

WEB RESOURCES

There are a number of Web resources available that offer guidance to parents wanting to develop a strong partnership with their child's teachers and schools. Following are a few parents may want to explore further:

NC School Report Cards, www.ncreportcards.org, is a terrific starting point for parents wanting to know more about their schools and how they compare with similar schools in their district and across the state.

US Department of Education, www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml offers a number of resources for parents to help their child be successful in school.

National Education Association, www.nea.org/parents/index.html offers resources to help parents get involved in their child's education.

The National PTA, www.ncpta.org, offers a wealth of information including legislative updates and ways for parents to get involved.

Public Schools of North Carolina, www.ncpublicschools.org, provides a copy of the state curriculum, The North Carolina Standard Course of Study, by grade level and subject.

The American School Counselor Association, <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?pl=327&sl=130&contentid=130> offers articles for parents to support their children as they transition through grade spans.



Tips from the Experts for Building Strong Partnerships

Following are some additional tips offered by North Carolina's past and present Teachers of the Year for building strong partnerships with your child's teacher(s):

- Make contact with your child's teacher(s) early by attending open house or planning a visit to his/her classroom(s). Not only does this let your child know that you care about his/her education, it also signals to the teacher(s) that you want to stay involved in his/her education.
- Make yourself accessible to your child's teacher(s). Let them know how to get in touch with you and when is the best time to reach you. Provide them with your e-mail address and other home and work telephone numbers.
- Regularly communicate with your child's teacher(s) through conferences, phone calls, e-mails or notes. Let them know of any problems your child may be having or academic successes you've seen at home. If your child is having difficulties, ask the teacher for some ideas, suggestions, books, or worksheets that you can use at home to help your child.
- Send the teacher(s) a positive note once in a while. Be thankful for all they do. Teachers really do have your child's best interests at heart and it's important to let them know you appreciate the efforts they are making on his/her behalf.
- Once in a while have lunch with your son or daughter at school. This gives parents an informal opportunity to talk to the teacher and see how everything is going at school.
- Make time to talk with your child and really listen to what they have to say. Family dinner time is important and provides a great opportunity to talk about the day's events.
- Nurture your child's self-esteem. A healthy self-esteem will give your child the confidence to do well in school.



MAKING the GRADE

Communication is Key to Strong Partnerships

North Carolina Newspapers in Education
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MAKING the GRADE

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Communication is Key to Strong Partnerships

When teachers and parents communicate, they establish a stronger learning environment for students by coordinating the efforts at home and at school. Teachers or principals often contact parents when their child is experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties, when they want to discuss future plans for the child, or when the school is looking for parents to serve as volunteers. It helps students, teachers and parents when the lines of communication are opened long before a special need arises.

Parents and teachers have the same goal— to help children love learning and to be successful. This tabloid offers suggestions for how parents can strengthen their partnerships with their children's teachers.

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BEGINNING AND ENDING THE SCHOOL YEAR ON THE RIGHT FOOT: HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD IN SCHOOL

It's important for parents to establish positive communication with their child's school from the first day of school to the last. Teachers are an important partner in your child's education and future. At the beginning of the school year, make an effort to attend your school's open house or make an appointment with your child's teacher or teachers. Learn more about what they expect from your child during the school year, including homework, and how you can support their efforts at home. Promptly read all of the material that your child's teachers send home or by e-mail and make a note of important dates, expectations and classroom rules.



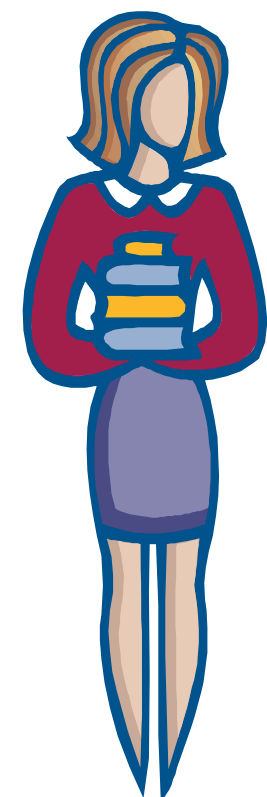
It's very important for parents to have realistic expectations. If your child is experiencing problems, talk with his or her teacher to find out what the problem may be. If a second opinion is needed, ask to meet with your principal, his or her designee, or your school's counselor. As parents or guardians, you play a crucial role in your child's learning. Following are a number of ways you can support your child's success in school.

EXPECT EVERYONE TO READ

- Read to preschool children at least 20 minutes a day or have older children read to you. Make reading a natural part of their daily routine.
- Add to your children's enjoyment of reading by discussing each book, newspaper article, or magazine they read. It helps them learn to express themselves. You'll enjoy the conversations, too.
- If you have difficulty reading, tell your children stories. Hearing about their grandparents, your family history and your own experiences will be interesting and rewarding for your children, and will help them develop an appreciation of language, storytelling and the past.
- Limit your child's TV viewing to no more than two hours a day. Studies show that while a little bit of television viewing every day is OK, excessive time at the set is directly linked to poor school performance.

EXPECT HARD WORK

- Provide your children with a regular, quiet place where they can do homework. Set up a place with few distractions, but close enough so they can ask you questions.
- Expect every child to take tough academic courses. In an increasingly complex world, all children should be prepared to meet the challenges they will encounter.
- Notice when your child completes his or her homework and provide encouragement. Recognize the progress he or she is making. Praise the steps they've taken and the efforts they've made to complete assignments on time.
- Encourage your child to talk to his or her teachers if he or she does not understand an assignment.



EXPECT MORE

- Find out what your child should know at the end of the school year. Make sure your children are acquiring the skills and knowledge they need.
- Understand that you may have to make some sacrifices in your effort to improve your school. Show the school faculty and administration that you're willing to put your time into meetings, research, discussions—whatever it takes to improve your school.
- Educate yourself about the opportunities available in your school district. Ask for real data and information about student performance and progress. Find out if advanced courses are offered, and whether students have additional learning opportunities before and after school and during summers. Look for signs that the community supports the school district.

EXPECT LEARNING TO BE AROUND-THE-CLOCK ENDEAVOR

- Talk about school every day. Discuss with your child information sent home from school. When your child knows that you think school is important, he or she will take it more seriously.
- Encourage schools and community groups to develop partnerships to support students who want or need more learning time beyond the regular school day and year. Setting up additional time for structured learning can give students more opportunities to master tough subjects.
- Reinforce learning by asking your children how they feel about events they may see on TV or read about in the newspaper then discuss with them your position. Remember, learning does not stop once your children leave school.

State Board of Education Adopts Parent Involvement Policy

In June 2005, the North Carolina State Board of Education adopted a policy to formally recognize the importance of parent and family involvement in the success of students. This policy focuses on the key collaboration that should be in place between educators and parents and families. The following eight essential elements of strong parent involvement programs are included in the policy:

- communication that is regular, two-way and meaningful;
- promoting and supporting responsible parenting;
- informing and involving parents in children's learning activities;
- ensuring that parents and guardians are welcome in school;
- including parents/guardians as partners in decisions that affect their children and families;
- assessing the parents' informational needs and providing parent training based on those needs;
- collaborating with community agencies and other organizations to provide resources to strengthen school programs, families and student learning; and
- promoting health awareness among parents/guardians.



MAKING THE MOST OF PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

The following is reprinted with the permission of the National Education Association

You've been asked to attend a regularly scheduled "report card" conference with your child's teacher. Or you've gotten a special note from your child's teacher asking to see you. In either case, you might be a little nervous.

Well, relax. Teachers don't want to put parents on the spot. They just like to meet with parents from time to time to discuss how to help students do their best in school.

All children learn in different ways. They have their own individual personalities, and their own listening and work habits. To help their students learn new knowledge and skills, teachers must know as much as they can about each child's likes and dislikes. No one knows more about these things than you, the parents. And no one has more influence over your children than you.

Working together, you and the teacher can help your child have a successful school year.

GETTING READY

Each teacher will probably come prepared with samples of your children's work and with ideas to help them do even better in school. You should get ready for each conference, too.

Talk to your children before the conference. Find out what they think are their best subjects and what subjects they like the least. Find out why. Also, ask your children if there is anything they would like you to talk about with their teachers. Make sure your children don't worry about the meeting. Help them understand that you and their teacher(s) are meeting together in order to help them.

BEFORE YOU GO TO THE SCHOOL, WRITE NOTES TO YOURSELF ABOUT:

- things about your child's life at home, personality, problems, habits, and hobbies you feel it's important for the teacher to know;
- your concerns about the school's programs or policies;
- questions about your child's progress; and
- how you and the teacher can work together to help your child.

THE CONFERENCE

It's a good idea to ask your most important questions first, just in case time runs out. Be sure to ask the teacher for specific suggestions on ways to help your child do better. This is the most important part of the meeting. It will become your action plan. If the teacher says something you don't quite understand, don't be shy about asking for an explanation. It's a good idea to end the conference by summing up decisions you've made together. If needed, ask to meet again.

SOME GOOD QUESTIONS TO ASK INCLUDE:

- Is my child in different groups for different subjects? Why?
- How well does my child get along with others?
- What are my child's best and worst subjects?
- Is my child working up to his or her ability?
- Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?
- Has my child missed any classes other than ones I contacted the school about?
- Have you noticed any sudden changes in the way my child acts? For example, have you noticed any squinting, tiredness or moodiness that might be a sign of physical or other problems?
- What kinds of tests are being done? What do the tests tell about my child's progress?
- How does my child handle taking tests?



AFTER THE CONFERENCE

Start immediately on the action plan you and the teacher worked out together. Discuss the plan with your child. Make sure he or she knows that you and the teacher care. To see if the action plan is working, watch your child's behavior and check your child's class work and homework.

Stay in regular touch with the teacher to discuss the progress your child is making. Meeting with your child's teachers should help build strong parent-teacher partnerships—partnerships that are needed if you and your child's teachers are to reach your common goal of helping your child get the best education possible.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:



- Start the conference right: be there on time, and plan not to run over the amount of time that has been set aside.
- If you are a working parent who can't arrange to meet during regular hours, make this clear to the teacher and try to set up a time to meet that is good for both of you.
- The best conferences are those in which both teachers and parents stay calm and try hard to work together for one purpose and one purpose only: to help your child do well. Arguing or blaming each other for problems your child is having, helps no one.