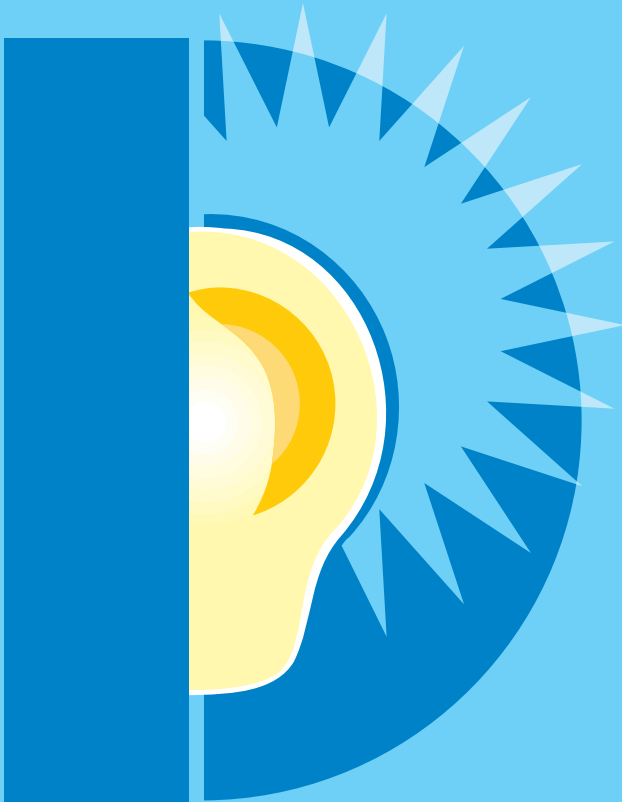


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



PARENT POWER

BUILD THE BRIDGE TO SUCCESS



Parent Power

Build the Bridge to Success

**U.S. Department of Education
Office of Communications and Outreach**

2010

U.S. Department of Education

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June 2010

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Parent Power: Build the Bridge to Success

To parents, we can't tell our kids to do well in school and then fail to support them when they get home. You can't just contract out parenting. For our kids to excel, we have to accept our responsibility to help them learn. That means putting away the Xbox and putting our kids to bed at a reasonable hour. It means attending those parent-teacher conferences and reading to our children and helping them with their homework.

—President Barack Obama, July 17, 2009

President Obama has a cradle-to-career plan to reform our nation's schools. He also is calling on parents to take responsibility for their child's success. His vision includes the belief that all children can and will succeed, and that parents are the bridge to this success. You as the parent, guardian or caregiver can help your child by connecting with his or her school to find out what's needed to ensure success and how you can help reach that goal. Studies of successful schools report that parent involvement is a major factor in their outcomes, including closing the achievement gap between various groups of students. With his vision, the president is asking that you make education a priority and a legacy for your family.



How can you accomplish this? By adopting the following principles and taking the steps indicated for each age group, you will be able to help your child learn at each step of the way and ensure success in school and in life.

Be responsible.

Accept your role as the parent and make education a priority in your home.

Be committed.

Once you have begun to work with your child, continue doing so throughout the year.





Be positive.

Praise goes a long way with children, especially with those who struggle in school. Provide positive feedback.

Be patient.

Show your child that you care through your commitment and encouragement.

Be attentive.

Stop your child immediately when bad behavior appears. Show him or her what to do and provide an opportunity to do it correctly. Discipline should be appropriate and consistent.

Be precise.

Provide clear and direct instructions.



Be mindful of mistakes.

Record your child's performance. Look over all the work your child brings home from school and keep it in a folder. Help him or her correct any errors.

Be results-oriented.

Gather information on how your child is performing in school. Keep notes of conferences with teachers, request progress reports and carefully read report cards and achievement test results. Ask questions about these results.

Be diligent.

Work from the beginning to the end of the year with your child and the teacher.

Be innovative.

Keep learning lively and dynamic.

BE THERE.

Just be there for your child—to answer questions, to listen, to give advice, to encourage and to speak positively about his or her life. Be there to support your child whenever needed.



PRESCHOOL

Ensure That Your Child Is Ready to Learn

Make sure your child's:

- ✓ Physical needs are met with a healthy diet, enough sleep and rest, exercise and good medical care;
- ✓ Social and emotional needs are met;
- ✓ Confidence, independence and cooperation skills are built;
- ✓ Discipline is appropriate and consistent;
- ✓ Play is stimulating;
- ✓ Questions are answered;
- ✓ Caregiver or preschool teacher has books to read to your child and does read to your child every day; and
- ✓ Day is filled with different learning activities.

You also can be part of your child's educational experience by teaching and reinforcing the skills your child needs and enhancing those taught in the classroom. Using the following checklists, you can help your child be a successful student from preschool through high school.

Know what your preschooler needs.

Babies need:

- ✓ Loving parents or caregivers who respond to their cries or noises;
- ✓ To feel safe and comfortable;
- ✓ To hear and make sounds;
- ✓ To move around;
- ✓ To be able to play in safe areas; and
- ✓ To play with safe toys.



Toddlers need:

- ✓ Activities that allow them to use their muscles;
- ✓ To experience their senses and develop language skills;
- ✓ To work with their hands;
- ✓ To learn to do things for themselves;
- ✓ To play with other children;
- ✓ To continue to learn about their movements;
- ✓ To build their vocabulary;
- ✓ To learn about their surroundings; and
- ✓ Opportunities to make choices within limits that you set.

Introduce babies and toddlers (birth to 2 years) to language.

- ✓ Talk to your baby or toddler often. Talk to your infant during feeding; look at family photographs and tell your child about the pictures; or tell the baby what you see out the window—a bird, bus, cars.
- ✓ Show your baby things, name them and talk about them.
- ✓ Encourage babbling or your toddler's trying to say words.
- ✓ Sing songs and read nursery rhymes.
- ✓ Read aloud each day, even if it's just for a short time.
- ✓ Have your child handle books—books made especially for babies or toddlers, such as interactive books (lift-the-flap or touch-and-feel). This will help your child with motor skills and language development.

Introduce young children (3-5 years) to language.

- ✓ Talk to your young child often and encourage your child to speak by asking questions and talking about what happened during the day.
- ✓ Show your child new things, making sure you name them, and teach your child new words every day.

Every child is different. Know your child's unique talents, skills, abilities and special needs. Children can enjoy learning and possess a healthy curiosity. Take advantage of learning opportunities. Use the checklist as a guide to lead your child to success.

- ✓ Read aloud each day, even if it is just for a short time.
- ✓ Teach your child the alphabet.
- ✓ Check your local public library for books made especially for 3- to 5-year-olds.

4- and 5-year-olds need:

- ✓ More books, games and songs;
- ✓ Chances to do science, math and art activities;
- ✓ To build their self-reliance and language skills; and
- ✓ To become aware of the world and people around them.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Lead Your Child on the Path to Success

Before the school year begins, find out about the school your child will attend.

- ✓ Visit the school.
- ✓ Visit a classroom in the school.
- ✓ Get a copy of the school's parent involvement plan.
- ✓ Volunteer, for example, to be a room parent, organize a winter coat drive, help out on test day or be a reading coach.
- ✓ Ask the principal for the school's report card.



Communicate with teachers.

- ✓ Find out the best time to contact them by telephone.
- ✓ Ask for the teacher's e-mail address.
- ✓ Find out about Web sites where teachers may list class notes and homework assignments.

Parent-teacher conferences are important.

- ✓ Be prepared to listen, talk and take notes.
- ✓ Write out your questions before you meet with the teacher.
- ✓ Ask for specific information about your child's work and progress.
- ✓ Review what the teacher has told you and follow up by talking with your child.
- ✓ Check back with the teacher regularly to see how things are going as the year progresses.

Know that counselors:

- ✓ Can help if there are problems at home, such as divorce or illness, which could affect your child's schoolwork;
- ✓ Have information about achievement tests and can explain what the results mean; and
- ✓ Can tell you what tutoring services are available.

Make sure your child continues to read.

- ✓ Set a special time each day for reading aloud together.
- ✓ Encourage your child to read to you when he or she is ready.
- ✓ Let your child see you enjoying reading.
- ✓ Use audio books that you and your child can listen to together and have your child follow along with the written words in the printed book.
- ✓ Play communication games with your child, such as Scrabble or Pictionary, which involve words and explaining what they mean.
- ✓ Practice day-to-day reading and writing, such as following a recipe or writing a note.
- ✓ Continue to check with the teacher and the pediatrician about your child's language development.





MIDDLE SCHOOL

Be There for Your Child in the Formative Years

Transitioning

- ✓ Help your child transition from elementary to middle school.
- ✓ Discuss the concerns he or she may have before starting middle school, such as learning from many teachers, getting to class on time, finding his or her locker, getting on the right bus, knowing where the cafeteria is, navigating crowded hallways and doing more homework.
- ✓ Talk to your child about the physical and social changes and the social pressures that often occur in the middle school years.

Parental involvement

- ✓ Communicate often with your child, the teachers, and the principal, vice principal or both.
- ✓ Visit the school. Be knowledgeable about the place where your child learns.

The middle school years are a time of transition: emotional, physical, social and academic. Your support and involvement are essential at this stage of your child's growth. Research shows that pre-teens do better in school when their parents are involved in their lives.

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