

Parental involvement makes the difference

Parental involvement is vital to a student's success in school.

Students whose parents are actively supportive throughout the school year often have better grades, fewer learning gaps and higher self-esteem. When parents are involved, students frequently excel.

For many busy parents, the question of how to become active participants in the education of their children must also take into account their own obligations to work during the day. Parental involvement can take many different forms.

Your interest in your child's daily work, projects and homework lets the child know that you are genuinely concerned with his/her progress. Since it is the parents who have the most influence over how children view learning, it is important to stress the value of education and set performance standards, as well as to take an active role in helping students achieve them.

When you take a few minutes to look over any papers or homework the child brings home, and offer positive comments, you are actively involving yourself. Similarly, when you and your child visit the public library to locate appropriate books and research materials for a project, you are actively involved. Reading together, even briefly, can be a pleasant time for you and your child. Discussing the characters and events of a story or novel can encourage a higher level of communication between parent and child.

Many students complete a daily "planner" or communication book at the end of each school day.

Your questions and comments in this book are valued by teachers, and contribute significantly to mutual understanding of your child.

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Your attendance at various school functions, including report card conferences, is another way of involving yourself in your child's education. It sends a clear message that you care and want to be involved.

Tips for parental involvement:

- Talk to your child's teacher to monitor his or her progress and learn how to help your child at home. Let your child know that you care about what he or she is studying and that you believe he or she can do well in school. Show support by attending school events.
- Help your child become organized and develop good habits. Together, map out consistent study times. Create a special place where your child can study each day. Help your child learn to keep organized class notes and materials by getting involved in choosing school supplies.
- Check your child's homework. Make sure it is completed correctly and neatly. Provide a constructive environment and help your child study, but make sure that the work turned in is his or her own.
- Don't judge your child on the basis of one test or grade. If a grade disappoints you, use it as an opportunity to work with your child on setting standards for improvement. Set goals that are an attainable stretch, like a half-grade improvement next time.
- Read with your child every day. If you have a young child, this is easy. If you have an older child, ask him or her to read a newspaper article to you and then discuss it together. Welcome your child's opinions and ask questions to help him or her learn how to articulate responses.