting to explore the feasibility of working together in a coalition. Send a letter inviting these organizations to send a representative to a coalition-building meeting. Let the organizations know that attendance at this meeting is not a commitment to join the coalition. Tell them that they will be asked for a formal commitment to join after the first meeting. Enclose a tentative agenda.
8. Conduct the meeting. You might follow this general agenda:
  - Introduce the leaders of your PTA and the purpose of the meeting. Distribute information on the need for the coalition. Statistics, demographics and reprints of media coverage are often helpful.
  - Ask the representative(s) of each group to introduce themselves and talk a little about themselves, their organization, and why they are at the meeting.
  - Appoint a temporary secretary.
  - Discuss the issue that prompted the PTA to investigate forming a coalition. Ask the participants to give their viewpoints on the issue, ideas they have about how to address it, and the capabilities of their organization to respond to the issue.
  - Discuss goals and objectives, tentative procedures, funding possibilities, timeline, and evaluation measures for the project. Be sure to give every member the chance to participate in the meeting. If some members are quiet, ask them directly for their ideas or opinions. Remember, effective coalitions have members who participate.
9. Report back to your committee or PTA board for their consideration. Decide together if the proposed coalition meets your needs. Take your recommendations to the appropriate voting body of your PTA. If the coalition is approved, inform your leaders and members.
10. With your PTA committee, write a letter to all coalition member organizations, reiterating the goals of the new coalition and requesting their participation. Ask what they are willing to do to accomplish the coalition's goals. Ask each organization to appoint a representative to serve on the coalition steering committee.

### Making a Coalition Work

Once each organization has decided formally to become a part of the coalition, hold a meeting. Consider these items for your agenda:

1. Elect a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary.
2. Develop a mission statement and a plan of action.
3. Assign individuals or form task forces to handle public relations, fund raising, research, and program planning.
4. Determine procedures for making decisions and conducting business. Include provisions for making decisions between meetings.
5. Schedule the next meeting or regular meeting dates and times. Establish a venue.

### **Tips for a Successful Coalition**

- Choose a name for the coalition—one that will identify your purpose and apply to present and future members.
- Make sure all members agree on their roles as members of the coalition.
- Expect cooperation.
- Divide responsibilities.
- Be certain that all members agree on the procedures developed by the group. Write up the procedures, and distribute to members.
- Develop a contact list of coalition members and their responsibilities.
- Develop a publication that explains the coalition's work. Include the mission statement and a roster of participating organizations.
- Consider creating a Web site.
- Hold a coalition press conference utilizing key organization leaders. Write a press release that explains your statement of purpose.
- Keep in touch between meetings through e-mail and phone calls, especially if meetings are infrequent.
- Take minutes at meetings. Write up and distribute promptly.
- Thank active members publicly.
- Acknowledge each coalition member's contributions in whatever form they are given, including in-kind contributions.
- Ask member organizations to publicize information about your activities and progress.

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## HANDOUTS/ARTICLES

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## Contacts Worksheet

Issue/Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Start with the organizations.

Determine who has a contact at each organization.

If no one has a personal connection, determine who will initiate contact with the organization.

Contacts	Name of Organization	Name of Organization	Name of Organization
Individual Contacts			
Events			
Publications			
Media			

## Sample Contacts Worksheet (Completed)

Issue/Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Start with the organizations.

Determine who has a contact at each organization.

If no one has a personal connection, determine who will initiate contact with the organization.

Contacts	Name of Organization Chamber of Commerce	Name of Organization Rotary	Name of Organization Bar Association
Individual Contacts	A member of the PTA, who is also a member of the Chamber.	Your next-door neighbor, who is the program chair.	An attorney, who is a PTA member
Events	Monthly membership meeting or mixer.	A regularly scheduled breakfast meeting.	Meeting of the State Policy Committee.
Publications	Chamber newsletter and Web site	Rotary magazine.	Bar Association local newsletter or state magazine.
Media	The business reporter of the local newspaper, whose son is in the same school as your child.	A local business reporter or columnist.	A local business reporter or columnist.

## "The Because" Worksheet

"The Because" is the answer to the question, "Why should this organization be concerned about parent, school, and community partnerships?" Brainstorming about the self-interests of these groups will help you determine the answer to this question. Be as specific as possible.

Issue/Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Organizations You've Selected	Self-Interests	How Interests Relate to the Issue
Business Community		
Retirees		
Law Enforcement		

## “The Because” Worksheet (Completed)

“The Because” is the answer to the question, “Why should this organization be concerned about parent, school, and community partnerships?” Brainstorming about the self-interests of these groups will help you determine the answer to this question. Be as specific as possible.

Issue/Activity: Safe Schools

Organizations You've Selected	Self-Interests	How Interests Relate to the Issue
<b>Business Community</b>	Pool of well-prepared potential employees.  A prosperous community.	Availability of this pool depends on strong, safe public schools.  Communities grow and thrive when the public schools are safe places.
<b>Retirees</b>	Stable or increasing property values.  Safe neighborhoods.	Property values are higher in communities where the public schools provide a safe learning environment.
<b>Law Enforcement</b>	Competent law enforcement, firefighters, public transportation.  Dependable healthcare.	Neighborhoods decline, and crime goes up when schools are not safe.  Today's public school students are tomorrow's public servants.

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## GENERAL RESOURCES

### COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

#### Organizations

Alliance for Children and Families ([www.alliance1.org/](http://www.alliance1.org/))

11700 West Lake Park Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53224-3099; (414) 359-1040

International membership association representing more than 350 private, nonprofit child- and family-serving organizations. Alliance members serve more than 5 million individuals annually in more than 2,000 communities, providing a vast array of services ranging from residential care to domestic abuse prevention and intervention. The Alliance's mission is to strengthen members' capacity to serve and advocate for children, families, and communities.

California Department of Education ([www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov))

1430 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 319-0791

California PARENT Center ([parent.sdsu.edu](http://parent.sdsu.edu))

6310 Alvarado Court, San Diego, CA 92120-4902; (877) 9PARENT

The Center is intended to be both a personal and a cyber educational and cultural resource network providing parental assistance, information and educational resources, networking and training activities directed to parents who are, or will be, served by the 1,055 public school districts in California. The Center is attempting to utilize technology to build linkages between home and school, between children and adults, and between schools and other agencies.

California State PTA ([www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org))

930 Georgia Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015; (213) 620-1100; Fax: (213) 620-1411

Online resources, publications, positions on legislative issues, and program ideas.

EdSource ([www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org))

4151 Middlefield Road, Suite 100, Palo Alto, CA 94303-4743; (650) 857-9604

National PTA ([www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org))

330 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60611-3690; (312) 670-6782; Fax: (312) 670-6783

Nationwide School Locator ([nces.ed.gov/globallocator/](http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/))

The locator allows one to search for schools by state or county, and covers public and private schools, colleges, and libraries.

Parent Information Resource Centers (PIRCS) [www.pirc-info.org](http://www.pirc-info.org)

San Diego Unified School District—Parent Involvement Department ([prod031.sandi.net/parent\\_inv/](http://prod031.sandi.net/parent_inv/))

Eugene Brucker Education Center, 4100 Normal Street, San Diego, CA 92103; (619) 725-5605

U.S. Department of Education ([www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov))

400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-0498; 1 (800) 872-5327

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services ([www.hhs.gov/](http://www.hhs.gov/))

200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20201; (202) 619-0257

The Department of Health and Human Services is the United States government's principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves.

#### Publications

**California Department of Education, Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit**

P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95812-0271; (916) 445-1260

*Publications Catalog: Educational Resources.* Free. Lists many publications available from the department.

**California State PTA** ([www.capta.org/Resources](http://www.capta.org/Resources))

930 Georgia Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015; (213) 620-1100; Fax: (213) 620-1411

Online resources and publications including *The Communicator* (reproducible articles), and the Toolkit, a comprehensive guide to help build your PTA, develop leadership, increase membership, improve advocacy, simplify finances, and create successful programs.

**EdSource** ([www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org))

4151 Middlefield Road, Suite 100, Palo Alto, CA 94303-4743; (650) 857-9604

Nonprofit organization which develops and widely distributes trustworthy information that clarifies complex K-12 school policy and improvement issues.

**ETN Parent Education Series**

Available from some PTA district offices and the California State PTA Office, P.O. Box 15015, Los Angeles, CA 90015; (213) 620-1100; Fax: (213) 620-1411

Developed by the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Educational Telecommunication Network, with support from the California State PTA. Each of the videos in this series includes a discussion guide and handouts. The series is repeated in Spanish.

**National PTA** ([www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org))

330 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60611-3690; (312) 670-6782; Fax: (312) 670-6783

*National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs*, 1997. Parent involvement has been shown to be linked to student success. The standards were created to be used in conjunction with other standards and reform initiatives in support of children's learning and success. Information about this and other National PTA materials is available on the Web site.

**Office of Educational Research and Improvement**, U.S. Department of Education, ([www.ed.gov/pubs](http://www.ed.gov/pubs))

1 (800) USA-LEARN

The Department of Education has several publications to assist parents, including its *Helping Your Child* series (*Helping Your Child Learn Math*, *Helping Your Child Learn to Read*, *Helping Your Child with Homework*, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, and others).

**Educators' Organizations****American Federation of Teachers** ([www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org))

555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001; (202) 879-4400

The mission of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, is to improve the lives of members and their families; to give voice to their legitimate professional, economic, and social aspirations; to strengthen the institutions in which we work; to improve the quality of the services we provide; to bring together all members to assist and support one another; and to promote democracy, human rights, and freedom in our union, in our nation, and throughout the world.

**Association of American Educators** ([www.aateachers.org](http://www.aateachers.org))

25201 Paseo de Alicia, Suite 104, Laguna Hills, CA 92653; (949) 595-7979

The stated purpose is to encourage and empower teachers who embrace similar views on education in America—especially those who subscribe to the idea that education should aim to improve a young person's character as well as his or her intellect.

**Association of California School Administrators** ([www.acsa.org/](http://www.acsa.org/))

1517 L Street, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 444-3216; Fax: (916) 444-3739

Involvement in the Association of California School Administrators demonstrates commitment to professional growth and improvement in public education. ACSA is committed to meeting members' needs with high quality member services and benefits.

**California County Superintendents Educational Services Association** (CCSESA) ([www.ccsesa.org/](http://www.ccsesa.org/))

1121 L Street, Suite 510, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 446-3095

(CCSESA) is comprised of the county superintendents of each of the 58 counties in California and their associated county offices. The county superintendent in California serves as an intermediary between the state and local



school districts within each county. County superintendents and their offices help with implementation of programs, provide fiscal oversight, monitor teacher credentialing, supply curriculum support and training, and help in other areas of interest to local districts.

California Federation of Teachers (CFT) ([www.cft.org](http://www.cft.org))

One Kaiser Plaza, Suite 1440, Oakland, CA 94612; (510) 832-8812; Fax: (510) 832-5044  
CFT takes positions on proposed legislation and other issues affecting teachers

California School Board Association ([www.csba.org/](http://www.csba.org/))

3100 Beacon Blvd., West Sacramento, CA 95691; (800) 266-3382; Fax: (916) 371-3407  
CSBA is a member-driven association that supports the governance team—school board members, superintendents, and senior administrative staff—in its complex leadership role. We develop, communicate, and advocate the perspective of California school districts and county offices of education.

California Teachers Association ([www.cta.org/](http://www.cta.org/))

1705 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010; (650) 697-1400  
The California Teachers Association's online home. Here, one can learn about the organization that represents and serves more than 330,000 members consisting of teachers and other education employees in the state's more than 1,000 school districts.

National Association of School Psychologists ([www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org))

4340 East West Highway, Suite 402, Bethesda, MD 20814; (301) 657-0270; Fax: (301) 657-0275;

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) ([www.naesp.org/](http://www.naesp.org/))

1615 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA; 22314; 1 (800) 386-2377  
The mission of NAESP is to lead in the advocacy and support for elementary and middle level principals and other education leaders in their commitment to all children. In carrying out that mission, we are mindful of two particularly striking findings of research: First, that children's early years in school are the most crucial to their future, not only in the classroom but, indeed, in life, and second, that the key figure in assuring a top-quality school is the principal.

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) ([www.nassp.org/](http://www.nassp.org/))

1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA; 20191-1537; (703) 860-0200  
Our mission is to promote excellence in school leadership. To this end, we provide our members with a wide variety of programs and services to assist them in administration, supervision, curriculum planning, and effective staff development.

National Education Association (NEA) ([www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org))

National School Boards Association ([www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org))

1680 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314  
Fosters excellence and equity in public elementary and secondary education through school board leadership. Supports school boards working in their communities.

Small School Districts' Association (SSDA) ([www.ssda.org](http://www.ssda.org))

1130 K Street, Suite 260, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 444-9335; Fax: (916) 441-4851  
SSDA is an advocacy and support organization for small school districts in California.

## State Legal Mandates for Parent Involvement

**California State Board of Education Policy on Parent Involvement, [www.ced.ca.gov](http://www.ced.ca.gov)**

In its 1994 policy on parent involvement, the California State Board of Education stated its commitment to assist school districts in developing comprehensive parent involvement programs designed to:

- Help parents develop parenting skills to meet the basic obligations of family life and foster conditions at home that emphasize the importance of education and learning;
- Promote two-way communication about school programs and students' progress;

- Involve parents, with appropriate training, in instructional and support roles at the school and in other locations that help the school and students reach stated goals, objectives, and standards;
- Provide parents with strategies and techniques for assisting their children with learning activities at home that support and extend the school's instructional program;
- Prepare parents to participate actively in school decision making and develop their leadership skills in governance and advocacy;
- Provide parents with skills to access community and support services that strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

### **The Family-School Partnership Act**

The Family-School Partnership Act is a California law that allows parents, grandparents, and guardians to take time off from work to participate in their children's school or childcare activities from childcare through twelfth grade. The law took effect in 1995 and was expanded in 1997.

For more information on the above legislation, visit [www.cde.ca.gov/fc/family/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/fc/family/) and click on Parents' Rights (Parent Involvement Policy) or Partnership Act (Family-School Partnership Act).

## **Federal Legal Mandates for Parent Involvement**

### **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Section 1118 Parent Involvement**

#### **Parent Involvement—School District**

- The school district's Local Improvement Plan must include a written parent involvement policy.
- School districts receiving \$500,000 or more of Title I funds must reserve at least 1% for parent involvement and must involve parents in deciding how these funds will be used.

#### **School/Parent Compact**

This document outlines how parents, staff, and students share responsibilities for achievement and includes:

- School's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction to standards;
- Parents' responsibility to support learning;
- Annual parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools;
- Frequent progress reports to parents;
- Reasonable parental access to staff and programs.

The United States Department of Education's *Compact for Reading* focuses K-3 schools on reading and meets the Title I requirements for a compact.\*

\*United State Department of Education. (1999). *A Compact for Reading Guide*. Nashville, TN: Little Planet Learning 1-800-388-1185

State and Federal Legal Mandates excerpted from Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center brochure *Family Involvement in Education—Resources for Families and Communities*.

For more information about Parent Rights and Responsibilities, refer to the California Education Code at [www.cde.ca.gov/iasa/partners.html](http://www.cde.ca.gov/iasa/partners.html)

## **COMMUNICATING**

### **Organizations**

Early Childhood Educator ([www.edpsych.com/Paldea1.htm](http://www.edpsych.com/Paldea1.htm))

Whether as a parent or teacher, you know the importance of communicating with children. Communication is the basic means of teaching and guiding. Without effective adult/child communication, children cannot learn, and you know that it takes more than a little effort and patience; it takes skill. When it comes to talking with children, there are four basic steps you can follow to improve your communication skills and encourage theirs too.

National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM) ([www.nafcm.org/](http://www.nafcm.org/))

1527 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1206; (202) 667-9700

The purpose of the National Association for Community Mediation is to support the maintenance and growth of community-based mediation programs and processes; to present a compelling voice in appropriate policy making, legislative, professional, and other arenas; and to encourage the development and sharing of resources for these efforts.

### **Publications**

*The Comer Model* by James Comer, Founder of the School Development Program, Yale University Child Study Center, 230 South Frontage Road, P.O. Box 207900, New Haven, CT 06520-7900; (203) 785-2548

Developed by Dr. Comer, this model program involves parents in a “school management team” where parents play an important role in both school and the parent education program, which has been central to the turnaround of schools where this model has been applied.

*Communicating With Children* by Dr. Claire Albright

([onlineorganizing.com/Organizer\\_Article\\_Communicating\\_With\\_Children.htm](http://onlineorganizing.com/Organizer_Article_Communicating_With_Children.htm))

Most people have more training before they receive their driver's license than before they become a parent. Educating yourself on how to communicate effectively with your child can be the key to achieving your parenting goals.

*Communicating With Children* by Patricia O'Leary

([www.parent.net/article/archive/commun.shtml](http://www.parent.net/article/archive/commun.shtml))

Communicating effectively with children is dependent upon learning to be a good listener. Although parents hear children talking every day and carry on conversations with them, good communication is not always taking place.

*Family School Compacts*, 1997. California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95812-0271;

(916) 445-1260; [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)

Contains information for schools interested in using family-school compacts as a means of encouraging a closer working partnership between schools and families.

*Home and School Institute*, 1201 26th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036; (202) 466-3633; [www.megaskills.org](http://www.megaskills.org)

Has many publications available for parents; also has projects and conducts research dealing with home-school partnerships.

## **VOLUNTEERING**

### **Organizations**

Corporation for National and Community Service ([www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org))

1201 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20525; (202) 606-5000

The Corporation for National and Community Service engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to help strengthen communities.

Parents' Rights, California Dept. of Education ([www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov))

In a democracy, parents and guardians are encouraged and welcomed to become involved in the formal education of their children enrolled in public schools. This early and consistent parental involvement helps children to do well academically. When this involvement is combined with a partnership between home and school, the student, the school, and the community benefit.

## **HELPING TEACHERS WORK WITH PARENTS**

### **Publications**

*Survival Guide for New Teachers—Working with Parents* ([www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov))

## INCREASING FATHERS' INVOLVEMENT

### Publications

*Calling All Dads: Getting More Men Involved in Their Children's Education* ([www.thefamilyworks.org](http://www.thefamilyworks.org))

*Challenging Ideas for Action-Oriented Dads* ([www.childfun.com](http://www.childfun.com))

*Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's School, National Study Links Fathers' Involvement to Children Getting A's in School* ([www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov))

*Get Involved in Education* ([www.fathers.com](http://www.fathers.com))

## PARENTING

### GENERAL PARENTING RESOURCES

#### Organizations

Center for the Improvement of Child Caring ([www.ciccparenting.org/](http://www.ciccparenting.org/))

When children are parented effectively, they feel better about themselves and their abilities. They enter school excited and ready to learn, and they are more likely both to achieve to their fullest potential at school and to make positive contributions to community life.

Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) ([www.eric.ed.gov/sites/barak.html](http://www.eric.ed.gov/sites/barak.html))

Internet-based service providing education information to teachers, librarians, counselors, administrators, parents, and anyone interested in education in the United States. Sixteen subject-specific clearinghouses and adjunct clearinghouses provide information on everything from adult education to urban education, childcare to international civic education. Includes AskERIC ([www.askERIC.org](http://www.askERIC.org)), a site at which you can ask a specific question and receive an answer via e-mail ([www.accesseric.org:81/resources/parent/involved.html](http://www.accesseric.org:81/resources/parent/involved.html)).

From this site, find out the answer to the question "How can I be involved in my child's education?" ([www.accesseric.org/resources/parent/parent.html](http://www.accesseric.org/resources/parent/parent.html))

Can we prevent violence in our schools? Can we strengthen children's self-esteem? Can I teach my young child about the environment? Find the answers to these questions and more through ERIC's Parent Brochures.

Education World ([db.education-world.com/perl/browse?cat\\_id=429](http://db.education-world.com/perl/browse?cat_id=429))

Good parent's resources in children's health, educational television programs, early childhood education, home schooling, and family fun.

Learning Network ([www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com))  
(formerly Family Education Network)

Articles, expert advice, and discussions on parenting and education. The site makes it quick and easy to find what you need by grouping information according to the child's age. The site covers a broad range of issues, including learning disabilities, technology in the classroom, and college planning.

National PTA ([www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org))

National Parent Information Network ([npin.org/library/texts.html](http://npin.org/library/texts.html))

The NPIN Virtual Library is a good source for information on parenting issues.

Parenting Resources for the 21st Century ([www.parentingresources.ncjrs.org](http://www.parentingresources.ncjrs.org))

Child development, childcare and education, family concerns, health and safety, out-of-school activities.

Search Institute ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org))

700 South Third Street, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415; (800) 888-7828

Information on the 40 developmental assets that are positive experiences, relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities young people need.

U.S. Dept. of Education ([www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/))

An extensive site of free government publications for parents, including everything from early childhood education to reading improvement to financial aid for college.

U.S. Dept. of Education ([www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/learnact.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/learnact.html))

Learning activities for your child.

The WonderWise Parent ([www.ksu.edu/wwparent/](http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent/)); (785) 532-5773

Charles A. Smith, Ph.D., Professor and Parent Educator, Kansas State University, 343 Justin Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-1411; [casmith@ksu.edu](mailto:casmith@ksu.edu)

An informative, ad-banner-free site on parenting and parent-child relationships. Designed for parents, grandparents, foster parents, stepparents, caregivers, teachers, and parent educators.

### **Publications**

*Basic Parenting* ([www.ksu.edu/wwparent/programs/basic/index.htm](http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent/programs/basic/index.htm))

*Helping Parents Help Their Kids*. On part of the National Public Relations Association Parent Education Project. Several publications available in English and Spanish.

## **At-Risk Youth**

### **Organizations**

San Diego CHOICE Program ([www.foundation.sdsu.edu/choice/index.html](http://www.foundation.sdsu.edu/choice/index.html))

4283 El Cajon Blvd., Suite 115, San Diego, CA 92105-1254; (619) 594-2525

Provides a comprehensive array of services to at-risk youth that are designed to stabilize behavior, increase independence and self-sufficiency, and prevent out-of-home placements. These services are accomplished through intensive, community-based, family-centered interventions that foster positive growth and empower the youth and their family.

## **Basic Life Skills**

### **Publications**

*In Any Language: Parents Are Teachers*. Home and School Institute, Rockville, MD, The Publishing Group.

A planned program for children in grades 4 through 6 that gives practice in daily life activities such as following directions, finding resources, and handling money. Available in Spanish. Other similar books of interest to parents are available.

*Megaskills*. Dorothy Rich. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1988. 350 pages. A collection of home activities for children ages 4 through 12. (Note that many of the activities are adaptable for younger or older children.)

Activities teach “life skills” such as confidence, motivation, perseverance, teamwork, and problem solving—skills children need to be successful in school and in life.

## **Childcare**

### **Publications**

*Day Care: Choosing a Good Center* ([familydoctor.org/handouts/030.html](http://familydoctor.org/handouts/030.html))

What to look for in a day care center. Available in English and Spanish.

*The Daily Parent* ([www.childcareaware.org/en/dailyparent](http://www.childcareaware.org/en/dailyparent))

Online newsletter offering information on child development issues, tips for finding quality childcare, and numerous resources for busy parents.

*What Is Family Child Care?* ([familychildcaresf.org/](http://familychildcaresf.org/))

Family child care providers are independent, self-employed business people who have assumed one of society's most important responsibilities, that of caring for our youngest children.

## Child Development

### Organizations

California Department of Education, Child Development Division

([www.cde.ca.gov/cyfsbranch/child\\_development/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/cyfsbranch/child_development/))

1430 N Street, Suite 6308, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 322-6233

Developmental Studies Center Child Development Project ([www.devstu.org](http://www.devstu.org))

2000 Embarcadero, Suite 305, Oakland CA 94606; (510) 533-0213; Fax: (510) 464-3670

Educational Testing Services Network ([www.ets.org/sppar](http://www.ets.org/sppar))

ETS gives you information on "Starting Points for Parents," succeeding in elementary and secondary school, and school transitions.

### Publications

*Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development*, Rima Shore, 1997, Families and Work Institute, 330 Seventh Ave., New York, New York 10001; (212) 465-2044; [www.familiesandwork.org](http://www.familiesandwork.org)

## Computers and the Internet

### Publications

*The Parents' Guide to the Information Superhighway*, 1996. Wendy Lazarus and Laurie Lipper, The Children's Partnership, 1460 4th Street, Suite 306, Santa Monica, CA 90401; National PTA; and The National Urban League. Explores issues relating to children's use of the Internet and provides information and parenting tips.

*Parent's Guide to the Internet*, U.S. Dept. of Education ([www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/internet](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/internet))

*Parents, Kids, and Computers*. A book that answers questions such as: What can kids do with a computer besides play arcade games? What are the best ways for children to work at the computer? How can I select the best computer programs? How are computers being used in schools? \$18.95 each. Add CA sales tax and \$5.00 shipping cost. Payable to Regents, University of California.

### Publications

*Back in Control: How to Get Your Children to Behave*, by Gregory Bodenhamer

*I'll Be the Parent, You Be the Child: Encourage Excellence, Set Limits and Lighten Up*, by Paul Kropp ([members.rogers.com/paul-kropp/parents/html](http://members.rogers.com/paul-kropp/parents/html))

*Parenting With Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility*, by Foster W. Cline and Jim Fay

*Parents in Charge: Setting Healthy, Loving Boundaries for You and Your Child*, by Dana Chidekel, Ph.D.

*Sleeping, Eating, and Getting Up: How to Stop the Daily Battles With Your Child*, by Carolyn Crowder

## Early Childhood Services

### Organizations

First Five California Children and Families Commission ([www.cffc.ca.gov/](http://www.cffc.ca.gov/))

501 J Street, Suite 530, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 323-0056

The First Five California Children and Families Act of 1998 (also known as Prop. 10) is designed to provide, on a community-by-community basis, all children prenatal to five years of age with a comprehensive, integrated system of early childhood development services. Through the integration of health care, quality childcare, parent education, and effective intervention programs for families at risk, children and their parents and caregivers will be provided with the tools necessary to foster secure, healthy, and loving attachments. These attachments will lay the emotional, physical, and intellectual foundation for every child to enter school ready to learn and develop the potential to become productive, well-adjusted members of society.

## Enrichment

### Organizations

Parents' Music Resource Center, 1500 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22209

## Entertainment

### Organizations

Kids in Mind ([www.kids-in-mind.com](http://www.kids-in-mind.com))

Parents can preview movie clips and read informed reviews about the violent content of films. Kids-in-Mind reviews are objective, non-critical assessments of the potentially objectionable material contained in movies. Reviews written for parents.

Screen It! ([www.screenit.com/](http://www.screenit.com/))

Created to give parents a way to access the content of popular entertainment to which their kids are exposed. It is designed to allow Hollywood and Record Labels to continue to produce movies, videos, and music while informing parents of their content.

## Family Literacy

### Organizations

Even Start ([www.evenstart.org/](http://www.evenstart.org/))

The purpose of the Even Start Family Literacy Program is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities for families. This is accomplished by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy and adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified literacy program. Even Start is implemented nationally through cooperative projects that build on existing community resources, creating a new range of services for children, families, and adults.

National Center for Family Literacy ([www.famlit.org/](http://www.famlit.org/))

325 West Main Street, Suite 300, Louisville, KY 40202-4237; (502) 584-1133

NCFL is recognized internationally as the leader in the field of family literacy, an innovative approach to meeting the educational needs of both children and their parents. By providing training for educators, researching effective practices, and raising public awareness, NCFL works to expand the learning opportunities for all families nationwide.

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) ([www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov))

1775 I Street, NW; Suite 730, Washington, DC 20006-2401; (202) 233-2025

NIFL serves as a focal point for public and private activities that support the development of high-quality regional, state, and national literacy services. NIFL's goal is to ensure that all Americans with literacy needs have access to services that can help them gain the basic skills necessary for success in the workplace, family, and community in the 21st century.

### Publications

*A Parent's Guide: How to Raise a Money Smart Child*, 1998. Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Family Literacy, 919 Eighteenth Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20006; [www.jumpstartcoalition.org](http://www.jumpstartcoalition.org)

## Health Education

### Organizations

California Healthy Kids ([www.cde.ca.gov/healthykids/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/healthykids/))

Provides an expansive array of materials and services in an effort to keep California's children healthy.

I AM YOUR CHILD ([www.iamyourchild.org](http://www.iamyourchild.org))

National public awareness and engagement campaign created by the Reiner Foundation to help people understand the importance of new brain research and its implications for our children's lifelong healthy development.

Kid's Health ([www.kidshealth.org/parent/general/index.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/general/index.html))

After high school biology, you probably thought you'd never need another anatomy lesson again, but then you had kids, and suddenly you realize how helpful it is to know more about the systems of the body—especially what happens when they don't work properly. For a quick refresher course, check out the Body Basics articles in Kid's Health General Health section.

National Center for Health Education ([www.nche.org](http://www.nche.org))

72 Spring Street, Suite 208, New York, NY 10012-4019; (212) 334-9470

National SAFE KIDS Campaign ([www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org))

1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20004; (202) 662-0600; Fax: (202) 393-2072  
Information on protecting children from unintentional injuries.

### **Publications**

*Medline Plus*, health information from the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health. ([www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/))  
Comprehensive list of online articles regarding many health issues.

## **Infant and Toddler Development**

### **Publications**

*Building Your Baby's Brain—A Parent's Guide to the First Five Years*, U.S. Department of Education ([www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov))

## **Parent Centers and Home-School Partnerships**

### **Organizations**

Home and School Institute ([www.megaskills.org](http://www.megaskills.org))

1201 26th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036; (202) 466-3633.

Many publications available for parents; also has projects and conducts research dealing with home-school partnerships.

Parental Assistance Coordination Center (PACC) ([www.pacc-pirc.net/](http://www.pacc-pirc.net/))

8601 Georgia Avenue, Suite 601, Silver Spring, MD 20910; (888) 385-7222

Developed by McFarland & Associates, Inc., under the direction of the United States Department of Education to provide technical assistance to the Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) around the nation.

## **Parenting Teens**

### **Publications**

*Parenting the Teenager*, by Carl E. Pickhardt, Ph.D.; (512) 452-4542, Capital Printing Co., Inc., 1983, [www.carlpickhardt.com](http://www.carlpickhardt.com)

Also by Pickhardt: *Keys to Developing Your Child's Self-Esteem*, Barron's, 2000; *Keys to Raising a Drug-Free Child*, Barron's, 1999; and *The Everything Parent's Guide to Positive Discipline*, Adams Media, 2003.

*Parenting Your Out-of-Control Teenager: 7 Steps to Re-establish Authority and Reclaim Love*, by Scott Sells

## **Parenting "Tweens"**

### **Publications**

*Choices and Changes*. Girls Club of Santa Barbara, P.O. Box 236, Santa Barbara, CA 93102

An excellent parent-child discussion program that can be facilitated through PTA efforts. Though originally set up as a mother-daughter, father-son program, the format now has been adjusted to accommodate all groups.

*Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools*, California Department of Education, 1987, pp 144-148. Describes the intellectual, physical, psychological, social, and moral/ethical development of middle grade students.



*Early Adolescence: Understanding the 10-to 15-year-old*, by Gail Caissy, Ed.D., Insight Books

*The Middle School Years: A Parent's Handbook*. Nancy Beria, Anne T. Henderson, and William Kerewsky. National Committee for Citizens in Education, 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MD 21044. 90 pages. Suggests ways parents can help improve the achievement of their middle-school-age children. Focuses on "normal" behavior and development of children 10 to 14 years old, and suggests ways parents can understand and assist them better.

*Yes! Your Teen is Crazy* by Michael Bradley, Ph.D. Harbor Press [www.docmikebradley.com](http://www.docmikebradley.com)

## Parenting Young Children

### Organizations

National Association for the Education of Young Children ([www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org))

1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20009

A source of numerous excellent materials and publications, many of which are adaptable for older children.

First Five California Children and Families Commission. Designed to provide all children prenatal to five years with a comprehensive, integrated system of early childhood development services. [www.ccfc.ca.gov](http://www.ccfc.ca.gov)

## Self-Esteem and Character Development

### Publications

*Children and Anxiety* and other handouts (1990). Edited by Alex Thomas, National Association of School Psychologists.

*The Confident Child*, by Terri Apter, W.W. Norton

*Emotional Intelligence*, by Daniel Goleman, Bantam  
The groundbreaking book that redefines what it means to be smart.

*The Heart of Parenting: Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*, by John Gottman, Ph.D., Simon & Schuster

*How to Raise a Child With a High EQ: A Parents' Guide to Emotional Intelligence*, by Lawrence Shapiro, HarperCollins

*How to Raise Emotionally Healthy Children: Meeting the Five Critical Needs of Children...And Parents Too!* by Gerald Newmark

*Mirrors: A Video on Self-Esteem*. Modern Talking Picture Service, 5000 Park Street N., St. Petersburg, FL 33709-0989  
Produced by the National PTA and Keebler Company, this award-winning video shows parents how every day, even in small ways, they may directly influence their children's self-image, both negatively and positively. Available for free loan to organizations; may also be purchased.

*The Moral Intelligence of Children: How to Raise a Moral Child*, by Robert Coles, Random House

*Raising a Thoughtful Teenager*, by Ben Kamin, Dutton

*Right from Wrong: Instilling a Sense of Integrity in Your Child*, by Michael Riera and Joseph DiPrisco.

*The Successful Child: What Parents Can Do to Help Their Kids Turn Out Well*, by William Sears

*Teaching Young Children to Resist Bias: What Parents Can Do*. Louise Derman-Sparks, Maria Gutierrez, and Carol B. Phillips. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20009. Price: 50 cents each, or 100 copies for \$10.00

This pamphlet, with explanation, contains examples of appropriate and inappropriate responses to children's questions.

*Toward a State of Self-Esteem*. California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. Order from the Bureau of Publications, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271.

## Substance Abuse Prevention

### Organizations

Council on Prevention & Education: Substances, Inc. (COPES) ([www.copes.org](http://www.copes.org))  
845 Barret Avenue, Louisville, KY 40204; (502) 583-6820; Fax: (502) 583-6832

National PTA ([www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org))

“COMMON SENSE—Strategies for Raising Alcohol- and Drug-Free Children”

The National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (NIPC) ([www.inhalants.org](http://www.inhalants.org))

Promotes awareness of the dangers of inhalant abuse and helps parents identify whether their child is at risk.

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America (PDFA) ([www.drugfreeamerica.org](http://www.drugfreeamerica.org))

A private non-profit, non-partisan coalition of professionals from the communications industry whose mission is to reduce demand for illicit drugs in America through media communication.

The following additional resources will help teachers and parents who want reliable information about alcohol and other drugs, including how to talk to kids about the dangers of illegal drug use, and information on drugs currently used by teens:

[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)

[projectknow.org](http://projectknow.org)

[www.samhsa.gov/CSAP](http://www.samhsa.gov/CSAP)

[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

[www.parentingisprevention.org](http://www.parentingisprevention.org)

### Publications

*Alcohol and Children*, National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc. Available online  
([www.ncfh.org/pateduc/en-alcohol.htm](http://www.ncfh.org/pateduc/en-alcohol.htm))

*Kids Act to Control Tobacco!*, National Education Association ([www.nea.org/programs/substance/kidsact.htm](http://www.nea.org/programs/substance/kidsact.htm))

1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036

School-based tobacco control advocacy program for middle school students.

## Violence Prevention

### Organizations

California Department of Education, Safe Schools & Violence Prevention ([www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/safety/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/safety/))  
660 J Street, Suite 400, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 323-2183

Connect for Kids ([www.connectforkids.org](http://www.connectforkids.org))

“Guidance for Grown-Ups”

Valuable information and contacts for dealing with situations such as violence in schools.

Talking with Your Kids ([www.talkingwithkids.org](http://www.talkingwithkids.org))

Parent tips and strategies for dealing with violence.

## STUDENT LEARNING

### ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

#### Organizations

California School Leadership Academy ([www.csla.org](http://www.csla.org))

Recognized statewide and nationally for expertise in the development, delivery, and impact of quality professional development for administrators and teacher leaders.

Core Knowledge Foundation ([www.coreknowledge.org/](http://www.coreknowledge.org/))

801 East High Street, Charlottesville, VA 22902; (434) 977-7550

Dedicated to excellence and fairness in early education, the Foundation conducts research on curricula, develops books and other materials for parents and teachers, offers workshops for teachers, and serves as the hub of a growing network of Core Knowledge schools.

The Education Trust ([www.edtrust.org](http://www.edtrust.org))

1725 K St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 293-1217

The Education Trust advances its mission along several fronts, from raising its voice in national and state policy debates to helping teachers improve instruction in their classrooms. The focus is on improving the education of all students and particularly those students whom the system traditionally has left behind.

GreatSchools.net ([www.greatschools.net/](http://www.greatschools.net/))

965 Mission Street, Suite 500, San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 977-0700 ext. 125

Nonprofit online guide to K-12 schools, the first Web site to bring an “Amazon.com” level of consumer friendliness to parents who are looking for school information.

Head Start ([www.nhsa.org/](http://www.nhsa.org/))

1651 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 739-0875

The National Head Start Association (NHSA) is a private not-for profit membership organization representing more than 952,000 children, upwards of 180,000 staff, and more than 2,400 Head Start programs in America. NHSA provides a national forum for the continued enhancement of Head Start services for poor children ages 0 through 5 and their families.

Just For The Kids ([www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org))

4030-2 West Braker Lane, Austin, TX 78759; (800) 762-4645

Just for the Kids identifies high-performing schools and investigates what they are doing to reach academic excellence. These schools then are compared to other schools serving similar student populations but with average performance. We conduct these studies and publish this information to provide a road map for improvement efforts across the nation.

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) ([www.nctm.org/corners/family/index.htm](http://www.nctm.org/corners/family/index.htm))

Dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of mathematics, NCTM is a recognized leader in efforts to ensure an excellent mathematics education for all students and an opportunity for every mathematics teacher to grow professionally.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) ([www.ncrel.org/](http://www.ncrel.org/))

1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200, Naperville, Illinois 60563; (800) 356-2735

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping schools—and the students they serve—reach their full potential. We specialize in the educational applications of technology.

Teach For America ([www.teachforamerica.org/](http://www.teachforamerica.org/))

315 West 36th Street, New York, NY 10018; (800) 832-1230

National corps of outstanding recent college graduates of all academic majors who commit two years to teach in urban and rural public schools and become lifelong leaders in the effort to expand opportunities for children.

U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement ([www.ed.gov/pubs/parents](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents))

## College Prep—Preschool to High School

OrganizationsCollege Express ([www.collegexpress.com/parentscorner/default.asp](http://www.collegexpress.com/parentscorner/default.asp))

Financial aid information at the “Parent’s Corner,” College Aid Calculator and a link to FAFSA Express (link to the federal financial aid forms).

College Parents of America ([www.collegeparents.org](http://www.collegeparents.org))

Good resource for parents of current or recent high school students. Sections on “money talks,” budgets, financial aid, credit, and current issues.

Education World ([db.education-world.com/perl/browse?cat\\_id=429](http://db.education-world.com/perl/browse?cat_id=429))

Information on college education.

Finaid! ([www.finaid.org/parents](http://www.finaid.org/parents))

Step-by-step instructions and financial aid links for parents of future college students.

U.S. Dept. of Education ([www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/finaid](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/finaid))

Information about financial aid.

“Families Guide to the 1997 Tax Cuts for Education” ([www.ed.gov/updates/97918tax](http://www.ed.gov/updates/97918tax))

From the U.S. Office of Post-secondary Education.

### **Publications**

*A Guide for Parents: Ten Steps to Prepare Your Child for College*, from College is Possible

([www.collegeispossible.org/preparing/ten\\_steps](http://www.collegeispossible.org/preparing/ten_steps))

Tips for parents of pre-school through high school students.

*How Can I Help My Gifted Child Plan for College?* Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC)

([www.accesseric.org:81/resources/parent/giftcoll](http://www.accesseric.org:81/resources/parent/giftcoll))

*Handbook for Parents of Students in Middle and Junior High School Years*, U.S. Dept. of Education

([www.ed.gov/pubs/GettingReadyCollegeEarly/](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/GettingReadyCollegeEarly/))

*Preparing Your Child for College*, U.S. Dept. of Education ([www.ed.gov/pubs/Prepare](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Prepare))

*Tips from the Financial Aid Trenches*, Petersons ([www.petersons.com/resources/trenches](http://www.petersons.com/resources/trenches))

## **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

### **Publications**

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act—FERPA ([www.ed.gov/offices/OM/fpco/ferpa1.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OM/fpco/ferpa1.html))

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are “eligible students.”

## **Family Literacy**

### **Organizations**

America Reads ([www.ed.gov/americanreads/families](http://www.ed.gov/americanreads/families))

What can families do to help with reading success? ([www.ed.gov/Family/RWN/Activ97/early](http://www.ed.gov/Family/RWN/Activ97/early)) Also lists activities that help children (birth—preschool) get oriented to sounds and reading.

American Library Association ([www.ala.org/](http://www.ala.org/))

50 E. Huron, Chicago, IL 60611, toll free telephone (800) 545-2433

Children's Research Center ([www.ericcece.org](http://www.ericcece.org))

51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820

National Center for Family Literacy ([www.familit.org/index.html](http://www.familit.org/index.html))  
325 West Main Street, Suite 200, Louisville, KY 40202-4251

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. ([www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org))  
1825 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20009

## Homework Helpers

### Online Resources

Ask Dr. Math ([mathforum.com/dr.math](http://mathforum.com/dr.math))

Search for the answers to your questions or ask for help at “send it to Dr. Math” (grades K-college).

Brainmania ([brainmania.com/](http://brainmania.com/))

If you're really stumped, you can “ask a brain” and check your work (grades 1-college).

Bruce J. Pinchbeck Jr. ([school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/bjpinchbeck](http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/bjpinchbeck))  
Links to 600 Web sites and the ability to ask a specific question online (grades 6-8).

EduResources ([www.startribune.com/stonline/html/special/homework/](http://www.startribune.com/stonline/html/special/homework/))  
Study skills, elementary school topics, and games.

Homework Central/Big Chalk—The Education Network  
([www.bigchalk.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/WOPortal.woa/1/wa/BCPageDA/pg-Parents](http://www.bigchalk.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/WOPortal.woa/1/wa/BCPageDA/pg-Parents))  
Weekly topics, supplementary curriculum, assessment and standards, and much more.

Homework Hotline Online ([www.wvptv.wvnet.edu/homework](http://www.wvptv.wvnet.edu/homework))  
Includes world languages and reference sections (with dictionaries and maps).

Infoplease (Homework Center) ([www.infoplease.com/homework/](http://www.infoplease.com/homework/))  
Search for a subject, get information on study skills and writing skills, or ask a question. It also has topics such as “World,” “Biography,” and “Society & Culture.”

Internet Public Library ([ipl.org/](http://ipl.org/))  
Teen and youth sections, newspapers, magazines, online texts, references, and exhibits (grades 1-12).

Mega Homework Help Page! ([www.maurine.com/student](http://www.maurine.com/student))  
For help with history, geography, and all fields of science (astronomy, zoology, entomology, paleontology, botany, geology, seismology, meteorology, etc.).

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) ([www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/links](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/links))  
For help with science and math, with many science project resources. Includes resources in Spanish.

Schoolwork.ugh! ([www.schoolwork.org/](http://www.schoolwork.org/))  
Search this site for quotations, statistics, biographies, information on mythology, law, drugs, writing/citing, and other subjects. Includes an encyclopedia, dictionary, and maps (grades 5-12).

Start Spot Network ([www.homeworkspot.com/](http://www.homeworkspot.com/))  
Subjects and a technology section according to grade level (grades 1-12).

Studyweb ([www.studyweb.com](http://www.studyweb.com))  
The sections in this site are Homework Help, Language Arts, History and Culture, Social Science, People and Places, US State-Specific, Reference, Math, Science, Health and Physical Education, Technology, Arts, Family, Sports and Entertainment, and Business and Finance (grades K-12).

### Publications

*Homework Involvement Activities*. Reginald M. Clark. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987  
These parent handbooks designed for specific grade levels (grades K-8) are filled with activities to reinforce math skills and have clearly written tips for helping children with homework.

*Homework Without Tears.* Lee Canter and Lee Hausner, Ph.D. Lee Canter & Associates, P.O. Box 2113, Santa Monica, CA 90406

Excellent book written to assist parents in dealing with their children and homework; programs and workshops are also available on this and other subjects.

## Language Arts Curricula

### Publications

*The Changing Language Arts Curriculum: A Booklet for Parents.* California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271

*A Guide to California's New K-3 Reading Program, 1997.* EdSource, 4151 Middlefield Road, Suite 100, Palo Alto, CA 94303-4743; (650) 857-9604

## Math and Science

### Publications

ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education, 1929 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1080; 1 (800) 276-0462; [www.ericse.org](http://www.ericse.org)  
Database of materials; newsletter; publications.

*Families and Homework, Figure This!* ([www.figurethis.org/family\\_corner\\_homework.htm](http://www.figurethis.org/family_corner_homework.htm))  
Questions you can ask to help your child with math, even if it is not your best subject.

*Family Math.* EQUALS, Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720; 1 (800) 897-5036 \$18.95 each. Add CA sales tax and \$5.00 shipping cost. Payable to Regents, University of California. Can be ordered online at [equals.lhs.berkeley.edu](http://equals.lhs.berkeley.edu).  
Focuses on parents and children working together to enjoy and succeed at math. Provides activities to explore topics such as measurement, logical reasoning, geometry and spatial thinking, probability and statistics, estimation and arithmetic. Many school districts conduct workshops for parents and students to attend together.

*Family Math for Young Children.* EQUALS, Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720; 1 (800) 897-5036  
\$18.95 each. Add CA sales tax and \$5.00 shipping cost. Payable to Regents, University of California. See "Family Math" resource for information on ordering online. Math for young children, pre-kindergarten through second grade.

*Help Your Child Learn Math.* U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, DC 20208. Order from Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81002. Available online through the National Parent Information Network, [npin.org/library/pre1998/n00109/n00109.html](http://npin.org/library/pre1998/n00109/n00109.html).

*Home Involvement Activities.* Reginald M. Clark. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. These parent handbooks designed for specific grade levels (K-8) are filled with activities to reinforce math skills and clearly written tips for helping children with homework.

*Kids Network.* National Geographic Society, Education Services, Washington, DC 20036; [www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/activities/index.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/activities/index.html)  
Activities and experiments available by subscription or online.

*Matematica Para La Familia (Family Math in Spanish);* ([www.mathcounts.org](http://www.mathcounts.org))  
Same ordering information as *Family Math* above.

*Math Counts.* National and California Society of Professional Engineers. Math Counts, 910 Florin Road, Suite 112, Sacramento, CA 95831-3569; (916) 442-7786  
A unique math incentive program sponsored by this professional association, for seventh and eighth grade students. Local school competition finalists can go on to state-and national-level math competitions.

*Math for Girls and Other Problem Solvers*. \$11.95 each plus \$4.00 shipping. Same ordering information as Family Math above.

108 pages of hands-on activities that make math challenging and fun. For elementary and secondary.

*More Than 1,2,3—The Real Basics of Mathematics*. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20009. Price: 50 cents each, \$10.00 for 100 copies. Online at [www.naeyc.org/resources/eyly/1997](http://www.naeyc.org/resources/eyly/1997).

*Off and Running*. What does a broken down car have to do with computers? This and other stories and activities teach concepts and skills that relate to using a computer and how that connects to the “real” world. Same ordering information as Family Math above.

*Young Astronaut Program*. Young Astronaut Council, 5200 27th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036; ([www.yac.org](http://www.yac.org))

## Reading

### Organizations

Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.

Publications of these developers of bias-free textbooks and storybooks can be ordered directly through the organization. Subscriptions to their magazine are also available. “A Checklist for Analyzing Bias in Children’s Books” is available online at [www.fpg.unc.edu/~walkingthewalk/pdfs/ChecklistBooks.pdf](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~walkingthewalk/pdfs/ChecklistBooks.pdf).

International Reading Association ([www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org))

800 Barksdale Road, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714

Has many brochures available for parents, including *You Can Prepare Your Child for Reading Tests*, *You Can Encourage Your Child to Read*, and *Good Books Make Reading Fun for Your Child*.

National Reading Panel ([www.nationalreadingpanel.org/](http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/))

6100 Executive Boulevard, Room #4B05, Bethesda, MD 20892-7510; (301) 496-6591

This Web site is updated regularly with information about NRP publications and materials as well as upcoming speaking engagements by panel members. This site is also an archive, featuring the congressional charge to the NRP, biographies of NRP members, meeting minutes, and other historical information.

Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center ([sccac.lacoe.edu](http://sccac.lacoe.edu))

Provides support, training, and assistance; integrates and coordinates programs and services; consults with the various No Child Left Behind (NCLB) stakeholders; and provides professional development services across NCLB initiatives. Significant support for reading initiatives.

### Publications

*Adventuring with Books: A Book List for Pre-K Through Grade Six*. Diana L. Monson. National Council of Teachers of English, 1985. Available through the Association for Library Services to Children/American Library Association, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611

An annotated list of 1700 children’s books selected for their literary and artistic quality. The parent’s guide includes books appropriate for various holidays. Other materials and services are also available.

*America Reads*. U.S. Department of Education; 1 (800) USA-LEARN; [www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/](http://www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/)

*Becoming a Nation of Readers: What Parents Can Do*. Marilyn R. Binkley. DC Heath, 1988. For information, contact the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009 or DC Heath & Co., Distribution Center, 2700 N. Richard Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46219

*Choosing Books for Children: A Commonsense Guide*. Betsy Hearne. Dell Publishing Company. New York, 1981. Recommends classic and more recent literature for children ages 2 through 12 that parents and children can enjoy together.

*Every Child a Reader* (report of the California Reading Task Force), 1995. California Department of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA 94244-2720; (916) 445-1260

"Great Gifts for Small People: An Adult Guide to the Best Children's Books." Digby Diehl. *Modern Maturity*, December 1989-January 1990, pp. 54-58.

*The New Read-Aloud Handbook*. Jim Trelease. Penguin Books, New York, 1985. The first half of this book deals with the need to read aloud to children—when and how to do it—and is supported by the author's personal experiences. The second half is the Treasury of Read-Alouds, a listing of recommended literature, from picture books to novels, for children from pre-school through grade 8.

"Read—And Write—All About It!" Nancy L. Roser. *Sesame Street Magazine Parents' Guide*, October 1989, pp. 30-34.

*Tips for Parents: How to Help Your Child Become a Better Reader*. Comprehensive Reading Leadership Center, Sacramento County Office of Education, 9738 Lincoln Village Drive, Sacramento, CA 95827; (916) 228-2219 Gives parents brief, easy to understand advice based on the California Reading Initiative.

*Writing: Parents Can Help; Reading at Home and at School; TV, Reading and Writing; Parent Power; Pressures on Children and Youth*. National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036. [www.nea.org/parents/readinmattershome.html](http://www.nea.org/parents/readinmattershome.html). Many materials for parents.

## School Reform

### Organizations

California Department of Education Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration ([www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov))

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR/D) Program is a school reform initiative administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Competitive grants are awarded to successful local educational agencies in an amount up to \$200 per student in each funded school, with a minimum allocation of \$50,000 per school site.

WestEd ([www.wested.org](http://www.wested.org))

Provides district and school administrators with the most current information and resources about CSR/D, with a particular focus on the needs of schools in WestEd's four state regions of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah.

### Publications

*Caught In The Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools* Reprinted, by permission, from *Caught in the Middle, Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools*, California Department of Education, CDE Press, 1430 N Street, Suite 3410, Sacramento, 95814. *Caught in the Middle* is out of print and no longer represents California Department of Education policy; it has been replaced by a publication titled *Taking Center Stage*.

Both books deal with school reform, but the section we are using is only in the older book and it discusses the characteristics of middle grade young adolescents. That material is not obsolete and is being included as a "Parenting" resource.

*It's Elementary: Elementary Grades Task Force Report*, 1992. California Department of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA 94244-2720; (916) 445-1260

## School Success

### Organizations

The Learning Network ([www.familyeducation.com/channel/0,2916,24,00](http://www.familyeducation.com/channel/0,2916,24,00))

Includes homework help, parent and teacher cooperation, home schooling, school safety, tests and grading, and educational trends.

National Center for Educational Statistics ([nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=29](http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=29))

Education publications and resources for parents, including a series on "Helping your child..."



**Publications**

Dear Parents ([www.dearparents.com/](http://www.dearparents.com/))

Information on learning styles, thinking skills, your child at school, school subjects, and home schooling.

*Family Life and School Achievement: Why Poor Black Children Succeed or Fail.* Reginald M. Clark. University of Chicago Press, 1983. Available online: [www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/374.ctl](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/374.ctl)

*Helping Your Child* series (*Helping Your Child Learn Math*, *Helping Your Child Learn to Read*, *Helping Your Child With Homework*, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, and others), U.S. Department of Education ([www.ed.gov/pubs](http://www.ed.gov/pubs)) 1-800-USA-LEARN. Check website for additional publications.

*Helping Your Child Succeed in School.* Association of American Publishers, School Division. For information on obtaining copies of this excellent 36-page booklet for parents, write to Sandra Conn Associates, Inc., 2551 N. Clark Street, Suite 400, Chicago, IL 60614-1717.

**School-to-Career****Organizations**

California School-to-Career ([www.stc.ca.gov/](http://www.stc.ca.gov/))

Information on the connection between school and work and on specific school-to-career programs in California. Hot topics and an extensive “related links” page.

**Special Needs—Learning Disabilities/Gifted Children****Organizations**

The Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented ([www.nexus.edu.au/teachstud/gat/papers](http://www.nexus.edu.au/teachstud/gat/papers))

California Parents Helping Parents (PHP) of Santa Clara ([www.php.com](http://www.php.com))

3041 Olcott St., Santa Clara, CA 95054-3222; (408) 727-5775 Voice

PHP has given hope, inspiration, and encouragement to families in Santa Clara County facing the challenges of raising children with special needs.

California Support for Families of Children with Disabilities (SFCD) ([www.supportforfamilies.org](http://www.supportforfamilies.org))

2601 Mission St. #710, San Francisco, CA 94110-3111; (415) 282-7494

SFCD is a parent-run San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that supports families of children with any kind of disability or special health care need.

California WorkNet ([www.sjtcc.ca.gov/SJTCCWEB/ONE-STOP/disabilities](http://www.sjtcc.ca.gov/SJTCCWEB/ONE-STOP/disabilities))

See “Resources for People with Disabilities”

Dear Parents ([www.dearparents.com](http://www.dearparents.com))

Information for parents of special needs and gifted children.

Disability Rights Education Defense Fund (DREDF) ([www.dredf.org](http://www.dredf.org))

2212 Sixth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710; (510) 644.2555

DREDF is a national law and policy center dedicated to protecting and advancing the civil rights of people with disabilities through legislation, litigation, advocacy, technical assistance, and education and training of attorneys, advocates, persons with disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities.

Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) ([www.accesseric.org:81/resources/parent/suptgift](http://www.accesseric.org:81/resources/parent/suptgift))

“How can I support my gifted child?”

Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) ([www.accesseric.org:81/resources/parent/disab1](http://www.accesseric.org:81/resources/parent/disab1))

“Rights and Responsibilities of Parents of Children with Disabilities”

Exceptional Family Support Education and Advocacy SEA Center ([www.sea-center.org](http://www.sea-center.org))  
6402 Skyway, Paradise, CA 95969; (530) 876-8321

Formally known as the Exceptional Family Support, Education, and Advocacy Center. Provides caring, emotional support to parents of children with special needs.

Exceptional Parents Unlimited (EPU) ([www.exceptionalparents.org](http://www.exceptionalparents.org))  
4440 N. First St., Fresno, CA 93726; (559) 229-2000

GT World ([www.gtworld.org](http://www.gtworld.org))  
Online support community for parents of gifted and talented children.

Hoagie's Gifted Education Page ([www.hoagiesgifted.org/](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/))  
Contests and awards, Internet investigations, and hot topics.

Homework Spot ([www.homeworkspot.com/parent/specialneeds](http://www.homeworkspot.com/parent/specialneeds))  
Information on dyslexia, ADD, and other learning disabilities.

*Kid Source Online* ([/www.kidsource.com/kidsource/monthly/mon.gifted.art.2000](http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/monthly/mon.gifted.art.2000))  
Articles about gifted and talented students.

LD Online Report ([www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org))  
The interactive guide to learning disabilities for parents, teachers, and children.

Learning Network ([www.familyeducation.com/channel/0,2916,23,00](http://www.familyeducation.com/channel/0,2916,23,00))  
Information on special needs children.

Matrix ([www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org))  
94 Galli Drive, Suite C, Novato, CA 94949; (415) 884-3535  
Matrix is a private non-profit organization offering support for families of children with special needs in the North Bay. Matrix provides services to families primarily in Marin, Napa, Sonoma, and Solano counties.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities ([www.nichcy.org/](http://www.nichcy.org/))  
State resources and parent guides.

Parents Helping Parents (PHP) of San Francisco ([www.dssc.org/frc/TAGuide/pti/ca7.htm](http://www.dssc.org/frc/TAGuide/pti/ca7.htm))  
594 Monterey Blvd., San Francisco, CA 94127-2416; (415) 841-8820  
Works with families of children and young adults with all disabilities. Funded by IDEA (the U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

**Publications**  
*Britesparks* ([www.britesparks.com/](http://www.britesparks.com/))  
Learn more about the gifted with special needs, ages toddlers through teens.

## Test Scores

**Publications**  
*School Wise Press* ([www.schoolwisepress.com](http://www.schoolwisepress.com))  
Information on standardized test scores, school rankings, and educational issues. Articles on over 50 hot education topics. Links to education resource organizations and advocacy groups.

*Star Testing Program* ([star.cde.ca.gov](http://star.cde.ca.gov))  
This California Department of Education site is a comprehensive source of information about the STAR testing program, including test results, sample questions, and demographic comparisons. The California Reading List also can be accessed from this site.

*Wrightslaw* ([www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/tests\\_measurements](http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/tests_measurements))  
A good resource for parents and advocates, including information on "Understanding Tests and Measurements."

## Advocacy

**Where to Go for Answers***A Guide to Schools, Legislators, and Education Organizations***Introduction**

Use these pages as your guide to finding answers to your specific questions about kindergarten through 12th grade education. Whether you question your child's academic progress, the policies of your school district, or a potential education law, the information is surprisingly easy to obtain—if you know whom to ask.

The information resources are divided into five sections: Your Local School, Your School District, County and State Education Offices, State Government and Legislators, and Statewide Groups. In each section, the types of questions to be answered are listed underneath the title of the person or organization to contact. You will need to fill in your local information.

*Adapted from EdSource "Where to Go for Answers" April 1999, [www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org)*

**Your Local School**

Web site \_\_\_\_\_

**School Secretary**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

For help with registering for school • immunization requirements • school calendar • on-site day care • after-school programs • lost and found • school lunches • absences • seeing the School Accountability Report Card • general questions about who to talk to and how to contact them.

**Teacher**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's special needs, progress, and classroom behavior • homework • promotion requirements • what is being taught in class • helping in the classroom • test results and report cards • best time for you to be contacted • how you can support learning at home.

**Principal**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What is being taught and what textbooks are used • student discipline and school rules • how your child is assigned to a class and teacher • the school dress code • special programs to help your child learn • the school's safety plan • ways you can help and support the school • serving on the school-site council or advisory committees • anything you can't find answers for elsewhere.

**Counselor**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Any problems or special needs your student has • graduation requirements • your student's course selections • college applications, requirements, entrance tests, and scholarships • special programs to help prepare students for college • internships, job placement, and career planning services • alternative programs and courses of study.

**PTA or Parent Group**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Activities for parents and students • volunteering at school • committees • meeting times • legislation and political issues that affect your school • parenting education.

**School Site Council/Advisory Committees**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Improvement Program at your school • SIP goals • who can serve on Site Council or Advisory Committee • how SIP funds are spent

**Your School District** Web site \_\_\_\_\_**District Office Secretary or main operator**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers or extensions for departments, staff members, and schools • enrollment procedures • district boundaries • how to contact school board members • school board meeting dates.

**District Superintendent**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Unresolved problems • district policies • district-wide committees, task forces, and projects • district-wide student test results • the district's philosophy of education • how to run for school board • agendas and minutes of school board meetings • general issues and concerns.

**District Business Manager**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Community use of school facilities and playing fields • how much money your school district receives • how the money is spent • the condition of school buildings, including maintenance needs • district-wide purchasing • district budgets.

**District Curriculum/Instructional Matters Manager**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Textbook selections • academic standards • standardized testing • magnet, choice, and other special school programs.

**District Student or Pupil Services (often called Pupil Personnel) Manager**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Specialized educational programs offered by and through your district (e.g., Special Education, Limited English Proficient, Gifted and Talented) • your child's eligibility for those programs • the student evaluation and placement process • explanation of special test scores.

**School Boundaries and Choice\* Contact**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

School districts vary in how they handle school choice, attendance boundaries, and transfers between school districts and to other schools within the district. Ask the district's main operator or someone in the Superintendent's Office for the appropriate person or office.

*\*\*"Choice" refers to a parent's right to choose the school their child attends.*

**Special Education Coordinator**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Special help programs offered by and through your district • your child's eligibility • placement

**Specialist**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Remedial or gifted testing information • interpretation of special test scores • speech therapy • English language instruction • student evaluation

**Board of Education**

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting schedule, agenda, and minutes • district policies • finance and planning • collective bargaining negotiations with employees • how to convey your opinions • current district issues • textbook selection

**Other District Organizations**

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**County and State Education Offices****County Office of Education/Superintendent of Schools****County Office**

Web site \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

School district boundaries • Special Education services • county-run education programs such as juvenile court schools • interpretation of state regulations and school finance laws • comparative statistics and test scores for your local and neighboring school districts • matters related to school district organization and unification • appeals of district's student expulsion and interdistrict transfer decisions • policies, budgets, and operations of the county office.

**County Board of Education**

Web site: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Appeals on suspensions and inter-district transfer decisions • policies for operating the County Office and setting the budget

**California Department of Education (CDE)**  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
721 Capitol Mall  
1430 N Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Web site—[www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)

(916) 657-2451

The CDE collects and distributes data and information on California public schools, acts as an advisor to school districts and county offices of education, and monitors state and federal education programs. You can find information on curriculum guidelines • enrollment figures • financial data about schools • state categorical programs • how state education legislation will be implemented • state education budget • federal programs in California • due process for students • court cases related to education • statewide testing programs • rankings of California compared with other states • information about private schools • calendar of education events • ways to earn a high school diploma or equivalent.

**California State Board of Education (SBE)**  
721 Capitol Mall  
P.O. Box 944272  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2720

Web site—[www.cde.ca.gov/board](http://www.cde.ca.gov/board)  
E-mail: [board@cde.ca.gov](mailto:board@cde.ca.gov)

(916) 657-2451

State Board of Education (SBE) is the governing body that oversees the implementation of laws passed by the Legislature affecting public schools in California.

**State Government and Legislators**

Many critical decisions about school funding and allocation are made at the state level in California. In recent years, state leaders also have been active in many other areas of education policy. We encourage all Californians to contact the state's policy makers and express their views on issues affecting education in California.

**Legislators are listed in the government section in the front of your phone book.**

**Your Assemblymember**Web site—[www.assembly.ca.gov](http://www.assembly.ca.gov)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your State Senator**Web site—[www.senate.ca.gov](http://www.senate.ca.gov)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Assembly and Senate Education Committees**

Assembly  
3123 Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 445-9431

Senate  
2053 Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 445-2522

Analysis and status of education bills • legislative calendar • names of committee members • how to contact them • schedule of hearings

**Attorney General's Office**

151 K Street, Suite 511  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Web site—[www.caag.state.ca.gov](http://www.caag.state.ca.gov)  
(916) 324-5437

Legal interpretation of the state's constitution, legislation, and ballot measures

**California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC)**

1900 Capitol Ave.  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4213

Web site—[www.ctc.ca.gov](http://www.ctc.ca.gov)  
(916) 445-0184

Credentials for teachers • professional standards • proficiency testing dates and results • approval of college training programs • regulations about seniority and tenure

**Governor's Office**

State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Web site—[www.governor.ca.gov](http://www.governor.ca.gov)  
(916) 445-2841  
Fax: (916) 445-4633

Proposed state budget • Governor's education policy • appointments to commissions and boards

**Legislative Analyst's Office**

925 L Street, Suite 1000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Web site—[www.lao.ca.gov](http://www.lao.ca.gov)  
(916) 445-4656

Analyses of proposed and adopted state budgets • public information about state initiatives and ballot propositions

**Legislative Bill Room**

State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Web site—[www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html)  
(916) 445-2323  
Fax: (916) 324-4281

Individual copies of bills and laws (write or call with bill number and author)

**California Legislative Information (LEGINFO)**

Web site—[www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov)

The LEGINFO Web contains full text of California bills and laws, which you can search either by bill number or key words, as well as legislative publications and information on current events in the Legislature.

**Lottery Commission**

600 N. 10th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Web site—[www.calottery.com](http://www.calottery.com)  
(916) 323-0400

Winning numbers • lottery revenue allocations and projections

**Public Employee Relations Board (PERB)**

1031 18th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Web site—[www.perb.ca.gov](http://www.perb.ca.gov)  
(916) 322-3088

Decisions on collective bargaining • bargaining unit disputes • rules and policies about collective bargaining

**State Allocation Board**

501 J Street, Suite 350  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Web site—[www.opsc.dgs.ca.gov/SAB/](http://www.opsc.dgs.ca.gov/SAB/)  
(916) 445-3377

State funding for new buildings, remodeling and repair of school facilities • leasing of portable classrooms

**Secretary of State**

1500 11th St.  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Web site—[www.ss.ca.gov](http://www.ss.ca.gov)  
(916) 653-6814

Ballot measures and initiative updates • proposition and initiative filing dates • deadlines for signatures • voter information • election results

**Organizations**

California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) ([www.bilingualeducation.org](http://www.bilingualeducation.org))

660 South Figueroa Street, Suite 1040, Los Angeles, CA 90017; (213) 532-3850

Fax: (213) 532-3860 E-mail: [info@bilingualeducation.org](mailto:info@bilingualeducation.org)

Information about bilingual education; conferences and newsletters.

California Department of Education, Migrant Education ([www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov))

Migratory youth—children who change schools throughout the year, often crossing school district and state lines, to follow work in agriculture, fishing, dairies, or the logging industry—are among the neediest students in California. Since 1966, federal and state laws in California have recognized the unique educational challenges migrant students face. Current law provides support for educational programs and services that are designed to help students and their families overcome the obstacles of poverty and disrupted educational experiences.

California Legislative Information ([www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov))

Details new developments within many legislative areas, including education. Terrific site for staying up-to-date on education reforms.

California School Employees Association (CSEA) ([www.csea.com](http://www.csea.com))

2045 Lundy Ave., P.O. Box 640, San Jose, CA 95106; (800) 632-2128; (408) 263-8000; Fax: (408) 954-0948  
CSEA positions on school finance and education issues.



California Teachers Association (CTA) ([www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org))

1750 Murchison Dr., P.O. Box 921, Burlingame, CA 94010; (650) 697-1400; Fax: (650) 552-5002  
CTA positions on proposed legislation and other issues affecting teachers.

California Tomorrow ([www.californiatomorrow.org](http://www.californiatomorrow.org))

436 14th St., Suite 820, Oakland, CA 94612; (510) 496-0220  
Publications, symposia, and demographic data.

California School Nurses Association (CSNO) ([www.csno.org/](http://www.csno.org/))

926 J Street, Suite 816, Sacramento, CA 95814; (888) 268-CSNO  
Professional development, legislative advocacy, communication with members, membership recruitment, public relations, governance, and leadership development.

Chicano Federation of San Diego County ([www.chicanofederation.org/](http://www.chicanofederation.org/))

610 22nd Street, San Diego, CA 92102; (619) 236-1228  
P.O. Box 620116, San Diego, CA 92162  
Our mission is to promote the self-sufficiency of San Diego County residents by building partnerships and providing education, economic development, advocacy, housing, and social service programs.

EdSource ([www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org))

4151 Middlefield Road, Suite 100, Palo Alto, CA 94303-4743; (650) 857-9604  
Fax: (650) 857-9618; E-mail [edsourcesource@edsourcesource.org](mailto:edsourcesource@edsourcesource.org)  
Explanations of K-12 education issues, especially school finance; publications; videos; conferences and workshops; speakers; special information kits; answers to phone requests for information

EdVoice ([www.edvoice.net](http://www.edvoice.net))

3 Twin Dolphin Drive, Suite 200, Redwood City, CA 94065; (650) 595-5023  
Fax: (650) 595-5033; E-mail: [info@edvoice.net](mailto:info@edvoice.net)  
Non-partisan, non-profit political advocacy group that helps pass laws that improve public schools for all California children. This new California organization encourages individuals at the local level who care about improving schools to join their efforts.

Homey's Youth Foundation/Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

([www.cahippy.com/index.html](http://www.cahippy.com/index.html))  
4981 Market Street, San Diego, CA 92102; (619) 264-1554  
HIPPY is devoted to helping children, adolescents, and adults achieve academic, economic, and social success.

National Urban League ([www.nul.org/](http://www.nul.org/))

120 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005; (212) 558-5300  
The mission of the Urban League movement is to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity and power, and civil rights.

School Site Planning Guide and Template, The California Department of Education (CDE) ([www.cde.ca.gov/ccp-div/singleplan](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ccp-div/singleplan))

Developed to help School Site Councils and school administrators meet the school planning requirements of state and federal programs. A template for a school site plan and the handbook (or guide) contents can be downloaded free of charge at

Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC) ([www.upacsd.com/](http://www.upacsd.com/))

1031 25th Street, San Diego, CA 92102; (619) 232-6454  
UPAC seeks to meet the economic, social, psychological, and physical needs of San Diego's Asian and Pacific Islander population.

**Publications**

*The New ABC's: Preparing Black Children for the 21st Century.* A 17-minute videotape from the National Urban Coalition, 1120 G Street, Washington, DC 20005.

Education Week on the Web ([www.edweek.org/ew](http://www.edweek.org/ew))

Updates on education legislation and implementation.

## COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

### Organizations

American Association of University Women (AAUW-CA) ([www.aauw-ca.org](http://www.aauw-ca.org))

1414 K St., Suite 220, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 448-7795; Fax: (916) 448-1729

Local, state, and national education and school finance positions and programs; publications; membership.

California Consortium of Education Foundations ([www.cceflink.org](http://www.cceflink.org))

P.O. Box 19290, Stanford, CA 94309; (650) 324-1653; Fax: (650) 326-7751; E-mail: [info@cceflink.org](mailto:info@cceflink.org)

CCEF provides training and support services to education foundations throughout California, including guidelines for starting a local foundation at your school or district. Publications include *Starting an Education Foundation*, which provides practical advice about starting a foundation to support local schools.

California Department of Education, After School Partnerships ([www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov))

California Department of Education, Family-School-Community Partnerships ([www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov))

Laws and policies from the California Department of Education are intended to improve student achievement through family-school-community partnerships.

California Police Departments ([www.usacops.com/ca/pollist.html](http://www.usacops.com/ca/pollist.html))

FAST National ([www.wcer.wisc.edu/fast/index.htm](http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/fast/index.htm))

University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1025 West Johnson Street, Suite 785, Madison, WI 53706; (608) 263-4200

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is a prevention program that trains culturally representative teams to do outreach to stressed, isolated, and often low-income families. Many of these family members graduate from their educational program.

League of Women Voters of California (LWVC) ([www.ca.lwv.org](http://www.ca.lwv.org))

926 J St., Suite 515, Sacramento, CA 95814; (888) 870-VOTE; (916) 442-7215; Fax: (916) 442-7362

Local, state, and national positions and programs, including education and school finance; pros and cons of ballot issues; publications on policy issues; membership in local unit

National Association of Partners in Education ([www.napehq.org/](http://www.napehq.org/))

Develops school volunteer, intergenerational, community service, and business partnership programs throughout the United States. Originally the National School Volunteer Program, the organization took its present name in 1988 when it assumed responsibility for the annual National Symposium on Partnerships in Education. Currently, it is the only national membership organization devoted solely to providing leadership in the field of education partnership development.

National Black Child Development Institute ([www.nbcdi.org/nbcdi](http://www.nbcdi.org/nbcdi))

1460 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20005

Provides and supports programs, workshops, and resources for African American children, their, parents and their communities.

National Institute for Urban School Improvement ([www.edc.org/urban/](http://www.edc.org/urban/))

University of Colorado at Denver, 1380 Lawrence Street, Suite 650, Denver, CO 80204; (303) 556-3990

Supports inclusive urban communities, schools, and families to build their capacity for sustainable, successful urban education. Provides dialogue, networking, technology, action research, information systems, alliance and consensus building.

National Network for Partnership Schools ([www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/default.htm](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/default.htm))

Johns Hopkins University, 3003 N. Charles Street, Suite 200, Baltimore, MD 21218; (410) 516-8800

Brings together schools, districts, and states committed to developing and maintaining comprehensive programs of school-family-community partnerships.

Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) ([pace.berkeley.edu](http://pace.berkeley.edu))

School of Education, University of California, 3659 Tolman, Berkeley, CA 94720; (415) 642-PACE

Analysis of state policy issues, technical support and advice to policymakers, publications, and evaluation of educational reforms.

Public Education Network ([www.publiceducation.org/resources/public\\_conversation.htm](http://www.publiceducation.org/resources/public_conversation.htm))

Through the Public Education Network, the Local Education Fund (LEF) facilitates conversations between a community and its school board.

School Services of California, Inc. ([www.sscal.com](http://www.sscal.com))

1121 L St., Suite 16, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 446-7517; Fax: (916) 446-2011

School Services of California, Inc., provides consulting services, data, and policy analysis to school districts, county offices, and community colleges in meeting their management, governance, and fiscal responsibilities.

Service Learning ([www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)) (more information)

Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, 1993, John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight. Distributed by ACTA Publications, 4848 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60640; Phone: 800 397-2282

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

### Organizations

Asset Building ([groups.ucanr.org/assets/](http://groups.ucanr.org/assets/))

Encourages positive youth development. Information about grassroots movements within communities where "asset building" is taking place and how to implement such a program within other communities.

California Team Advocates for Special Kids (TASK)

100 West Cerritos Ave., Anaheim, CA 92805; (714) 533-8275

California Team Advocates for Special Kids (TASK), San Diego

3750 Convoy St., Suite 303, San Diego, CA 92111-3741; (858) 874-2386

Even Start ([www.evenstart.org/](http://www.evenstart.org/))

The purpose of the Even Start Family Literacy Program is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities for families. This is accomplished by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy and adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified literacy program. Even Start is implemented nationally through cooperative projects that build on existing community resources, creating a new range of services for children, families, and adults.

Family Involvement in Education ([www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/pfie.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/pfie.html))

The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (PFIE) produces a number of publications that focus on joining together employers, educators, families, religious groups, and community organizations to improve schools and raise student achievement.

FINE - Family Involvement Network of Educators. ([www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine))

FINE develops the human resource capacity for effective family-school-community partnerships. Through a rich and diverse offering of research materials and tools, FINE equips teachers to partner with families and informs families and communities about leading-edge approaches to full partnership with schools

Head Start ([www.nhsa.org/](http://www.nhsa.org/))

1651 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 739-0875

The National Head Start Association (NHSA) is a private not-for profit membership organization representing more than 952,000 children, upwards of 180,000 staff, and more than 2,400 Head Start programs in America. NHSA provides a national forum for the continued enhancement of Head Start services for poor children ages 0 through 5 and their families.

Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) ([www.cahippy.com/index.html](http://www.cahippy.com/index.html))

4981 Market Street, San Diego, CA 92102; (619) 264-1554

HIPPY programs empower parents as primary educators of their children in the home.

Migrant Education Even Start ([www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/OME/mees.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/OME/mees.html))

400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-6135; (202) 260-1164

Migrant Education Even Start is a program designed to break the cycle of poverty and improve the literacy of migrant families through early childhood education, adult basic education or English Language instruction, and parenting education. Projects provide a number of services and strategies to help parents and children meet their educational goals and to support parents in their role as their child's first teacher.

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) ([www.ncpie.org/](http://www.ncpie.org/))

3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91-A, Fairfax, VA 22030-2401; (703) 359-8973

At NCPIE, our mission is simple: to advocate the involvement of parents and families in their children's education and to foster relationships between home, school, and community to enhance the education of all our nation's young people.

National PTA's Building Successful Partnerships Program ([www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/bsp/index.asp](http://www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/bsp/index.asp))

Focused on increasing awareness and implementation of the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs. Presenters around the state are available to talk with you or conduct a workshop on any of the six standards (contact the California State PTA office to request a presentation).

National Parent Information Network (NPIN) ([npin.org/index.html](http://npin.org/index.html))

NPIN provides access to research-based information about the process of parenting and about family involvement in education. They believe that well-informed families are likely to make good decisions about raising and educating their children.

No Child Left Behind ([www.nclb.gov](http://www.nclb.gov))

400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202; 1 (888) 814-NCLB

Information on the law No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It encompasses sweeping educational reform, including stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work. Website includes many printable brochures to assist parents in helping their children learn.

Parents As Teachers (PAT) ([www.patnc.org/](http://www.patnc.org/))

2228 Ball Drive, St. Louis, MO 63146; (314) 432-4330

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an international early childhood parent education and family support program serving families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten, usually age 5. The program is designed to enhance child development and school achievement through parent education accessible to all families.

The Parent Institute ([www.parentinstitute.com/parent/about/](http://www.parentinstitute.com/parent/about/))

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474; (800) 756-5525

Publishes parent involvement materials for schools, including *The Educators' Notebook on Family Involvement* newsletter for staff, the *Parents Make the Difference!*, *Parents STILL Make the Difference!*, *Helping Children Learn*, *Helping Students Learn*, and *Building Readers* newsletters. Includes "44 Proven Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Their Children Do Better in School."

Parent Institute for Quality Education ([www.piqe.org/](http://www.piqe.org/))

4010 Morena Blvd., #200, San Diego, CA 92117; (858) 483-4499

Encourages and supports low-income, ethnically diverse parents of elementary, middle, and high school children to take a participatory role in assisting their children to create a home learning environment; navigate the school system; collaborate with teachers, counselors, and principals; encourage college attendance; and support a child's emotional and social development

### **Publications**

*Critical Issue: Creating the School Climate and Structures to Support Parent and Family Involvement*, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory ([www.ncrel.org](http://www.ncrel.org))

*The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement*, Anne T. Henderson. National Committee for Citizens in Education, 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MD 21044

Reviews the many studies that demonstrate the benefit to students, teachers, and schools of involving parents in their children's education.

*Family Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches, An Idea Book*, Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-8173; Fax: (202) 205-9133

*Family Involvement in Education: Resources for Families and Communities*, Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center (SCCAC) ([www.sccac.lacoe.edu/](http://www.sccac.lacoe.edu/)); (562) 922-6343

*Make Parental Involvement a Priority*, by Dixie Connor  
([www.education-world.com/plan-ctr/2003/plan\\_ctr003.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/plan-ctr/2003/plan_ctr003.shtml))

*Middle School/High School Parent Involvement Resources Online*  
California State PTA ([www.capta.org/Resources/communicator10-02.html](http://www.capta.org/Resources/communicator10-02.html))  
930 Georgia Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015; (213) 620-1100; Fax: (213) 620-1411

*National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs*, 1997. National PTA, 330 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60611-3690; [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org); (312) 670-6782; Fax: (312) 670-6783. See full description above.

*A New Understanding of Parent Involvement, Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, Family Involvement in Children's Education*—October 1997, ERIC Digest ([www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov))

*Organizing a Successful Parent Center*, 1994. California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95812-0271; (916) 445-1260  
Notes how parent centers can promote family involvement and gives ideas for establishing parent centers.

*Parent Involvement: An Agenda for Excellence*. From the Campaign for Families and Schools: Support from the Home Team. Pennsylvania Department of Education. Division of Early Childhood and Family Education, 12th Floor, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333.

*Parental Involvement Improves Student Achievement*, National Education Association (NEA). Available online. ([www.nea.org/parents/](http://www.nea.org/parents/))

*Parent Involvement in Education—Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7; Early Years Are Learning Years—Building Parent-Teacher Partnerships*, National Parent Involvement Network ([www.npin.org](http://www.npin.org))

*Promising Practices in Family Involvement in Schools*, Diana B. Hiatt-Michael ([dmichael@pepperdine.edu](mailto:dmichael@pepperdine.edu)), Pepperdine University; (310) 568-5644

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research & Improvement ([www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/))

