



The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

Home & School

“Together We Can Make a Difference”

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Skip Forsyth

Every school year is filled with firsts - first grade, first day, first period. In addition to the obvious... First time to ride a school bus. First “A” and perhaps first “F.” First time being disciplined by a person other than a family member. First role in a school play. First field trip to a museum. First cell phone. First time to see or experience bullying. First high stakes test – STAAR. First time home alone after school. First time to play in school athletics. First time being rejected or eating alone. First girlfriend or boyfriend and first breakup. First time to be tempted with tobacco or alcohol or drugs. First time to play a musical instrument. First instrumental competition for a “chair.” First part-time job. Receiving driving license – first time to drive to school without parents and perhaps first automobile accident. First prom.

What is a parent and school to do when kids encounter challenges and setbacks?

Learn the lesson of hurdles! As a kid in my small junior high, most of the boys participated on the track team in the spring. I was short and husky, and not particularly fast. Nevertheless, the coach had us try every track and field event at least one time at a practice session during the season. I remember the hurdles. I was terrible. I didn't clear one hurdle without touching it. Several times I stumbled over the hurdle and crashed on the cinder track. I hated it, BUT once a week I would try to run the hurdles. Once a week I would try to improve a little bit. Once a week I learned how to fall forward, and then keep going.

Some of the “firsts” children encounter will be hurdles. It seems to me the task of parents and school is to:

- Help children recognize the hurdles for what they are. Some are challenging opportunities, such as a science fair or spelling bee. Some are dangerous, such as alcohol and drugs and inappropriate use of social media.
- Train children how to overcome the hurdles through character development, positive social skills, learning how to be a problem-solver, applying good ol' common sense, and avoiding risky choices and behaviors when necessary.
- Support children when they mess up, and they will mess up, but teach them how to fall forward and then encourage them to keep going.

During the school year children will face hurdles and stumble, but they can finish the “race” with perseverance and confidence if we provide consistent, positive reinforcement.

BACK TO SCHOOL

The first day of school
Not sure what's in store.
A brand new teacher
And a whole lot more.

Making new friends
And seeing old ones too.
What will we learn?
I haven't a clue.

Will we learn about animals?
Or outer space?
Will we learn to be writers?
Or in gym will we race?

I have so many questions
About how this year will be.
A brand new adventure
We'll just have to wait and see.

Author Unknown



Tips for Successful Parent-Teacher Conferences at Your Child's School

During the academic year, most schools in the U.S. invite parents to come in for regular parent-teacher conferences. This is a standard part of the school's efforts to build a strong partnership between parents and teachers.

Knowing that you have to go to your child's school may make you feel nervous, intimidated, or frustrated as you consider the language and cultural differences that you face here in the U.S. You may wonder what to expect, and what is expected of you.

In this article you will find:

- Answers to your questions about parent-teacher conferences
- Tips about how you can prepare for the conference
- Suggested questions and topics to discuss



This information can be applied to students in elementary, middle, and high schools. Your child's school may also provide information about parent-teacher conferences in your language.

Frequently asked questions

What is a parent-teacher conference? A parent-teacher conference is a meeting between you and your child's teacher to discuss your child's progress in school.

You can request a conference with your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns about your child by contacting the teacher to set up a meeting.

What if I don't speak English? If you do not feel comfortable speaking with your child's teacher in English, you have the right to request that an interpreter attend the conference, or to bring an interpreter that you trust to the conference. If you request an interpreter from the school, make the request at least 24 hours before the conference.

Why does my child's teacher want to meet with me? Teachers believe that a strong partnership between the home and school will help children succeed in school. If your child's teacher schedules a meeting with you, it does not necessarily mean that your child is in trouble. Teachers welcome input from the parents about their children, such as information about what the child likes to do or what they are good at. Teachers also understand that each student is different and learns differently, and that no one knows your child better than you do. You may provide some insight that will help the teacher work more effectively with your child at school.

What information will my child's teacher give me? Your child's teacher will probably show you some samples of your child's work, and may discuss your child's progress, grades, homework, and behavior. The teacher may also ask you about any concerns that she has about your child, as well as questions about his study habits. These questions are intended to help the teacher provide your child with any additional support needed in the classroom, and are not intended to make you feel uncomfortable or defensive.

Why is it important to go to a parent-teacher conference? Going to the parent-teacher conference provides you and the teacher an opportunity to work together as a team in order to help your child. You each have an important perspective to share — as the parent, you know your child's personality, habits, strengths, and weaknesses. The teacher, on the other hand, has been trained professionally in the best methods of teaching, meeting individual student's needs, how to control classroom behavior, and how to help your child succeed in school. Working together you will be able to find ways that each of you can provide the appropriate and necessary support for your child.

Before the conference

The conference with your child's teacher will be more efficient and productive if you do some preparation beforehand. To prepare for the conference:

Talk with your child. Ask your child what his/her strongest and weakest subjects are, and which subjects he/she likes most and least. Ask your child if he/she would like you to speak about anything particular with the teacher. Make sure that your child understands that you and the teacher are meeting to help him, so that he doesn't worry about the conference.

Prepare a list of notes. Make a list of topics that you want to discuss with the teacher and that you think the teacher should know, such as your concerns about the school, the child's home life, any major changes in your family, or anything that is worrying your child.

Prepare a list of questions. Preparing a list of questions will help you have a productive conversation with your child's teacher. Prioritize the questions in case you run out of time during the conference.

The following questions are examples that will help you learn more about your child's progress in school:

- ✓ What is my child expected to learn this year?
- ✓ How will this be evaluated?
- ✓ What are my child's strongest and weakest subjects? (ask for example)
- ✓ Does my child hand homework in on time?
- ✓ What types of tests and evaluations will my child have to take this year?
- ✓ How are my child's test-taking skills?
- ✓ Is my child participating in class discussions and activities?
- ✓ How are my child's social skills?
- ✓ Does my child seem happy at school?
- ✓ Have you noticed any unusual behaviors?
- ✓ Has my child missed any classes other than his/her excused absences?
- ✓ Do you think my child is reaching his/her potential?
- ✓ What can I do at home to help support his/her academic progress?

After the conference

Talk with your child. Talk about the conference with your child.

Start working on the action plan. Set the action plan in motion.

Keep in touch with the teacher. Stay in touch with your child's teachers. This will help you strengthen the parent-teacher partnership.

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/tips-successful-parent-teacher-conferences-your-childs-school>

Building Capacity



ESSA, Section 1116 (e)(1-14) *Building Capacity for Involvement*

“To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school, parents, and the community to improve academic achievement, each school and LEA shall provide various services and trainings.”

A district and school MUST:

- Provide assistance to parents to understand the State’s academic standards, the State and local assessment standards, and how to work with educators to improve their child’s achievement
- Provide materials and training to help parents work with their child, such as literacy and technology training
- Educate teachers, principals, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of the contribution of parents and how to communicate with and work with parents as equal partners
- In so far as it is feasible, coordinate and integrate parent involvement programs and activities with other Federal, State, and local programs
- Provide information to families in a uniform format, and to the extent practicable, in a language parents can understand
- Provide reasonable support for family engagement activities

A district and school MAY:

- Involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other school staff
- Provide necessary literacy training using funds from this program if the LEA has exhausted other fund options
- Pay reasonable and necessary expenses including transportation and child-care costs to maintain parent participation in school-related meetings and trainings
- Train parents to enhance the involvement of other parents
- Arrange school meetings at a variety of times, and conduct in-home conferences
- Adopt and implement model approaches to improving parent and family engagement
- Establish a districtwide parent advisory council (required for Migrant program and their families) to provide advice regarding the parental involvement program
- Develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities

RAISING MENTALLY STRONG KIDS

Mentally strong kids are prepared for the challenges of the world. They’re able to tackle problems, bounce back from failure, and cope with hardships. To be clear, mental strength isn’t about acting tough or suppressing emotions. It’s also not about being unkind or acting defiant.

Instead, mentally strong kids are resilient and they have the courage and confidence to reach their full potential. Helping kids develop mental strength requires a three-pronged approach:

- ✓ teaching them to replace negative thoughts with more realistic thoughts
- ✓ helping them learn to control their emotions so their emotions don’t control them
- ✓ showing them how to take positive action



TEACH SPECIFIC SKILLS. Discipline should be about teaching your kids to do better next time, not making them suffer for their mistakes.

LET YOUR CHILD MAKE MISTAKES. Teach your child that mistakes are part of the learning process so he doesn’t feel ashamed or embarrassed for getting something wrong.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO FACE FEARS HEAD-ON. If your child avoids anything scary, she’ll never gain the confidence she needs to handle feeling uncomfortable. Cheer her on, praise her efforts, and reward her for being brave and she’ll learn that she’s a capable kid who can handle stepping outside her comfort zone.

Parts taken from an article in: <https://www.verywellfamily.com/tips-for-raising-mentally-strong-kids-1095020>

Helping Young Children with Learning Disabilities at Home

Many parents of young children with learning disabilities ask what they can do at home to help their youngsters. Generally, the first step is to try to understand the child's difficulties and to consider how these weaknesses might impact on self-help skills, communication, discipline, play and independence. Focus on your child's strengths in order to build self-esteem and to help them become an integral part of the family.



Like all parents, they need to consider the delicate balance between providing too much or too little assistance for the child, a balance between under and over expecting what the child can do independently. Understanding the child's needs takes time because needs change with age and with expectations at home, in social settings, and in school. New and unexpected problems may arise as they do with all children. However, youngsters with special needs often require more understanding and support, not only from parents and teachers but from siblings.

Symptoms Associated with Learning Disabilities. The symptoms associated with learning disabilities vary. Some have difficulty processing auditory information while others have problems with visual tasks. Some have difficulty processing language, whereas others have problems with nonverbal skills such as interpreting facial expressions, learning to play, or dress themselves. Some have no problems until they enter school, though indications of pre-academic weaknesses may be evident.

Recommendations. The first step is always understanding. It is important to remember that the population of children with learning disabilities is heterogeneous. The children are similar because they all have adequate hearing, vision, mental ability, and many strengths, but their specific disabilities and symptoms differ.

- **Focus on the child's strengths, not the weaknesses.** Every child is unique; all can contribute to the joys of family life. Find special times and jobs that allow the child to contribute to the group.
- **Set reasonable expectations.** Try not to expect more than the child is capable of doing, but expect the best that he or she can produce, with and then without assistance. The child may need to be taught simple skills, and then complex tasks can be taught step by step, gradually reducing the supports as the child makes progress.
- **Provide the guidance needed for independence.** Climbing the steps on a sliding board requires some degree of sure-footedness, as well as visual and visual-motor skills. Crossing the street requires very careful visual scanning and time estimation. Some children with learning disabilities will need careful guidance and instruction in order to master these and other skills requiring attention and visual perception.
- **Maintain consistent discipline.** Give clear, simple explanations, particularly if children have language problems. They may not understand the vocabulary, lengthy instructions, and complex sentences used at home or in school. Our guideline is "firmness with warmth," together with consistency.
- **Foster intellectual curiosity.** Try to excite children about the learning process. Parents and teachers who enjoy learning themselves can convey such an attitude to their children. Many infants and toddlers seem to be naturally curious as they look at objects, explore them, turn them, try to move them, etc., whereas others need guidance.

<https://ldaamerica.org/helping-young-children-with-learning-disabilities-at-home/>

SAT and ACT Test Dates

Though you can't register for the 2018 – 2019 SAT and ACT test dates just yet, you can put them on your calendar now.

SAT Test Dates:	Register by Date:	ACT Test Dates:	Register by Date:
August 25, 2018	July 25, 2018	September 8, 2018	August 5, 2018
October 6, 2018	September 6, 2018	October 27, 2018	September 21, 2018
November 3, 2018	October 3, 2018	December 8, 2018	November 2, 2018
December 1, 2018	November 1, 2018	February 9, 2019	January 11, 2019
March 8, 2019	February 8, 2019	April 13, 2019	March 8, 2019
May 4, 2019	April 4, 2019	June 8, 2019	May 3, 2019
June 1, 2019	May 1, 2019		

PARENTS OVERPRESSURING KIDS TO WIN



It's a proud moment for parents when their child wins in sports, but too much pressure to win could be problematic, according to Dr. Max Trenerry, a Mayo Clinic sports psychologist. He says overpressuring kids to win at a young age sometimes can make them want to quit competing in sports altogether.

"It starts to affect motivation, and, when the pressure to win is out there, we start to lose our young athletes around age 13," Dr. Trenerry says.

He says kids are able to compare their talent and skill level to other kids around age 9. By age 13, kids are often turned off to sports altogether if they feel their skill

level doesn't match their parents' expectations.

Therefore he says parents should leave coaching to the coach and instead be your child's safety net.

Being a safety net means helping kids prepare and develop good sports habits when they're young. It also means letting children talk about their performances on their own terms, letting them compete when and how they choose, and making sure they feel connected to something bigger than themselves in their team.

By Ian Roth, Source: [Mayo Clinic News Network](#)

BACK TO SCHOOL

Starting the new school year can be a time of great excitement... and anxiety. Help calm your child's fears (and your own) with these teacher-approved tips.

Meet the new teacher.

For kids, one of the biggest back-to-school fears is "Will I like my new teacher?" Breaking the ice early on is one of the best ways to calm everyone's fears. Take advantage of your school's open house or back-to-school night. Some teachers welcome phone calls or e-mails — another great opportunity to get to know each other before the year begins.

If personal contact with the teacher isn't possible, try locating the teacher's picture on a school website or in a yearbook, so your child can put a name with a face. If your child's teacher sends a welcome letter, be sure to read the letter together.

Tour the school.

If your school hosts an open house, be sure to go. Familiarizing your child with her environment will help her avoid a nervous stomach on the first day. Together you can meet her teacher, find her desk, or explore the playground.

With an older child, you might ask him to give you a tour of the school. This will help refresh his memory and yours.

Connect with friends.

A familiar friend can make all the difference when heading back to school. You might try calling parents from last year's class and finding out which children are in your child's class this year. Refresh these relationships before school starts by scheduling a play date or a school carpool.

Tool up.

Obtain the class supply list and take a special shopping trip with your child. Having the right tools will help him feel prepared. While keeping basic needs in mind, allow for a couple of splurges like a cool notebook or a favorite-colored pen. These simple pleasures make going back to school a lot more fun.

School supply lists also provide great insight into the schoolwork ahead. Get your child excited about upcoming projects by explaining how new supplies might be used.

Chat about today's events and tomorrow's plans.

While it is important to support learning throughout the summer, don't spend the last weeks of summer vacation reviewing last year's curriculum. All kids need some down time before the rigors of school begin. For some kids, last-minute drills can heighten anxiety, reminding them of what they've forgotten instead of what they remember.

Ease into the routine.

Switching from a summer to a school schedule can be stressful to everyone in the household. Avoid first-day-of-school mayhem by practicing your routine a few days in advance. Set the alarm clock, go through your morning rituals, and get in the car or to the bus stop on time. Routines help children feel comfortable, and establishing a solid school routine will make the first day of school go much smoother.

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/back-to-school/back-to-school-tips-for-parents/>





Although no parent wants to leave his or her child at home unsupervised, the fact is many parents have no choice but to leave the kids home alone. Some are left for 30 minutes while mom runs to the supermarket. But many are left for longer periods -- usually the hours between the end of school and a parent's return from work.

Parents may feel backed into a corner when their child is too old to have a babysitter but lacks the "home-alone" experience. So how do you know if your child is ready to be left "in charge?"

Before you make the big decision to leave your child in charge at home, make sure they are mature enough for such a big responsibility. Although some states have laws that determine the age at which children may be left unsupervised, most leave parents to figure it out on their own. The following guidelines should help.

Ready, Set, Solo

Once you've decided your child is ready to be left alone for a few hours, you need to prepare him well. Go through a list of hypothetical situations, and even consider role-playing with him. Here is a partial list of what to review:

- If someone calls or stops by the house, your child should never reveal that he's home alone. He should have rehearsed some answers such as, "My mom is busy in the kitchen. Can I take a message?"
- Your child should carry her key with her at all times. Don't label the key with your address or phone number in case it gets lost, and instruct her to have it in her hand when she arrives home. If she stands outside the door fumbling, someone may notice.
- Tell your child never to enter the house if something looks suspect: A door is ajar, or a window is broken or open.
- Have a good backup plan. If something appears awry, your child should have a "Plan B." Ask a reliable neighbor or relative to be on call for such emergencies until you get home.
- Instruct your child to call you as soon as he gets into the house. That way, you'll know he's safe, and you can go over any details including homework, snacks, and visitors with him.
- Your child should not let anyone into the house for any reason. Even if someone claims, "Your mom and dad told me to come get you," she should know to ask for a code word that you agreed to ahead of time.
- Set up a list of emergency phone numbers and instructions for your youngster (the way you would for a sitter), and post it on the fridge.

Make sure your child knows basic first aid and fire safety, including how to use the 911 system. He must know to give your full address and stay on the phone until the operator has all the details and tells him to hang up.

Even if things seem to be going well after several weeks, you should check up on the situation periodically. Come home early one day and see what your son or daughter is really up to. Or ask a neighbor to check in occasionally. With good communication and organization, you and your child should achieve home-alone success.

Taken in part from: <https://www.parents.com/kids/safety/stranger-safety/home-alone/>

FREEZER BANANA BITES

Bananas have some terrific benefits for children:

- ✓ Bananas are a natural antacid!
- ✓ They are high in B vitamins, which means they can help improve nerve function.
- ✓ They are a good source of fiber. Many kids have bowel trouble, fiber is a great way to relieve that.



1. Cut bananas into chunks. Arrange on a cookie sheet lined with wax paper or parchment paper with a toothpick in each banana.
2. Freeze bananas for about 1-2 hours.
3. Melt some chocolate chips
4. Take bananas out of the freezer and dip each one in the melted chocolate, and then in a bowl full of coconut.
5. Return bananas to the freezer until the chocolate hardens up!

Moms

&

DADS

Children need both a mother and a father, and it is not just about family solidarity. Kids need both the nurturing style that most mothers bring to the family as well as a more challenging and real-world based style that seem to be innate to most fathers.

So how do the parenting styles of fathers and mothers differ, and how can we blend them in a family to benefit the children as they grow up and prepare for life?

A Mother's Style

Mothers tend to find themselves generally in a more nurturing role. They seem to have an innate ability to be discerning with their children. There is simply an emotional connection between mother and child that a father simply doesn't get.

In addition, mothers tend to verbalize a lot more with the children. Part of that tendency is that women generally are more verbal than men. That style tends to manifest itself in parenting where Mom offers more words of affirmation, tends to express her expectations more clearly and to "talk out" issues involving discipline.



Mothers generally put their children's needs ahead of their own. She seems to come "pre-wired" to self-sacrifice; perhaps that starts with a pregnancy where a Mom's full-time physical care role is so dramatic.

A Father's Style

Fathers are generally more focused on having high expectations of their children and encouraging them to deliver on those consistently.

They tend to focus less on making a child feel good or secure and more on challenging them and helping them prepare to cope with the real world. The emotional connection that a mother has is not often replicated in fathers.

Fathers, while they do not verbalize as much as mothers do, tend to be more direct and use fewer words. They may seem to be "too tough" to the moms, but their toughness is rooted in helping kids be prepared for real life. From a disciplinary standpoint, they tend to impose consequences more quickly and then talk later.



Working together to blend your parenting styles takes a lot of work and specific focus. But the positive impact on your children as you try to be effective co-parents can be truly amazing and worth all the work. Put your children first, recognize that different styles are not bad, just different, and communicate together as parents and you will find this whole parenting business a much more rewarding process.

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