

Tips for Parents

Helping your child succeed in school

It's not rocket science!

In August 2011, People for Education released a report, *Doing what matters most: How parents can help their children succeed in school*, which reviewed thirty years of research from Canada, the United States and England.

The evidence is clear. Parents make a difference. And the way they contribute most to their children's education is through what they do at home. Being a parent can be challenging, but the good news is that you don't have to be 'volunteer of the year' or an expert on the war of 1812 to help your child succeed at school.

Have high expectations for your children.

Let your children know that you think it is important that they do well in school. High parental expectations have the greatest impact on student achievement. When parents consistently express belief in their children's potential and tell their kids that they expect them to succeed academically, students do better.

Talk about school.

Talk with your children about what's happening at school—activities, programs and what they are learning. Surprisingly, this has a greater impact on academic achievement than monitoring homework, being at home after school for your kids, or limiting the time they are allowed to watch TV or go out during the week.

According to our kids, we may not be doing such a great job in this area. In student surveys conducted by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), less than half of students in grade 3 (46%) report they talk to a parent or guardian "every day or almost every day" about their school activities. By grade 6, that percentage drops to 38%.

Help your children develop a positive attitude and good work habits.

Parents help their children succeed by helping shape their children's attitudes, sense of personal competence and work habits, including persistence, seeking help and planning. Rather than trying to directly "teach" your children, focus on helping them handle distractions and crises of confidence, praise them for effort and persistence and demonstrate a positive attitude about school as a whole.

Read together (in any language)

Reading is one of the foundations of all education, and you can make a big difference by reading and talking about books and stories with your children. Reading with children is the best way to turn them on to reading. But this doesn't mean that you should be forcing them to sound out words. Instead of focusing on teaching your children the mechanics of reading, teach them to *love* reading. Make reading fun and enjoyable!

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Once again, our kids are telling us that there is room for improvement when it comes to time spent reading together. The EQAO student survey found that only 21% of children in grade 3 report reading together with a parent or guardian “every day or almost every day”.

Parent Involvement in School Activities

Whether it is attending a school concert, cheering on a school team, or participating in community events and meetings planned by your school council, parent involvement in school activities can foster a sense of community within the school. It can build stronger relationships between teachers and parents, and provide an opportunity for parents to connect with and support each other.

School-based activities may not have a direct impact on student achievement, but they can be a fun and engaging way to build a stronger school community. When you can, take advantage of the opportunity to participate in school events to show your support for your children’s school.

For more information:

www.peopleforeducation.ca

Read People for Education’s report on parent involvement, *Doing what matters most: How parents can help their children succeed in school*. It provides a background on all the research behind this tip sheet. You can also join our online community to connect with other parents, and go online and get your questions about education in Ontario answered.

www.eqao.com

To find out more about the questionnaires that students, teachers, and principals complete every year as part of the EQAO testing, or see the survey results, visit the Education Quality and Accountability Office website.



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