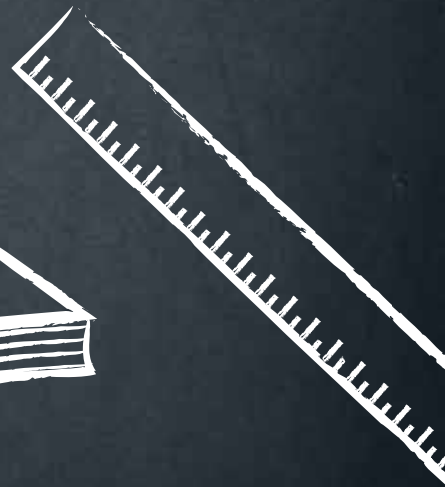


PARENT ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Parents and Educators Working Together for Student Success



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

Communities In Schools of Georgia

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WELCOME

Communities In Schools (CIS) of Georgia coordinated the production of this Parent Engagement Toolkit in an effort to support Georgia's school districts by providing resources for education professionals to support children's academic achievement.

This is a resource designed to provide practical information for all districts to better support and engage parents so that their relationship within their child's school is more productive, enjoyable and beneficial. Utilizing the information provided in the toolkit in addition to utilizing the CIS website at www.cisga.org will provide numerous resources for achieving academic success.

The toolkit includes:

- Research-based strategies for overcoming barriers to parental engagement in school and at home.
- Information for parents of elementary, middle and high school children, as well as parents of special needs students and those who speak English as a second language.
- Practical, fun activities professionals can use to engage parents and children.
- Inspiration and ideas to help encourage parents to create a home environment that will foster good study habits.

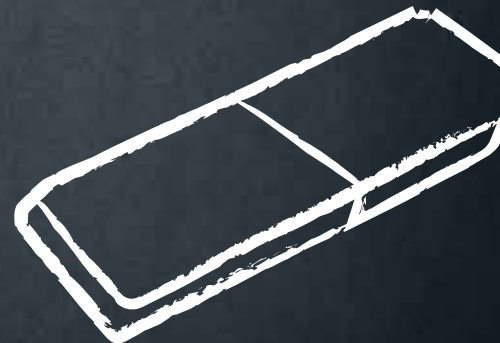
We hope this toolkit will enhance your efforts and be useful as you empower families to partner with their home school. The goal of our combined efforts will engage more families to ensure student success, increase graduation rates and help students succeed both in school and in life.

Funding for this project was made possible by a federal grant issued by the U.S. Department of Education, Award Number U310A060227-08, Project 84.310A Communities In Schools of Georgia's State Parental Information and Resource Centers Project.

1

Overview of an Effective Parent Resource Center

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CHAPTER 1

Overview of an Effective Parent Resource Center

Parents want their children to succeed in school, but often don't know how to form a partnership with their child's school. Parents may be unaware that they are welcome at school. Some might be afraid to visit the classroom because they had a negative experience as a child. Parents might think that as long as the teacher doesn't summon them, they are not needed.

The Parent Resource Centers help strengthen the parent-school partnership by creating a safe and welcoming atmosphere for parents to learn how to support their child's education at school and at home. The centers inspire parents to believe their role is important and that they are capable of being active partners in their child's education.

Given the right tools, parents can overcome the barriers that prevent them from walking confidently into their child's school, helping with homework and being an education advocate.

This kit will provide you with the tools you need. It includes need-to-know information for parents in an easy-to-understand format as well as templates for home-school communications and parental involvement activities.

This toolkit contains a variety of activities for families with children at all grade levels including elementary, middle and high school. Every school community is different, and not every idea will apply to every school. But by trying different ideas, the Parent Resource Centers can find the strategies, programs and approaches that work.

Most parents have the desire to get involved – they just need how-to, motivation and support. The centers serve as a one-stop shop that meets all of these needs.

Why should parents get involved?

Research consistently shows that children whose parents are involved in their education do better on average than children whose parents are not involved. Children with involved parents tend to have:

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better school attendance
- Increased motivation
- Higher self-esteem
- Fewer discipline problems
- Fewer instances of violent behavior

Getting parents on board

Despite the undisputed importance of parental engagement, schools have a difficult time communicating to parents their role as partner, according to a 2011 study led by Michelle LaRocque, an associate professor at Florida Atlantic University. In the study, the authors write:

The value of parental participation is widely accepted, but participation is difficult to promote and maintain. Schools are becoming more diverse, and a great challenge facing educators is meeting the needs of all students.

Students and families are different and have different needs. “There is no one best way for parental involvement,” the authors write. “Parents base their participation on a variety of factors such as comfort level, knowledge, self confidence, motivation and language skills.”

By understanding the specific and diverse needs of the students and families they serve, schools can bring parents to the table. To do so, schools may need to adjust the way teachers communicate with parents, implement family events that provide explicit direction on helping their children at home and adopt a family-friendly school culture that makes parents feel welcome.

The more parents are involved, the greater the benefits are for their child. With guidance and support, parents who are not involved can learn to help their children and become active, effective partners.

How do Georgia schools get parents engaged?

Given the many challenges and complexities involved by engaging parents in their children’s education, schools must make a concerted effort. In a landmark study of existing research, Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp identified the common threads that create a culture of parental engagement. This research led to updated standards that spell out what parents, schools and communities should do together to support student success.

These are the standards:

Standard 1	Welcoming all families into the school community Families are active participants in the life of the school and feel welcomed, valued and connected to each other, to school staff and to what students are learning and doing in class.
Standard 2	Communicating effectively Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.
Standard 3	Supporting student success Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students’ learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Standard 4	Speaking up for every child Families are empowered to be advocates to all children.
Standard 5	Sharing power Families and school staff members are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence and create policies, practices and programs.
Standard 6	Collaborating with community Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families and staff to expand learning opportunities, community services and civic participation.

How can the Parent Resource Centers help?

For many reasons related to culture and history, parents often lack confidence when it comes to school involvement. The role of the parent center is to help parents build their confidence so they can be partners in their child's education.

The centers help parents get past their challenges by providing:

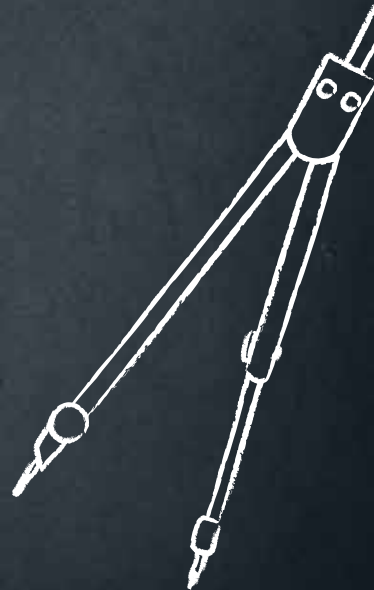
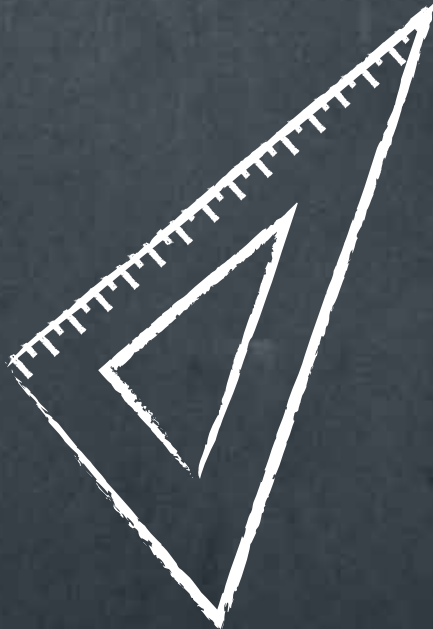
- ✓ **Information:** A primary role of the center should be to take the mystery out of education through collaborations with school staff and local parental involvement programs. Many parents have not entered a school since they were students. They may not realize, for example, that courses students take as early as middle school can determine the type of colleges they can attend. The courses students take in high school will influence higher education options and careers. Sharing information with parents about curriculum, testing and policies should empower parents.
- ✓ **Support:** The resource centers provide parents with emotional support to overcome their fears and challenges. The key to reaching all parents, even those from low-income, rural and limited-English-speaking homes, is to create fun and engaging programs that make getting involved seem attainable and desirable.
- ✓ **Compassion:** Children do better in school when they believe their teachers care about them. Likewise, Parent Resource Centers are most effective when staffed by professionals who demonstrate compassion and patience.

Creating a culture of parental involvement is a marathon, not a sprint. A diverse parent community might require several different approaches, and some parents might stubbornly resist outreach efforts, even as they insist they want to help their child.

The Parent Resource Centers should be a safe place where parents can get the support they need to succeed in their parenting journey. And by helping parents become partners in their child's education, the result will be more children reaching their academic potential and achieving their dreams and goals.

2

Curriculum: What Parents Need to Know



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CHAPTER 2

Curriculum: What Parents Need to Know

When parents know what their children are supposed to be learning in school, they are better able to help them succeed. But for many parents, it's hard to figure out what their child is learning because their child doesn't say much. Some students don't bring home homework folders or textbooks.

The best source of information is the child's teacher. Parents who aren't comfortable visiting the school or communicating with the teacher are more likely to remain in the dark about what their children are studying.

When a parent isn't aware of the curriculum, several problems arise:

1. Parents can't reinforce academic skills at home and plan appropriate enrichment activities.
2. Parents are left with only a report card to tell them when their child is falling behind. If they know what their child is supposed to be learning, they can ask questions that indicate whether their child is on track.
3. Parents have a hard time setting high expectations for their child, because they aren't clear what the expectations are at school.
4. Parents aren't able to steer their children toward the right middle and high school courses. Instead, these critical course decisions are left to school administrators.

How a Parent Resource Center can help:

- **Teaching parents about curriculum and why it's important:** Curriculum is what children are taught in school each day. For example: In third grade, children in Georgia learn about the concepts of whole and half numbers in math. By fifth grade, students should be able to include multimedia elements, such as videos and podcasts, into technology-assisted presentations.
- **Helping parents communicate with the teacher about curriculum:** Teachers know best what they are teaching. Some send information home and others post lessons on their website. Parents have a right to know what their child is learning, and teachers should be willing to answer any questions parents may have. For example, a parent might think that a book that their child was assigned is inappropriate for their child's age. The Parent Resource Center can help the parent craft written communication to the teacher (**Appendix B**). Sometimes parents are better able to articulate their concerns in writing.

- **Directing parents to online curriculum resources:** In Georgia, the statewide curriculum is known as the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). Some districts add their own curriculum concepts to the state curriculum, but every public school teacher must teach the CCGPS. The CCGPS represents the broad standards children are expected to meet. Each school and teacher will have much more specific information on these standards. The state curriculum can sometimes be difficult to navigate and understand. The Parent Resource Center should be able to help parents locate and interpret the curriculum, which may be found on the Georgia Department of Education website at: <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/CCGPS.aspx>.
- **Guiding parents and students through the process of choosing middle and high school courses in line with their college and career goals.** Students need to take the right classes early on to keep them on track to reach their education goals. Parents need to understand what their children are learning, as well as their capabilities and aspirations, so they can help them take the right courses.

What should my child know?

Often parents just want to know, generally, if their child is learning at grade level. It seems like a simple request, but it can be a hard question to answer. Georgia goes through curriculum changes as education trends change with the times.

In recent years, 45 states, including Georgia, have agreed to a set of basic standards all children should learn in each grade. Known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative, these standards can give parents an idea of the broad themes covered in each grade.

For more information, go to: <http://www.corestandards.org>.

Here is a sampling:

Kindergarten	
English and language arts	Use knowledge of letters and letter-sound correspondences to spell words as they sound
	Read and understand a story designed for early readers
Math	Count objects
	Solve addition and subtraction word problems
First grade	
English and language arts	Read grade-level text with understanding and fluency
	Learn from books, getting facts from books and enjoying books
Math	Add with a sum of 20 or less, and subtract from a number of 20 or less
	Use understanding of place value to add and subtract
	Solve addition and subtraction word problems

Second grade	
English and language arts	Read grade-level books with understanding and fluency
	Build a foundation of knowledge through reading and listening to books in social studies, science and other subjects
Math	Use understanding of place value to add and subtract
	Solve addition and subtraction word problems
	Measure lengths and solve word problems involving addition and subtraction of lengths
Third grade	
English and language arts	Read grade-level books, stories, poems and articles
	Write and speak well, following rules of punctuation and grammar
Math	Begin multiplication and division
	Understand fractions
Fourth grade	
English and language arts	Comprehend a range of grade-level books, stories, poems and informational texts such as biographies, articles or guidebooks about history, science or the arts
	Build knowledge of synonyms, antonyms and idioms, and use this knowledge to convey ideas more precisely
Math	Solve word problems with multi-digit numbers
	Solve word problems with fractions
Fifth grade	
English and language arts	Read closely, drawing evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction materials
	Communicate effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
Math	Multiply and divide fractions and solve related word problems
	Work with decimals
Sixth grade	
English and language arts	Read closely and cite evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction to support an analysis
	Develop a rich vocabulary of complex words, using these words to communicate more clearly
Math	Analyze and solve problems using concepts of ratios and working with variables and expressions
	Analyze and solve word problems using equations

Seventh grade	
English and language arts	Read closely and cite several sources of evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction to support an analysis
	Develop a rich vocabulary of complex words, using these words to communicate more clearly
Math	Analyze proportional relationships
	Solve arithmetic problems with positive and negative numbers
	Solve equations quickly and accurately
	Write equations to solve word problems
Eighth grade	
English and language arts	Read closely and cite several sources of evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction to support an analysis
	Develop a rich vocabulary of complex words, using these words to communicate more clearly
Math	Solve linear equations with one and two variables
	Understand functions
	Understand congruence and similarity of geometric figures

Curriculum activities:

- **Curriculum Night:** Most schools have a curriculum night at the start of the school year. Many parents do not know what curriculum night is and why it's important. The Parent Resource Centers should collaborate with the school to publicize and promote Curriculum Night (**Appendix C**). If possible, the center should also help make the event fun by offering door prizes, books and educational materials for parents to take home.
- **Make-It Take-It:** This is a fun hands-on activity to do before school ends for winter break or summer (**Appendix D**). Photocopy a variety of worksheets for each grade level and each subject. Give each parent a folder for each child (**Appendix E**). Let parents pick and choose the worksheets they think their child would most benefit from, creating custom homework packets. A good homework packet has some easy activities as well as some challenging ones. Teachers can help parents make good choices.
- **Curriculum Trivia:** Play curriculum trivia at the next PTA meeting. Call out a skill such as telling time, U.S. history or parts of a plant and have parents guess which grade starts learning that skill. If parents aren't likely to participate in a game where they have to speak in front of a crowd, create a quick game (**Appendix F, Appendix G**). Challenge parents to play the game while they wait for the meeting to start. Offer a useful prize, such as a grocery store or gas station gift card, for parents who get all the answers correct.

- **College is Coming:** This event is aimed at middle school parents, letting them know the post-secondary options available and what courses their children need to take to reach their college and career goals. This event could also include information on the PSAT, SAT and ACT, which are standardized tests that will impact college opportunities. Parents can also get an overview of how to pay for college (**Appendix I**).

Conclusion

Once parents start understanding curriculum, they will be empowered to ask more questions and get more involved. If they know their child is studying measurement, it's a great opportunity to cook with their child on Saturday morning. The child can measure the ingredients. If the curriculum indicates that the study of volcanoes is coming up, parents can take their child to a science museum or make a volcano at home. For instructions, go here: <http://www.sciencebob.com/experiments/volcano.php>. There are many free online resources for parents who want to do fun, educational activities with their child at home (**Appendix H**).

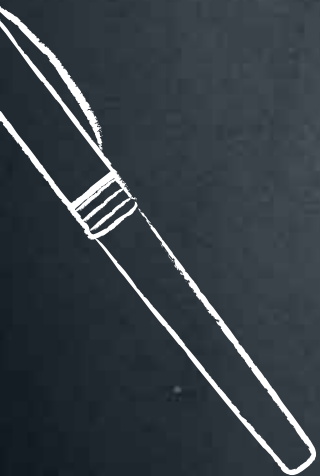
Curriculum can be overwhelming. Remind parents that they aren't expected to know every single thing each child learns on any given day. The goal is to understand the broad topics their child is expected to learn and to use that knowledge to help their child make connections in the real world.

Knowing what their child is learning and connecting classroom lessons to the child's real life helps parents feel connected to their child's education.

3

Helping Parents
Understand Testing

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CHAPTER 3

Helping Parents Understand Testing

Students get stressed out about standardized tests – and so do parents. Suddenly a flurry of communication comes home reminding parents of test dates, the importance of eating a healthy breakfast and getting a good night's sleep.

These tests are important!

Standardized test scores are used to judge how well a school is educating its students and how well a teacher is teaching. Most importantly, they let parents and teachers know how well a student is mastering the curriculum. At some grade levels, test scores determine whether a child is promoted to the next grade. Test scores are also used to place children in programs such as gifted and special education.

Yes, test scores matter – but they aren't worth stressing out over. Anxiety will hurt, not improve, a child's performance.

Here are some ways the Parent Resource Center should help parents manage test stress and help their children do their best:

- Help parents understand which standardized tests their children will take and how those test scores will be used.
- Provide information on the types of questions that will be on the test and the answer sheet format. Teachers may send home test-prep packets and sample answer sheets for students to practice filling out.
- Remind parents that a test does not define their child's worth.
- Encourage parents to emphasize at home the value of learning, not standardized test scores. Remind parents not to compare their children or broadcast their children's scores.
- If parents are worried their child will fail the test and be retained, help the parents understand the policy. In most cases, children have several chances to retake the test before being retained. Help parents access tutoring so their child can catch up.
- Remind parents to do everything they can at home to support their child during testing. Children need sleep, exercise and good nutrition. They also need encouragement, downtime and the opportunity to talk about their fears. Encourage parents to maintain a positive attitude about the test.
- Give parents the opportunity to talk about their test anxieties, separate from their children. Sometimes parents unintentionally push their anxieties onto their children.

Standardized Tests in Georgia

Primary assessments:

- **CRCT:** Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. This test is given to children in grades three through eight in math, reading, language arts, science and social studies. Third graders must pass the reading portion for promotion to fourth grade, though exceptions can be made. Fifth graders must pass reading and math. The CRCT measures how well a student has learned the Core Curriculum Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS).
- **CRCT – M:** This is a modified version of the CRCT. It is given to students who receive special education services.
- **GAA:** Georgia Alternate Assessment. This is a portfolio-style assessment for students with severe special needs.
- **EOCT:** End of Course Tests. These tests are given in 10 core subjects, including algebra, U.S. history, biology and American literature and composition. Any student taking one of these courses for credit is required to take the test, which counts as 20 percent of the student's final grade.
- **GHS GT:** Georgia High School Graduation Test. For many years, Georgia students had to pass this test to graduate. The test is being phased out. Starting with students who entered ninth grade in 2011–2012, the test is not required.
- **Writing assessments:** Writing tests are given in grades three, five, eight and eleven.

College preparation:

- **PSAT:** Pre-SAT. All Georgia tenth graders take the PSAT, which provides information on how prepared the student is for college. Some students will take the PSAT again as a junior. These scores are used for eligibility for National Merit Scholarships.
- **SAT:** A college admission test administered by the College Board. All colleges accept the SAT, and many colleges require the SAT or the ACT for admission.
- **ACT:** A college admissions test run by a different organization than the College Board. Almost all colleges accept the ACT, even though it is less popular than the SAT in Georgia. The test has a different format than the SAT, and some students perform better.

Other:

- **GCHILDREN:** Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills. This is an ongoing, flexible assessment of kindergarten students. It documents their academic and social development.
- **Lexile Framework for Reading:** This test assesses a child's reading level, so they can be matched with appropriate books.
- **NAEP:** National Assessment of Educational Progress. This national test is given to a random sampling of students in fourth and eighth grades to measure broad educational trends.

- **Access for ELLs:** Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State for English Language Learners. This test measures a child's English language proficiency and is given only to children who do not speak English as their first language.
- **Norm-referenced tests:** These tests compare students with their peers nationally. The most familiar one is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). This test is optional in Georgia. Some schools choose to administer it because it gives them data that can help them identify weaknesses.

The report card:

Standardized test scores are just one piece of the puzzle that shows how well your child is doing in school. A student's report card gives more specific insight into how a child performs on the tests and quizzes administered by the teacher.

Having both a school-issued report card and standardized test scores ensures accurate assessment of your child's skills.

Here are some tips for interpreting a school-issued report card:

- Make sure parents communicate to teachers the grading scales. Some schools may use different grading system for the early grades. Some use letter grades, while others use numerals.
- Feedback is meant to be helpful. If you don't understand something, take the initiative to explore it further and ask questions.
- When you look at a student's report card, focus on the positive first. Find a grade that's higher than expected and praise them for it. Then talk about any grades that are lower than expected. Say something simple like, "Tell me what happened in science."
- Talk about how you can work together to bring up a low grade. Maybe you need to change the homework routine and spend more time on a particular subject. Maybe even search to find an online resource that can help.
- Remember that a student is more than a report card. Remind them of their special characteristics and the many aspects of their personality that make them an important part of their environment.

Testing-related Activities:

- **All about testing:** Hold an informational event focused on testing (**Appendix K**). Give an overview of the tests students take, the purpose of the tests and the types of questions children will be asked. Talk about how parents can support their children throughout the year and during testing period. Possibly, draw parents to this event with great door prizes, such as a family night out at the movies, passes to the local zoo or science museum or a family dinner at a local restaurant.
- **Just-for-fun party:** Have a relaxed party for parents just before the CRCT or other test (**Appendix K**). Serve refreshments, play games, show a movie and encourage everyone to relax and have fun. Encourage students to do their best, but don't over-emphasize the test. Send parents home with reminders about how to prepare their children without contributing to their stress.

- **Test stress support groups:** Hold separate support groups for children and parents where they can talk about their anxiety about tests and other school issues. Enlist a school psychologist to moderate.
- **SAT and ACT Support:** For some students and parents, the SAT or ACT is the most stressful aspect of the college admissions process. They see the student's worth boiled down to a single number. This event gives parents and students a chance to learn about the SAT and ACT, find resources for SAT and ACT preparation and get help managing stress (**Appendix L**). Preparing for the SAT and ACT can be a stressful task, and many times students are unaware which one they should take. Some valuable insight is available in **Appendix M**.

Conclusion

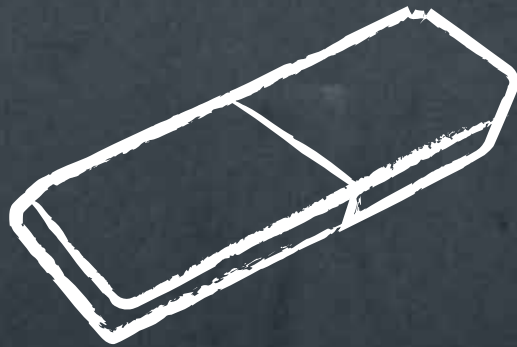
Standardized tests matter, but the learning that happens prior to the test is far more important. By helping parents put standardized testing in perspective, they can feel empowered to help their child with learning, rather than feel stressed out about their child struggling or possibly failing.

Parents can't sit down and take the test with their child, but they can offer support throughout the school year that will pay off on testing day, and their help will be instrumental.

4

Helping Reluctant Parents

ABC



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CHAPTER 4

Helping Reluctant Parents

When parents are reluctant to volunteer in a child's classroom or attend a PTA meeting, it's helpful to ask them why. Usually they say they're too busy.

Sometimes parents offer other reasons. Some might say they've had a bad school experience when they were in school and now they don't trust public education. Or parents say they don't feel comfortable in a classroom, often because they were not good students. Middle and high school parents often say their children don't want them at school.

The Parent Resource Center can help by acknowledging the parent's reason for not getting involved. Thank the parent for sharing the reason. Offer to help find a solution. Remind the parent that children whose parents are involved do better in school and have a greater chance of making it to graduation and college. Be gentle, but persistent.

Here are some common excuses and solutions:

I don't have time!

Parents today are busy. Many are juggling work, community and family responsibilities. Many are pursuing education themselves and helping extended family members. Many are involved in church and other activities that are meaningful to them.

When a parent says, "I don't have time," the parent is probably truly overcommitted.

Here are some ways to help find a solution to this very real problem:

- Acknowledge that a busy schedule makes it hard to find time for school involvement. Assure the parent that you can relate.
- Talk to the parent about the many different ways to get involved. Offer to help find something that works with the parent's schedule. For example, if the parent only has weekends available, let the parent know about an upcoming science festival or other educational weekend activity. Talk about educational activities the parent can do with her child over the weekend that tie into what the parent's child is studying in class.
- Start very small. If the parent has limited time to offer, propose something short, like helping in the classroom for just a few minutes (**Appendix N**).
- Becoming involved in the classroom can potentially present some barriers. Let parents know that any amount of time spent in the classroom or the school system will help improve the services offered by the school, ultimately improving the quality of education the student receives.

- Let parents of older students know they are still welcome and needed. Even if their child claims to be embarrassed by their parents' presence at school, research shows the child will benefit. For middle and high school parents, being involved means knowing what their children are studying, making sure they do their homework, knowing who their child's friends are and knowing where their child is at all times.

I hated school!

Studies show that parents who hated school as a child are far less likely to be involved when their children start school. They need extra encouragement.

Here are some ways to help them get past their bad memories and become partners in their child's education:

- **Don't dismiss parents' reasons for not getting involved.** Their concerns are valid and common. Show empathy and patience.
- **Encourage parents to talk about their experiences in school.** What do they remember? Remind them that schools have changed over the years. For example, teachers today are better trained in appropriate ways to handle children with discipline problems. They are taught not to humiliate or taunt a misbehaving child. Children with special needs are no longer isolated from their peers. They are included in school life whenever possible with the rest of the school population.
- **Take parents on a tour of the school.** If the parents are afraid their child will be bullied like they were, stop by the school counselor's office to talk about the school's anti-bullying policies. If parents are afraid the child will fail like they did, show them all the resources in place to make sure that doesn't happen.

I don't feel comfortable at school!

- **Talk to parents about what makes them uncomfortable.** They may find the principal intimidating. They may be overwhelmed with the size of the school. Parents from other cultures may find the American school completely different. In many cultures parents do not spend time at school. Once you understand their reluctance, you can help them find their comfort zone.
- **Stand in the parent's shoes.** Does the school have a welcoming atmosphere? If not, work with the principal to determine what the Parent Resource Center can do to help improve the climate.
- **Remind parents that involvement begins and ends at home.** Even if parents get nervous when inside the school building, they can be their child's teacher at home. Demonstrate ways they can do activities with their children to enhance what they are learning. For example, if their child is studying plants, they could plant a simple herb garden or some flowers with their child (Appendix O, P, Q).

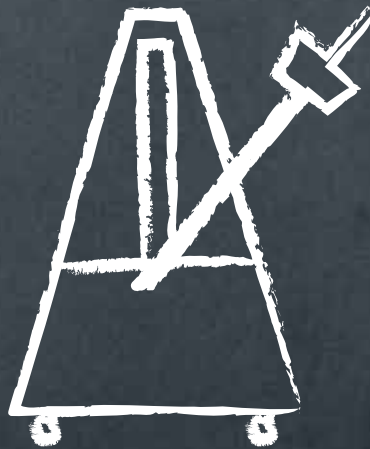
- Acknowledge parents who step outside their comfort zones to get involved with their children's education. Recognize their participation with a certificate or other gesture. Tell them often how much their involvement means to their child.

Conclusion

There are many reasons parents don't get involved at school. Often, it is because they have never been asked. Or it might be that they lack the how-to. The Parent Resource Center should work with parents and the school to make sure all parents know they are wanted and needed as partners in their child's education at school and at home.



Solving the Toughest
Parent-School Problems



PARENT
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— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 5

Solving the Toughest Parent-School Problems

Often parents get involved because they are frustrated about something going on at school. Sometimes parents just want someone to listen. But the parent may be open to some advice on how to resolve the problem.

Here are three issues parents frequently raise at school and how the Parent Resource Center can help:

I don't like my child's teacher!

In a perfect world parents, children and teachers would all get along. In reality, the parent and teacher may not see eye to eye. Yet, they have to work together to support the child.

- Listen to the reasons why the parent does not like the teacher. Empathize with their frustration. Help them figure out ways to better communicate with the teacher. Sometimes it's best to put most communication in writing.
- Introduce the parent to the words every teacher loves to hear. "I think we're having a problem with _____. What can I do to help?" This way, the parent can express their frustration with the teacher without alienating the teacher.
- Remind the parent to treat the teacher with respect, even when they are angry. They have a right to expect the same courtesy from the teacher.
- If the parent wants to complain about the teacher, help them understand the chain of command. The board of education is not the first place you go. Instead, start with the teacher, then, if necessary, take the complaint to the principal. If the parent is not satisfied, the central office is the next step. Finally, if the problem is still not resolved, the parent can take their concerns to the elected school board.
- Help the parent shift their focus from the teacher to the child. What can the parent do to help the child be successful in school? Reading with the child at home and helping with homework will help the parent make a difference in the child's education despite a teacher conflict.

I don't understand my child's homework!

It can be frustrating when a parent does not understand a child's homework, but it's completely normal. Education has changed through the years, and many subjects are taught differently, especially math.

- Listen to the parent's concerns. Does the parent think the teacher assigns too much homework? Is it too confusing? Is it just one subject the parent is struggling with or is it all subjects? Is the child struggling? The teacher needs to know if a student is consistently having a hard time with homework.
- Assure the parent that it's okay not to understand everything each child is learning. The parent can still help with homework (**Appendix R**).
- Let the parent know it's probably best not to try to teach the child using a different method. The child might only get more confused. Seek help at school instead.
- Encourage the parent to ask the child to teach the parent the assignment. It's a great learning experience to teach something to someone else.
- Remind the parent that it's the parent's job to know what the child is studying and to support the child at homework time. But it's not the parent's responsibility to be able to do every math problem.

My child is being bullied!

Bullying is a serious issue and requires immediate attention. All children deserve to feel safe at school. When a child is being bullied, the parent and child need support.

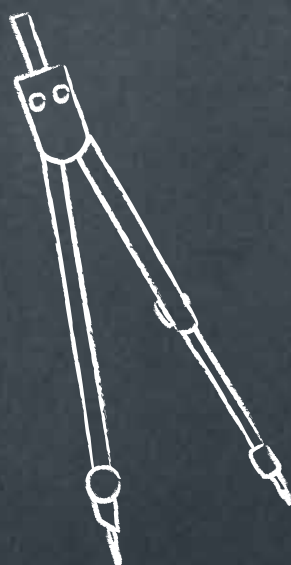
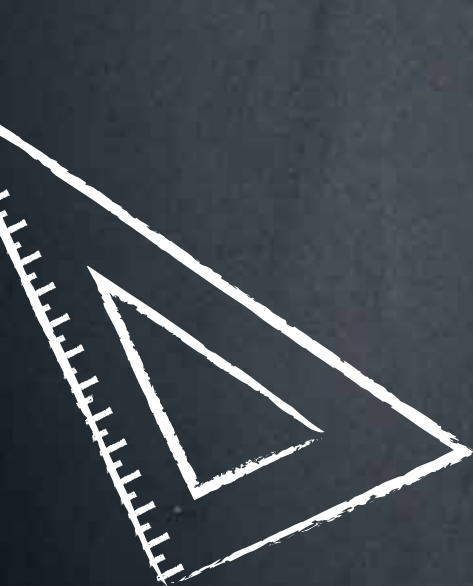
- Find out what happened. Is the child being bullied? Or is it a less serious situation? It's normal for children, especially adolescents, to have squabbles with friends, but bullying goes further (**Appendix S, T, U**).
- Help the parent determine how to report the bullying. Help the parent access the school's bullying policy.
- Show the parent you take the concern seriously. Stay in frequent contact with the parent, and make sure the problem gets resolved. Pay extra attention to this parent and child throughout the year. Let them know you care.

Conclusion

When a parent has a problem at school, the problem needs to be resolved. When problems fester, parents become discouraged, disengaged and even bitter. Help find solutions for problems large and small, so the parent can be a positive presence at school and at home.



Inspiring Parents to Read
with their Children



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 6

Inspiring Parents to Read with their Children

Research proves a great truth over and over: Parents can have a huge impact on their child's education by reading with them on a daily basis. And, yet, for many parents, this goal seems out of reach.

There are many reasons parents don't read to their children every day:

- They are not confident about their reading ability.
- They are overwhelmed with the demands of parenthood and other aspects of life and exhausted by the end of the day.
- They don't realize how important it is to read to their child every day.

The Parent Resource Center should be able to help parents overcome these barriers by being empathetic, supportive and informative.

When parents lack confidence in their reading ability:

- Help the parents improve their own literacy. They may be eligible for an adult literacy or GED program.
- If English is the parents' second language, make sure the parents understand that they can read to their children in their native language. Their children will learn to love language, books and stories as mother, father, grandparent or other family member reads aloud in their native language.
- Help the parent choose the right books to read. Great children's books use only a few well-chosen words alongside vivid illustrations. Even parents who can't read well can read many wonderful children's books.
- Encourage the parent to read books ahead of time to get familiar with the text and gain confidence.
- Try audiobooks. The library might have children's audiobooks available to check out. Parents can listen to the audiobook while following along in the book with the child.

When parents are overwhelmed and exhausted:

- Encourage parents to let go of the idea that they have to read to their child at bedtime. For many families, bedtime is not the best time for reading because everyone is too tired.
- Give examples of reading with a child during the course of the day. Read road signs while driving, food labels in the grocery store or even newspaper comics. Words are everywhere (**Appendix V**).

- Empathize with the parents' exhaustion. Offer suggestions for relief such as earlier bedtimes for everyone, simplified morning and evening routines and fewer social commitments.

If the parent doesn't understand the importance of reading:

- Host regular reading events at school (**Appendix W**).
- Hold a workshop for parents, focusing on how to support their children in reading. Talk about working with the teacher to understand their child's reading level, choosing appropriate books, minimizing television and computer games, modeling good reading habits and, of course, reading aloud with children (**Appendix X**).
- Emphasize the importance of reading at every opportunity. Parents cannot hear this message enough. Include simple, direct statements such as, "Read every day with your child!" on everything you send home for parents. Post positive reading messages around your school and community (**Appendix Y**). Leave a message on your voicemail: "Please read with your child every day!"
- Put books in the hands of parents whenever you can. Hold book drives collecting books families have outgrown (**Appendix Z**). Carry books with you at all times and hand them out to parents.
- Don't let the summer months slip by without promoting reading. Sponsor a summer reading club (**Appendix AA, AB**).
- Sponsor a book club for parents. Choose a book that relates to the parenting journey. For example, many parents worry about bullying. Choose a book about bullying such as "Little Girls Can Be Mean" by Michelle Anthony or "The Juice Box Bully" by Bob Sornson, Maria Dismondy and Kim Shaw. Or choose a readable novel everyone can enjoy, such as "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett or "The Secret Life of Bees" by Sue Monk Kidd. As you discuss the book, also discuss reading habits and the importance of modeling good habits at home.

Conclusion

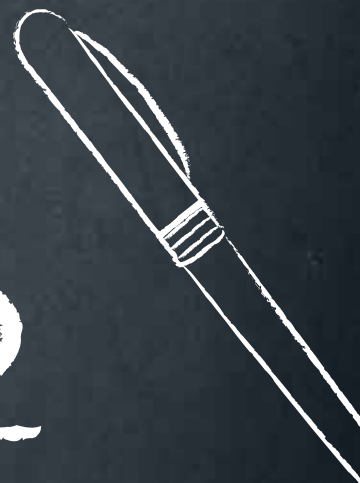
Reading with a child is a great opportunity to bond, relax and share a laugh. But for many parents, reading is associated with stress and guilt. Bring a positive, enthusiastic attitude about reading wherever you go and in all your interactions with parents. For many parents, once they make reading with their children a habit, it's a habit that will stick.



Connecting Parents
with Resources



$$1 + 1 = 2$$



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 7

Connecting Parents with Resources

Parents love their children and want to do what's best for them. To do that, parents need information. They need to know where to go for help, the value of joining the parent organization, the vocabulary terms needed to access help and how to interpret documents such as school report cards.

The Parent Resource Center should be able to help connect parents to the resources they need and help parents understand the language and acronyms common in the education world.

The Georgia Department of Education publishes a report card for every public school. These report cards offer a wealth of information and are easy to access on the state's website. Yet parents may need help interpreting the report cards, which may be found at: <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Pages/By-School.aspx>.

Where to go for help

The Parent Resource Center should serve as a valuable resource for community and school resources. They should also help parents figure out the type of help they need and make a plan to access that help.

For example, if a child is behind in reading, the first place to turn is the school for some type of extra help. Additionally, there might be free tutoring resources available in the community through churches, after-school programs or a local college.

The Parent Resource Center should maintain an up-to-date database of community resources and build relationships with the people involved in programs parents might need. For example, a family that is struggling financially might benefit from a program that helps with tax preparation. Often families are entitled to a much larger tax return than they realize.

In many communities, United Way is a useful source of community programs. Show parents how easy it is to call the United Way helpline. In metro Atlanta, the number is 2-1-1.

Some parents may need encouragement asking for help. Support them as they struggle with shame and embarrassment. Remind them that resources exist so families can get the help they need to raise healthy, happy children.

The role of parent organizations

Every school has a parent group. In schools, it's known as the Parent-Teacher Association, PTA-Teacher Organization, PTO, parent club or parent council.

Parent groups are usually based at the school and run by an executive board made up of members who may be parents, teachers or community members.

The role of the parent group is to support the school through volunteering and fundraising. Parent groups do everything from sponsoring Family Reading Night to putting on a school carnival to raise money for technology upgrades.

Parents give lots of reasons for not joining a parent group:

- They don't see a benefit for themselves or their children.
- They fear they will be constantly tapped to volunteer.
- They don't want to be pressured to raise or contribute money.
- They don't think they will fit in.

The Parent Resource Center can help parents understand why the parent group can be a valuable resource and make sure parents have enough information to make an informed decision about whether to join.

Here are benefits of parent groups:

- Parent groups can help parents feel like they are part of the school community. When parents help raise money for new playground equipment, they become invested in that new playground and are more invested in their school.
- When parents spend more time at school, they find out about programs and activities that might benefit their child.
- Parents make friends with other parents. Those friends can become a support system.
- There are many volunteer roles for parents ranging from helping teachers in the classroom, planning events and raising funds.
- Joining the parent group is an important first step to being involved at school. It communicates to children that their parents are committed to their school and their education. It helps parents get comfortable visiting the school and can be a stepping stone to become a room parent, school council member or hold some other leadership role.

The parent group is an important school resource for parents. There are other ways for parents to advocate for children and education. Schools have school councils, school improvement teams and other principal-led groups. Some communities have parent leadership groups, and some school districts have district-wide leadership teams that involve parents. By getting involved in such groups, parents can gain self-esteem and have their voices heard.

Education Dictionary

Parents often encounter unfamiliar words related to their child's education. Here are some terms parents might need to know:

Classroom Terms

Advanced Placement (AP): This program is administered by the College Board, which also administers the SAT. It consists of about 30 challenging high school courses. At the end of each AP course, students take a standardized test. Some colleges award credit for a high AP score. Solid scores on AP exams are highly regarded for college admissions.

Alignment: The process of making sure what is spelled out in the curriculum is the same content that appears on a standardized test. For example, if the test has questions about Rosa Parks, then the curriculum must also include content about Rosa Parks.

Benchmark: Checkpoints set throughout the year for teachers to make sure students are on track for learning the curriculum. This helps prevent students from getting so far behind that they cannot catch up.

Data-driven instruction: Teachers use results from standardized tests to determine what skills they emphasize in their teaching.

Differentiated instruction: Teachers tweak lesson plans for students' individual needs, based on their level of understanding. For example, a teacher may plan a lesson on prepositional phrases, including an overview for the whole class, plus additional small-group instruction for struggling students and additional independent study for high-achieving students.

Disaggregated data: Test scores broken down by subgroups, such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, special education participation and English language ability. This enables the public to see how well a school educates all its students, not just those with the most advantages. Disaggregating test results can also show principals and teachers the specific areas they need to work on. This is known as “drilling down” and enables teachers to use this test data to better meet the needs of their students.

Item bank: List of standardized questions teachers draw from to make sure their students are learning the curriculum. These questions may be used for classroom or homework assignments, or they may be part of in-class quizzes or tests. They are not actual questions from the standardized test.

Parent-teacher conference (P-TC): A scheduled meeting with a child's teacher to discuss progress. In most cases, teachers are required to meet with parents twice a year. It's extremely important that parents attend the P-TC.

Rubric: A scoring tool that allows a teacher to evaluate a student's work on more than one criterion. Rubrics are often used when scoring writing assignments, group projects and portfolios. Children should understand the rubric prior to starting the assignment. Teachers might use the rubric to assess their own work before turning it in.

Standard: A description of a skill, fact or topic a student should learn in a particular grade. The standards children are expected to learn should be clear, specific and easy for parents and their child to understand.

Vertical teaming: In vertical teaming, teachers in different grade levels work together to ensure a smooth transition from grade to grade. This is especially important in transition years such as 5th grade to 6th grade and 8th grade to 9th grade.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): This is the federal law dating back to 1965 that funds primary and secondary education while ensuring states retain local control over their schools. It emphasizes equal access to education, high standards and accountability. In 2001, the law was re-authorized as No Child Left Behind, but it has since returned to its original name, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

No Child Left Behind Act: Signed into law in 2002 and commonly referred to as NCLB, this law held schools and teachers accountable for student learning through a series of standardized tests, goals and sanctions for schools that miss those goals. Georgia received a flexibility waiver from some aspects of NCLB and is creating a plan to achieve the goals of the law but with less federal oversight. The law is now referred to by its original name, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

ESEA Flexibility Waiver: Georgia received a waiver for some sections of ESEA, formerly known as No Child Left Behind, to identify and support schools where students continue to struggle based on student achievement growth or student subgroup performance issues.

Reward School: A designation for a Title 1 school that succeeds by having high test scores, high graduation rates or through significant improvement in these measures as spelled out by the state. These schools receive public recognition and may be eligible for financial rewards.

Priority School: A designation for a Title 1 school identified for having low test scores for three consecutive years or low graduation rates for two consecutive years as determined by the state. Priority schools will get help from the state and work collaboratively with parents, their communities and their school districts to develop turnaround plans.

Focus School: A designation for a Title 1 school with a low graduation rate for the past two consecutive years as determined by the state or by having an achievement gap between subgroups of students. Focus schools will get help from the state and work collaboratively with parents, their communities and their school districts to develop turnaround plans.

Alert school: A designation for Title 1 or non-Title 1 school with a low graduation rate, low achievement in a particular subgroup or low achievement in a particular subject, such as math or science, as defined by the state. Alert schools will get help from the state and work collaboratively with parents, their communities and their school districts to develop turnaround plans.

Subgroups: Subgroups are groups of students within a school population such as African Americans, English learners, special education students and students from low-income families. Examining student performance by subgroups enables educators to make sure all students are getting the education they are entitled to under the law.

Special Education

Accommodation: Teachers provide extra help in the classroom to students with disabilities. For example, a child with a vision problem might need larger text. Accommodations are spelled out in the IEP, or Individualized Education Program.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Every child with a disability is entitled to FAPE under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Inclusion: Serving a child with a disability in a classroom environment along with students who do not have disabilities. Some children with disabilities are in a regular classroom with support from a teacher's aide. Others split their time between a regular classroom and a specialized environment.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A customized plan for how a school will provide a quality education for the student with an identified disability. The IEP is determined by an IEP committee, which includes the child's parents, the classroom teacher and other school professionals. A parent may also choose to have an advocate or an attorney present.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Federal law that ensures services are provided for children with disabilities. A complex law, it says that children should be served in the least restrictive environment. The school must prepare an Individualized Education Program for students whose disabilities are covered under IDEA. The law also requires states to provide intervention services for babies and toddlers with identified disabilities.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The federal requirement under IDEA that students with special needs be served in the least restrictive environment possible, given their challenges. In other words, it is not appropriate to sequester students with special needs from their regular-education classmates.

Section 504: A particular portion of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. It requires recipients of federal funding to provide appropriate educational services to students with disabilities. Some students may not qualify for services under IDEA but still qualify for accommodation under Section 504.

Self-contained classroom: A small class with students who have similar disabilities and teachers who are certified in special education. The students' disabilities are deemed too severe for students to succeed in the regular classroom, though students might be able to spend part of the school day in a traditional classroom.

Testing

Criterion-referenced standardized test. This measures a child's grasp of the curriculum. It does not compare a child with other students. Instead, it sets benchmarks and determines whether a child meets those standards. Results from this type of standardized test are often broken into categories such as "exceeds expectations," "meets expectations" and "does not meet expectations." In Georgia, the criterion-referenced test is known as the CRCT, Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

High-stakes testing: The practice of using test results to determine whether a child is promoted to the next grade level. A child will probably not be held back based on a single test score; they would have a chance to take the test again and get additional support.

Norm-referenced standardized test: A type of standardized test that compares students with their peers. If a child is in the 90th percentile, that means they did better than 90 percent of all other students. If they are in the 50th percentile, they are right in the middle, with half their peers scoring better and half scoring worse. In Georgia, many students take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, a longstanding norm-referenced test.

Portfolio: A collection of work used to assess whether a student has mastered the curriculum or met a standard.

Standardized test: A test created by an entity outside the school to provide objective data on how well a child is learning. In elementary and middle school, standardized test results usually do not affect a child's classroom grades. Standardized tests can tell you a lot about a child's progress, but it is important to understand how they are scored.

Recognition

Blue Ribbon School: A federal designation for public schools that excel on state standardized tests.

Distinguished School: The National Title I Association honors schools that consistently meet testing goals. Schools selected as a Distinguished School have either exceeded AYP for two years or more or made significant improvement in closing the achievement gap.

Other

English Learners (EL): Students who are still learning English. These students may have been born in foreign countries or be a part of a family whose primary language is not English.

Free and reduced-priced lunch: The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch Program for students who qualify for free or reduced-cost meals because their family income is below poverty level. Free and reduced-priced lunch is about more than making sure all children get to eat. The percent of a school's students qualifying for free and reduced-priced lunch determines whether a school receives federal Title I funds.

Title I school: A school that receives additional federal funds because a large number or percent of students come from low-income families. The goal is to ensure that all children meet state academic standards.

Understanding Your School's Report Card

Students get a report card that lets parents know how they're doing. Every public school in Georgia also gets a report card. You can find the state report cards at: <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Pages/By-School.aspx>.

Report cards are useful when parents want to compare schools and find the best school for their child. Report cards can tell you, historically, how a school has performed and the level of achievement expected.

A word of caution, however, about report cards: Data cannot give a complete portrait of a school. For a full understanding of a school, visit the school, walk the hallways and speak with the principal.

Still, the report card is a welcome complement to visiting the school in person.

The good news is that the state report cards contain a wealth of information. The downside is that it can be challenging to find the needed information. The Parent Resource Center can help parents access and interpret data found on school report cards.

School Choice

Parents wishing to enroll their children in a school other than the one they are assigned may be eligible for school choice. They may wish to explore charter schools, public schools with special programs open to students outside the attendance zone and schools that have open seats and are therefore required to accept transfers. The Parent Resource Center should be able to help parents understand their school choice options.

Conclusion

These are just some of the types of information the Parent Resource Center should be able to provide for parents. When parents have information, they feel empowered. The information provided through the resource center should be able to help parents navigate the world of public education and make sure their child receives the best quality of education possible.



Supporting Kindergarten Parents



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 8

Supporting Kindergarten Parents

Parents who get involved in their child's education in kindergarten have a high likelihood of remaining involved for years to come. Kindergarten parents are typically enthusiastic and nervous. They are eager for their child to have a great school experience. But they might not be sure what their role should be.

The Parent Resource Center can help parents learn the ropes of being part of a school community and figure out their role as a partner in their child's education.

Here are some ways to do that:

- **Reach out to prospective kindergarten parents as soon as possible.** Getting to know parents when their children are in preschool or prekindergarten is ideal, as they'll be even more prepared for kindergarten. Work with the school to offer a tour for parents of prekindergarten students. Sponsor a social gathering for families of rising kindergarteners (**Appendix AC**), so children and parents can get to know each other.
- **Hold a "What to Expect in Kindergarten" workshop (Appendix AD).** Times have changed dramatically, and nowhere is this more evident than in the kindergarten classroom. Many classrooms no longer have play kitchens and other play areas. Instead, children are learning to read and compute in ways that used to be reserved for first and second grade. Prepare parents for how exciting and fun kindergarten is today.
- **Hold a reading workshop aimed at parents of kindergarten students (Appendix AE).** There are so many reading strategies parents can use with younger children, such as reading games, rhyming words, songs and dictated stories. Show parents how they can fit reading into their day.
- **Encourage parents to get involved at the school through a parent group.** They might be intimidated to join, but let them know their support of the school is important for their child.
- **Help parents get comfortable volunteering in the classroom.** There are so many ways a kindergarten parent can help. Read a story to the class, prepare materials for a craft project, chaperone field trips, help plan class parties. Encourage parents to ask the teacher what type of help is needed.
- **Teach parents how to communicate with teachers.** Some teachers like to communicate via email and others do not. Some teachers will talk to parents before school and at dismissal, while others want parents to make an appointment. Parents need to find out how to best communicate with their child's teacher. An often under appreciated tool is the old-school backpack folder. If the teacher sends home a folder with information, the parent can put written correspondence in the backpack and send it to school with the child.

- **Help parents prepare for and understand the importance of the Parent-Teacher Conference (Appendix A1).** It's critical that parents attend parent-teacher conferences, even if they think their child is doing well. It's also important for parents to understand that they don't have to wait for a parent-teacher conference to ask questions. They should talk to the teacher as soon as a concern arises.
- **Keep in frequent contact with kindergarten parents.** Ask parents how things are going. Try to pick up on problems in the early stages so a solution can be found sooner rather than later. If the parent dislikes their child's teacher, help the parent figure out ways to make the situation better. If the parent is disconnected from the school, find different ways to reach out and encourage the parent to participate.

Conclusion

Kindergarten parents are assets to the school community. They are typically enthusiastic. They want their child to succeed. It's likely that they will be part of the school community for years to come. By helping parents of kindergarten students early on, the resource center can get parents and their children on a positive school path that leads to graduation and success.



Supporting Parents of
Children with Disabilities



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 9

Supporting Parents of Children with Disabilities

Research has proven that children do better in school when parents work in partnership with the school to support their child's education. When that child is challenged by a cognitive, emotional or physical need, it's even more important that parents and teachers work together.

The Resource Center should be able to help families of students with disabilities by providing information and support as they navigate a world they never expected.

Below is some general information about special education:

What is the responsibility of the school when a child is identified with a disability?

All children are different, and a disability impacts every child differently. Yet the process for educating children with disabilities – as spelled out in the federal law known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – is the same for all families.

*At the crux of the law is this directive: **All children determined eligible for special education and related services are entitled to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.***

The phrase “free and appropriate public education” is often abbreviated as FAPE. The phrase “least restrictive environment” is frequently abbreviated as LRE.

Challenges emerge when parents disagree with school leaders and teachers about what constitutes an appropriate education, what is the least restrictive environment their child can handle and what's best for a child's education.

A video from the Georgia Department of Education provides detailed information about the rights of parents of special needs students in Georgia. Access the video at: <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Parents-Rights-Videos.aspx>.

These are the categories of special needs spelled out in IDEA:

- Autism
- Deaf/blind
- Deaf/hard of hearing
- Emotional and behavioral disorder
- Intellectual disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Significant developmental delay
- Specific learning disability
- Speech-language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment and blindness

How does a parent access special education services?

- First, the parent should talk to the child's teacher about the reasons the child should be evaluated for special education. For some children, extra support (such as tutoring) is available without going through the special education process.
- If the parent believes the child needs additional services to be successful in school, the parent may request a special education evaluation. Professionals, such as the school's principal can also request an evaluation. Parental consent is required. A parent may also have a private evaluation, independent from the school district.
- If the parent disagrees with the school's evaluation, there is an appeal process.
- If the evaluation supports special education services, the school will form an Individual Education Program (IEP) team, which includes parents, the child's teacher, a special education teacher, a school psychologist and, possibly, other professionals.

What goes into an IEP?

The IEP includes a child's current performance in school and goals that can be reasonably accomplished in a school year.

- Special education and related services, including:
 - Counseling
 - Speech, occupational or physical therapy
 - Support from a classroom assistant
 - Assistive technology
 - Behavior intervention and modifications
- Participation with non-disabled children and mainstreaming opportunities
- Participation in standardized tests, promotion criteria and diploma objectives
- Information on special services, when they will begin, how often they will be provided, where they will be provided and for how long
- Information on how to measure a child's progress

What is the parents' role at an IEP meeting?

- Offer insight into how the child learns, what the child's interests are and other things only a parent would know.
- Listen to what other team members think the child needs to work on at school and share suggestions.
- Report on whether the skills the child is learning at school are being used at home.
- Ask questions of all team members.

What are steps a parent should take if they do not believe the school is in compliance with IDEA in its handling of the child's IEP?

- First, the parent should speak to the teacher.
- Next, if the issue is not resolved, the parent should go to the next person in administration and, if necessary, the district special education director.
- Parents might have to go through a formal complaint process to the Georgia Department of Education; an outside mediator will determine what should be done in each case.
- Parents can request an advocate or attorney present at the IEP meeting.

Where should the Parent Resource Center refer parents for help and support?

- Many of Georgia's school districts have parent mentors who can answer questions and support families. For information, go to: <http://parentmentors.org>.
- IDEA provides each state with a Parent Training Information Center (PTI), which trains parents in the process and empowers them to advocate in a positive way. In Georgia, the PTI is called Parent to Parent. It offers a roadmap to lead families through the process as well as trained parents who can answer questions. For more information, visit: <http://www.p2pga.org>.

Here are some ways the Parent Resource Center should be able to support parents of students with disabilities:

- Connect parents with sources of information and help them understand the terminology used in special education materials.
- Help parents improve their communication skills with teachers and administrators.
- Help parents break the large task of advocating for the child into small, manageable pieces. Help the parents create a schedule of what needs to be done.
- Encourage the parent to participate in school life, such as joining the PTA or other parent group; volunteering for school events and participating in school activities. Parents should not feel isolated from the regular education population and neither should their children.

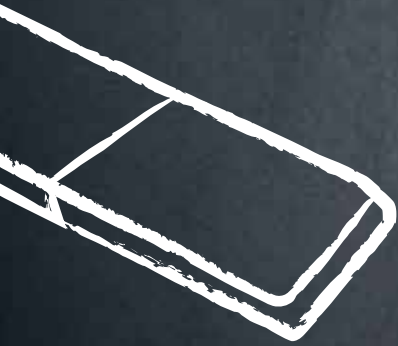
Conclusion

Special education is a complex issue for students, parents and schools. Emotions run high. Parents want their children to learn and enjoy school. When that doesn't happen, parents may get frustrated with the school, their teachers and their child. Parents need support and understanding. When parents feel supported, they can feel confident as they advocate for their child.

10

Working with Parents Who Don't
Speak Fluent English

ABC



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 10

Working with Parents Who Don't Speak Fluent English

The number of students in Georgia schools who do not speak English at home has risen sharply over the past two decades. According to the International Center for Leadership, Georgia is one of the states with the fastest growing non-English speaking student populations. Schools have had to adapt to a changing culture within their schools. Some have student bodies that hail from many countries and speak many different languages. Other schools have large numbers of children who speak the same foreign language, usually Spanish.

Parents who do not speak fluent English face practical challenges as well. How do they read the communications the teacher sends home? How can they help their children with homework? How can they talk to a counselor about the social problems their children are having? How do they know how well their children are doing?

The Parent Resource Center should be able to assist these parents in understanding the expectations for parental engagement and in managing the many challenges they face every day with their child's education.

Also, the center should be able to help EL parents feel welcome at school, rather than isolated and left out of their child's education.

Accessing a quality education for their children is a primary reason people give for leaving their home countries for the United States. These parents generally want to be involved in any way they can. They just don't know how.

Here are some ways the Parent Resource Center can engage EL parents:

- **Help parents handle language barriers.** Some parents want to learn English and are motivated to do so. The center should help these parents find English as a Second Language (ESL) classes appropriate for their goals and skill level. Other parents are not motivated to learn English, but they still need to know what is going on at school. The center should partner with the school to:
 - Translate communications
 - Provide interpreters at school functions
 - Match parents with parent mentors who speak their native language
- **Show parents how important school involvement is in the United States.** Parental engagement is expected and necessary for students to do well in school. In many cultures, parents are not supposed to spend time in the school. Hold a workshop, and invite EL parents who have successfully integrated into the school community as guest speakers.

- **Get parents involved in a parent group.** Parent organizations, such as PTA and PTO can be intimidating for EL parents. The leaders of parent groups are generally confident and outgoing. EL parents might be reluctant to join because they feel uncomfortable around parents who feel so at ease at school. They might not think they have anything in common with the parents involved in the parent group. They may think they have nothing to offer. They might see the annual dues, often just \$5, as a barrier. Encourage parents to join. Let them know what the parent group does, how important it is to being part of the school culture and how much it will mean to their children to have them involved at school.
- **Let parents know involvement is about what goes on at home as well as school.** Parents should help their child with their homework, but not do it for them. EL parents may feel like they can't help because they don't know the language, but there are other ways to support their children:
 - Provide an appropriate place for a child to do homework.
 - Help the child stay focused by limiting TV and computer time.
 - Look over the child's homework to check that it appears complete. Even if they don't understand it, this step will keep their child on track to finish.
- **Give EL parents opportunities to socialize and learn about school life.** Hold fun, informal and informative events for EL parents. Focus on topics such as testing, homework, report cards, transitions to middle and high school, bullying, social life and other issues. Invite guest speakers and provide information, but allow plenty of time for socializing.
- **Make sure parents attend Parent-Teacher Conferences.** They can be intimidating, but they're not optional. The parent-teacher conference is the best opportunity for parents to speak one on one with their child's teacher and find out exactly how their child is doing.
- **Be careful not to overwhelm parents with everything they need to do to help their children be successful in school.** Keep the tone light whenever possible, and be generous with compliments when a parent takes a small step forward, such as attending a parent group meeting.
- **Help EL parents access the community resources they need.** They may need help finding a doctor or a dentist, renting an apartment or getting clothing for their children. By putting them in touch with reputable organizations, you can free up more of their time to focus on their child's education.

Conclusion

Being a parent involves endless second guessing and worrying over decisions large and small. Imagine the anxieties parents deal with when they are raising children in an unfamiliar country, one where they don't know the language or the culture. EL parents need support, information, patience and encouragement.

11

Helping Parents Help Their
Children with Homework



$$1 + 1 = 2$$



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 11

Helping Parents Help Their Children with Homework

Homework is a reality of school life. After spending at least six hours at school, it's often the last thing students want to do at home. Parents play an important role in making sure children do their homework.

Yet homework can be stressful for parents. Some find the assignments confusing. And many parents are frustrated watching their children struggle through work they don't seem to understand.

Parents may be confused about what their role should be. Should they sit down next to their child and help with each homework problem? Or should they help with the first problem and then let the child work independently? Should parents nag their children to do their homework? Or let children suffer the consequences at school?

The Parent Resource Center should support parents by helping them figure out the homework routine that works best for their family.

Here are some questions parents may have about homework and some solutions for homework problems:

How much homework should children have?

Experts recommend about 10 minutes of homework per grade, per night, on average. So a first-grader would have just 10 minutes per night of homework, while a fifth-grader would have 50 minutes. However, that's an average, so most children will have more homework some nights than others.

Some schools and districts have homework policies spelling out how much homework teachers should assign. Often, it's up to the teacher.

If parents feel their children have too much homework, their first step should be to talk to the teacher. Research shows that teachers sometimes underestimate how much time homework is taking.

Parents can talk to other moms and dads to find out if their child spends as much time on homework as their child.

If their child is the only one struggling, it's possible their child does not understand the material. Their child might have missed a crucial math skill or might have deficits in reading skills that make it hard to handle the workload. Parents should work with the teacher to find ways to get the child caught up. Remediation services such as tutoring might be an option. Homework should be reinforcement of skills learned in class, not a time to learn new skills.

When a child struggles with homework but understands the material, distractions are a likely culprit. For some children, studying at a desk is not the best option. Some may be able to focus better while lying on the floor or standing up. Some children might need complete silence, while others might do well listening to music while they study.

Here are two proven tricks for parents with easily distracted children:

- **Use a timer.** Set the timer for 10 minutes and require the child to focus on homework for just ten minutes. Then let the child get up and move around or listen to music for 10 minutes. Don't let the child watch TV, play video games or check a social-networking site. Encourage the child to shoot baskets, read a graphic novel, listen to music or sketch. Then, set the timer for another 10 minutes of homework. Soon, your child will be finished.
- **Give your child a fidget toy.** Children with excess energy need to channel it somewhere and stress relievers can give children an outlet for that energy. Other stress relievers include stress balls, Play Dough and modeling clay.

When should children do homework?

It's tempting for parents to insist their child do homework right after school. That works for some children. But for some children, especially those who struggle with homework, experts recommend outdoor play after school, followed by homework. That gives children the opportunity to run off excess energy, relax and release stress from the day.

Some students can get their homework done at an after-school program, and others can do homework after dinner and get it done in time to get a good night's sleep.

It's not as important when a child does homework, as long as it works for that child. What is important is that children get into a homework routine. Parents can help establish that routine and minimize distractions such as cellphones and television until homework is done.

How much should parents help with homework?

Most homework is meant for students to do independently. If the child doesn't understand the concepts required to do the homework, the parent can help or work with the teacher to get help for the student. But it's the student's responsibility to do the math problems, write the essay and complete the project.

Some children will do their homework independently and others will procrastinate, make excuses and do anything to avoid homework, especially if they aren't confident in their academic skills (**Appendix E-2**).

Activities to support parents:

- **Homework workshop:** Hold a homework information session for parents (**Appendix E-4**). Review the school's policy on homework, if there is one, and solutions to homework dilemmas such as children who refuse to do homework or assignments that take too long. Invite a teacher to offer a perspective on homework. Let parents share their strategies and ask questions.
- **Homework clinic:** Hold an after-school homework clinic where children can get their homework done and get help from trained teachers (**Appendix E-5**). Lead children in stretching exercises and jumping jacks before getting started, and let them take frequent breaks. Teach studying strategies and techniques for pushing through tough assignments, so children can work independently on days when there is no clinic.

Conclusion

Getting parents to take an active role in their child's homework can be challenging. Hectic work schedules, financial struggles and other pressures can leave parents exhausted and feeling like they don't have anything positive to offer.

The Parent Resource Center should support parents as they juggle their many responsibilities and make time to support their children in school and help with homework.

12

Helping Parents and Students Through
the Middle School Transition



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 12

Helping Parents and Students Through the Middle School Transition

The move from fifth to sixth grade can be difficult – and not just for the children. Parents often fear the transition from small, nurturing elementary school to the larger middle school. Most students will get lockers for the first time. They'll have several teachers instead of just one. They'll face higher academic expectations just as their bodies are changing and their social lives are becoming more complicated.

As students move into middle school, they may feel less positive about their potential and less interested in school. Many students put forth less effort and give up on themselves in the classroom. They may be less interested in pleasing their parents and more interested in fitting in with their peers.

The Parent Resource Center should help parents and students have a smooth transition from elementary to middle school by offering support, information and solutions to common problems. The center should help parents understand what their middle school child is going through and let them know they are not alone.

What are the challenges students face in middle school?

- **They're distracted by their social lives.** The school is larger and there are more students to socialize with. They are going through physical and emotional changes, and these changes might motivate them to drift apart from their elementary school friends and seek new friends.
- **They're distracted by technology.** Today's middle school students spend time with cellphones, video games and social networking. Some students may spend more time with their electronic devices than their actual friends and family. Some students get so caught up in their digital lives that they can't focus on their real lives, including their homework.
- **They're not interested in the curriculum.** Middle school students have a tendency to tune out when they're not engaged by what they're studying. They need to know what they're studying is relevant to their lives. Some may need more creative ways to demonstrate knowledge of the curriculum, such as digital presentations, group projects or creative portfolios.
- **They can't maintain the grades that came easily in elementary school.** In middle school, students are expected to take charge of their own learning. They'll have more reading assignments and homework. Deficits in reading and math might come to light. Students who easily made straight As in elementary school might be in for a shock when they have to study for tests.
- **They're disorganized.** It's normal for adolescents to have trouble with organization. Their brains are changing as they morph from children into teenagers. Yet middle school requires them to be more organized because they have more teachers and more assignments.

What happens in middle school?

Some might think it would be easier just to keep children in elementary school for an extra year and then send them off to junior high for seventh and eighth grade. Experts say the middle school model is better because schools with grades 6, 7 and 8 can be designed to meet the emotional, social and academic needs of children going through puberty.

- Middle schools prepare students for high school by increasing expectations and giving students greater responsibility. At the same time, middle schools recognize that students at this age are still children. Developmentally, there is a huge range. Some sixth graders are already dating. It's important for teachers and parents to remember adolescents are still children who struggle with impulse control. They need guidance in making good decisions.
- Middle school is when students start to branch off into academic areas they excel in, such as math, language arts and other subjects. Students also get a chance to try different courses beyond the core subjects, such as fine arts and foreign language.
- Middle school is when students and parents start thinking, in a general sense, about college and careers. Students need to have their broad college and career goals in mind so they can choose the right courses in preparation for high school.

What can parents do to prepare their children for middle school?

- Set high expectations and enforce a consistent homework routine. Parents can get their child accustomed to completing homework every night while in elementary school, even if the child doesn't have a lot of homework. The routine will pay off in middle school.
- Work with teachers to identify any learning deficits that need to be addressed before middle school. If their child is barely passing math in fifth grade, sixth grade could be more challenging.
- Encourage children with specific, sincere praise. Avoid the empty praise of "Good job!" Instead, say something like, "I can tell you worked really hard on this project," or "I like the ending you came up with for this essay."
- Teach children organization and study skills. Parents can show their child how to make flashcards as a study aid for a social studies test. Encourage students to maintain a planner.
- Help children with social skills. Many children need help making and keeping friends. Parents can make sure their child has time and opportunity for unstructured socializing. If their child struggles to make friends, parents can help them figure out why. Some children unwittingly dominate every conversation with topics of interest only to them. Others may be chatty at home but shy at school.

What can parents do while their children are in middle school?

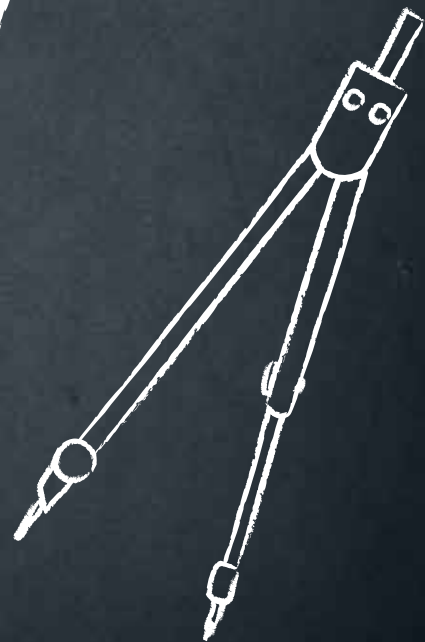
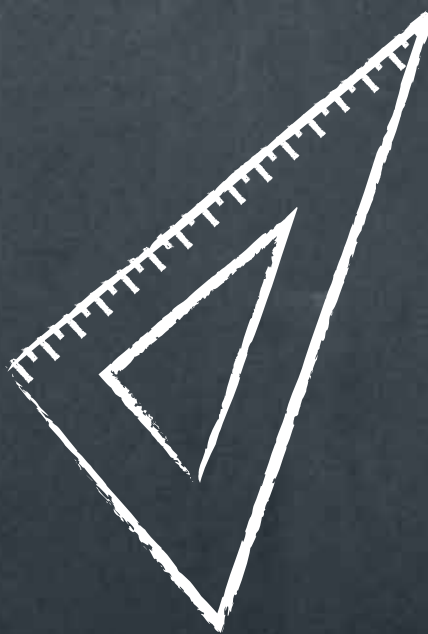
- **Keep a very close watch on their child's friends and social life.** At this age, peers may have a greater influence on a child than parents. Parents need to know their child's friends and their parents. Some adolescents want to rush into the teen years. Parents can help their children take it slowly and act age appropriate.
- **Make sure a child is placed in the right classes for their ability and college and career goals.** Parents should find out what course offerings their child's school has and make sure their child is challenged but not in a class that is too difficult. Most middle schools have advanced math courses and some also have advanced language arts and other core subjects. For a child who wants to attend a competitive college, it's important to take these honors classes in middle school.
- **Don't let a child get overwhelmed and exhausted with activities.** It's common for middle school children with outgoing personalities to want to do everything. Some children want to play every sport, attend every party and join every club. Parents can help their child with time management and make sure their schedule isn't overloaded. Adolescents need time to relax, decompress and play with other children.
- **Help a child find interests and passions.** Some adolescents don't want to participate in extra-curricular activities. Parents can help their child find activities that interest them.
- **Continue setting clear expectations with consequences when it comes to homework.** Staying on top of homework is key to a successful middle school life. Children at this age tend to procrastinate. Parents can help their child break big tasks into small, manageable tasks.
- **Stay involved at school.** Parents should be a familiar face at school, even if their child protests. Parents should know their child's teachers and attend parent-teacher conferences when possible, even if their child is doing well.

Activities to help with middle school

- **Get ready for middle school!** Hold a workshop for fifth graders and their parents (**Appendix AF, AG**), introducing them to all things middle school – from lockers to changing classes to extra-curricular activities. Invite a middle school teacher as well as a few middle school students to talk about the transition. Encourage questions.
- **Middle school transition support group:** Identify the most at-risk fifth graders, the ones most likely to struggle in middle school socially and academically. Start a club or support group for these students. Help them to understand the skills needed to be successful, such as good study habits and how to handle peer pressure.

13

Helping Families Make a Smooth
Transition to High School



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 13

Helping Families Make a Smooth Transition to High School

Parents survived the first day of kindergarten. They survived the transition to middle school. Now, their child is in eighth grade and it's time to start preparing for high school.

For some parents, it's an intimidating thought as their child transitions to high school. Their child will be in school with a larger student population. They will have an increased workload and have more independence. Whatever the challenges are, middle school parents need support as they prepare to send their children to high school, and they need information. The Parent Resource Center should be able to provide both.

High School Graduation Requirements

It's important for parents to be aware of high school graduation requirements in Georgia:

- 4 courses in English language arts
- 4 courses in mathematics
- 4 courses in science
- 3 courses in social studies
- 3 courses in Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) Pathways, modern language, Latin or fine arts
- 1 course in health and physical education
- 4 electives

Parents may need help navigating the details of Georgia's graduation requirements, which may be found at: http://archives.gadoe.org/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-4-2-.48.pdf.

Following are some common fears about high school and how the center can help parents get past their fears and support their child.

"My child is not ready for high school!"

When students start high school, most are 14 or 15 years old. It's hard to imagine them in the same school with students who are 18. That's why most schools use a ninth grade academy model. They recognize that high school freshmen are still going through transition and in need of special attention. They also know ninth graders need minimal distractions.

Ninth grade academies typically house freshmen in one part of the building and allow minimal interaction with upperclassmen. Schools often have a counselor who works closely with freshmen, as well as programs to help ninth graders acclimate to high school life.

The best way to help parents get comfortable with high school is to give them opportunities to visit the school (**Appendix AH**), get to know administrators and teachers and get their questions answered.

"I'm afraid my child will be bullied."

In many schools, bullying is a problem and is taken seriously by school administrators. Georgia has an anti-bullying law and local school boards have anti-bullying policies. Still, there is no law or policy that compares to the impact parents have when they know what's going on in their children's lives.

Working together, parents and teachers can create an environment where bullied children and the bullies can ask for and receive help.

The Parent Resource Center and school leaders should continue to work hard enough to convince parents that bullying, including cyber bullying, is not tolerated at school, on the bus or at school events **(Appendix S, T, U)**.

"The high school is too big and too impersonal."

Just because a high school is big does not mean it's impersonal. But parents often fear their child will not get the attention they need because of the large student population.

The key for students is to find a smaller niche within a large high school. Parents can help their children find that niche, whether it's band, drama, math club or a sport. A benefit of large high schools is the large number of clubs, sports and opportunities. It's also important for students to reach out to teachers when they need help and to get that help as soon as they start to fall behind academically.

Parents can help their children fit in at high school by providing opportunities for them to try different activities and meet other students. Parents can help the high school feel more personal by getting involved and volunteering at school, even when their child claims to not want them there.

"My child might fall in with the wrong crowd."

Parents can help their children make good decisions when it comes to friends by teaching them social skills at an early age and reinforcing those skills throughout middle school. For example, children are more likely to form appropriate friendships when they know how to reach out and choose friends instead of waiting until a potential friend chooses them.

Students with low self-esteem are especially vulnerable to getting involved with the wrong crowd, as are children who don't believe their family members listen to and understand them.

By helping parents communicate with their child, they can feel more confident that their child will make the right choices when choosing friends.

"My child is already struggling academically, and high school will be even harder."

By the time a student reaches high school, teachers expect students to take responsibility for their learning. It's up to students to manage their assignments, turn homework in on time, pay attention in class, ask for help and study for tests.

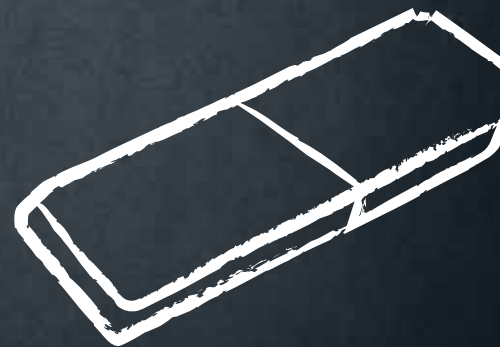
It's a lot for a teenager to handle, especially if the student is immature and/or taking a heavy course load.

Parents need to work with the school and their child to make sure they are enrolled in the right courses based on their motivation, goals and academic skill level. Parents need information on the importance of course selection for high school students planning to attend college (**Appendix I-1**). For super-motivated students, parents may need to intervene and make sure they do not become over committed to extra-curricular commitments or social aspects of the school environment.

14

Conclusion

ABC



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

CHAPTER 14

Conclusion

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher, and they want their children to be successful in school. Most parents recognize the value in education and want their children to acquire the level of education necessary for them to be successful and happy.

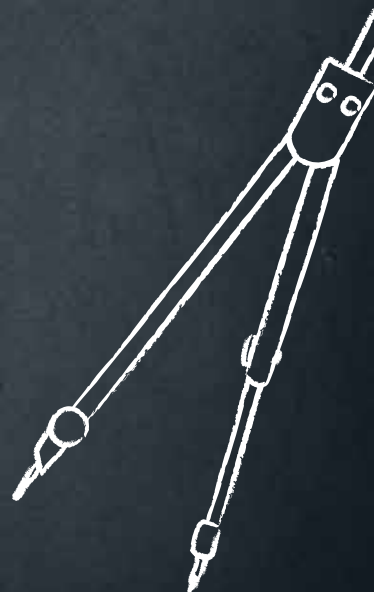
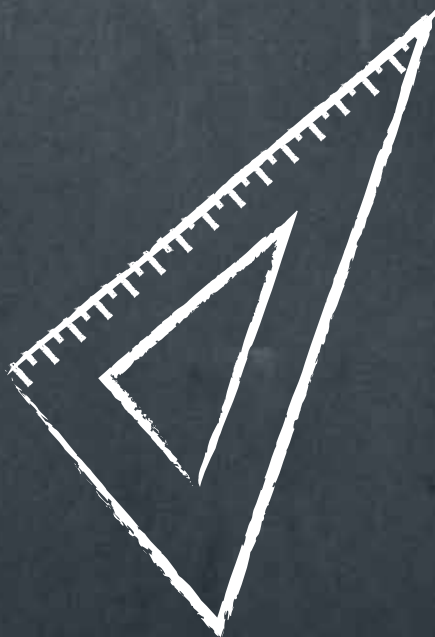
The Parent Resource Centers are designed to help parents overcome the obstacles that prevent them from supporting their children in school by providing information and encouragement. Resource Center staff and educators should continue to emphasize the importance of having parents as partners in the education of their children.

When parents are informed, they can navigate the public school system and make sure their child gets the most out of the public school experience. When parents are encouraged, they build the confidence they need to be their child's first and most important teacher.

Many parents don't know exactly what it means to be engaged with their child's education. They may think bringing their child to school every day on time and making sure their child has school supplies is enough **(Appendix A-M)**.

By providing regular communication to parents and creating programs that involve parents, the Parent Resource Center should be able to provide a roadmap that leads to school success for every family.

SOURCES



PARENT
RESOURCE CENTER
— WHATEVER IT TAKES —

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Dr. Linda Bradley, Associate Professor, Georgia College, Department of Early Childhood and Middle Grades

PTO Today

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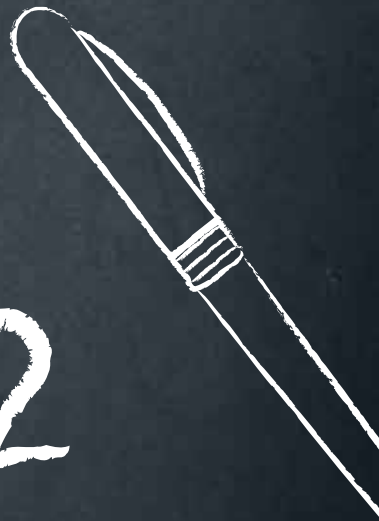
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APPENDIX



$$1 + 1 = 2$$



APPENDIX

Please visit www.CISGA.org/ParentResourceCenter to download and/or print PDF versions of these resource documents in both English and Spanish.

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PARENT-STUDENT-TEACHER PLEDGE

I hereby give my pledge to support the education of:

Name: _____ Grade: _____

In my role as (student, teacher or parent/caregiver), I promise to do my part to make sure that the educational goals of this student are reached.

- As a parent or caregiver, I will attend parent-teacher conferences, review homework each night and read with my child for at least 15 minutes each day.
- As a student, I will take responsibility for my education by listening and participating in class, doing my homework and seeking help when I need it.
- As a teacher, I will teach the curriculum required for the student to advance to the next grade, communicate with the student's parents and provide assistance and support when the student needs it.

By living up to the terms of this contract, we know this student will be in the best possible position to graduate from high school and pursue his or her dreams, whatever they may be.

Together, in partnership, we can succeed!

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____



NOTE TO MY CHILD'S TEACHER

Date: _____

Teacher's name: _____

Child's name: _____

Parent's name: _____

Dear Teacher,

We are having a hard time with homework, especially with _____.
I am committed to making sure my child completes the homework every night but we are finding several of the most recent homework assignments confusing. We need some help!

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule a meeting. I would like to speak with you personally about how we can best help my child.

The best way to contact me is _____.

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for all you do for my child and the other children in the class!

Regards,

CURRICULUM NIGHT



DOOR
PRIZES!

REFRESH-
MENTS!

Help your child have a
great school year!

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

You're Invited To...

MAKE-IT TAKE-IT NIGHT



Come make a custom homework packet *for your child.*

We will provide:



Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

This Homework Packet Prepared with Love By:

Especially for:

MAKE-IT TAKE-IT NIGHT

Parents, Students and Teachers: Partners in Learning



Brought to you by your Parent Resource Center
www.CISGA.org/ParentResourceCenter

LET'S TALK ABOUT...HOMEWORK



- How much homework should children have?
- How can parents help?
- How can you motivate your child to do homework?

Join us for information,
fun and *friendship*!

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP WITH HOMEWORK

- Work with your child to figure out the best homework routine.
- Review the assignment and help your child come up with an action plan. If it's a big project, help divide it into manageable sections. If it's a long set of math problems, encourage your child to do half of it before dinner and half after. If the reading text seems overwhelming, give your child some index cards and demonstrate how to write down one key point on each card.
- Be close by in case your child has a question, but resist the temptation to take over the homework.
- Review the homework and verify that it is finished. But don't grade, correct or revise it. Leave that to the teacher.
- Access the academic support your child needs, whether it's more attention from the teacher in class, a tutor or a computer program.
- Make sure your child has the necessary supplies to do the homework assignments.
- Set a clear expectation that your child complete homework assignments each night.
- Spell out clear consequences, such as no access to a cell phone or time on the computer.
- Enforce consequences.
- Praise and encourage your child when homework gets completed.
- Seek help from the teacher if your child can't get homework completed each night, even with support.

HOMEWORK HELP FOR PARENTS



- How much time should homework take?
- How can I help when I don't remember algebra?
- How can I get my child to do homework?

Hear from a teacher! Share strategies!
Find a homework routine that works
for your family! Free homework tools!

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

HOMEWORK HELP CENTER



- Get your homework done after school
- Get help from teachers
- Work on group projects
- Relax when you get home

Tuesdays & Thursdays
2:30-4:30pm in the cafeteria

Snacks and transportation provided!
Learn homework strategies!

WHAT GRADE DO CHILDREN LEARN THIS?

Directions:

- Fill in the blank with the grade you think your child is expected to learn this skill or topic: K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- HINT: THERE ARE TWO TOPICS FOR EACH GRADE.
- Good luck! It's okay to guess. And remember: It's just for fun!

- _____ Explain the development of the Declaration of Independence
- _____ Tell time to the nearest hour and half hour
- _____ Discuss the life of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.
- _____ Classify organisms to simplify the study of living things
- _____ Identify 200 common sight words
- _____ Distinguish living things from non-living things
- _____ Explain the effects of pollution and humans on the environment
- _____ Analyze data presented in a graph
- _____ Count back change to \$1
- _____ Identify first and last name in print
- _____ Describe the universe as the moon, sun, other stars and planets
- _____ Identify quadrilaterals (objects with four sides)

WHAT GRADE DO CHILDREN LEARN THIS?

ANSWER KEY:

- 4 Explain the development of the Declaration of Independence
- 1 Tell time to the nearest hour and half hour
- 3 Discuss the life of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.
- 5 Classify organisms to simplify the study of living things
- 1 Identify 200 common sight words
- K Distinguish living things from non-living things
- 3 Explain the effects of pollution and humans on the environment
- 5 Analyze data presented in a graph
- 2 Count back change to \$1
- K Identify first and last name in print
- 2 Describe the universe as the moon, sun, other stars and planets
- 4 Identify quadrilaterals (objects with four sides)

Source: Gwinnett County Public Schools. Your school may do things a little differently. Check with teachers to find out the broad themes they cover during the year.

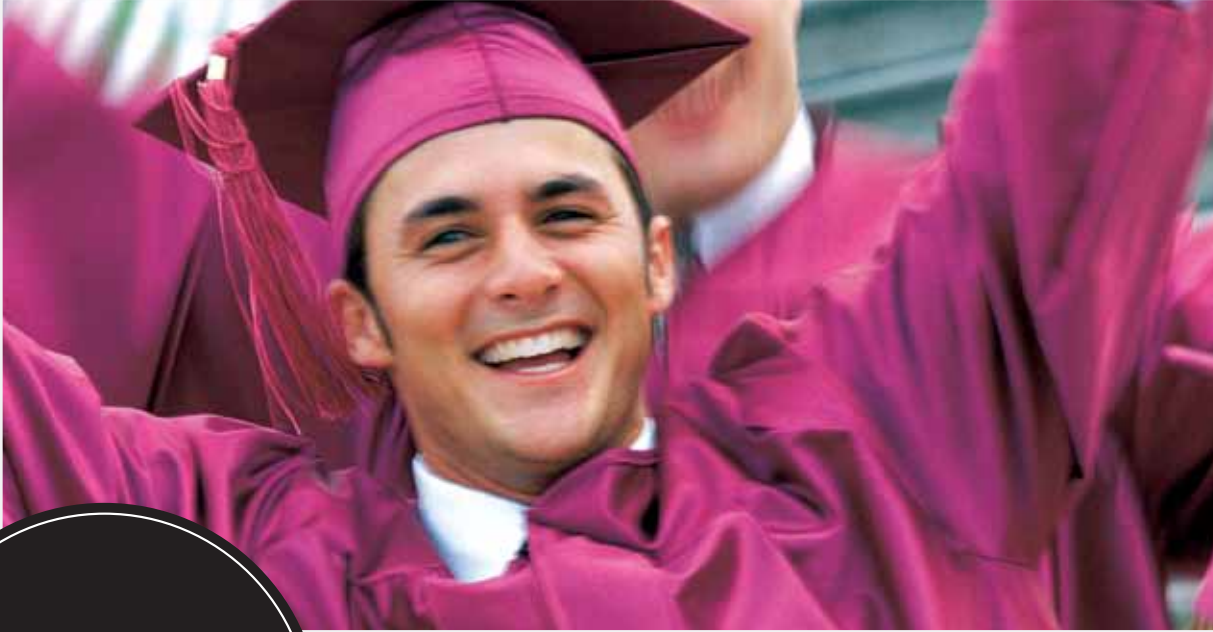
RESOURCES FOR HELPING YOUR CHILDREN LEARN AT HOME

You are your children's first and most important teacher. Take the time to ensure your children have what they need for school each day and they do their homework.

Here are some resources:

- **U.S. Department of Education:** This site includes links to booklets for helping your child in science, math, reading and history. It also includes tips on how to help your child with homework. <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html>
- **Communities in Schools of Georgia:** Learn more about this dropout prevention organization and see if your community has a CIS program your child can join. <http://www.cisga.org>
- **Math.com:** This site includes specific and doable home activities that will help children learn and enjoy math. Games include Squash That Box and Money's Worth. <http://www.math.com/parents/articles/mathhome.html>
- **Scholastic.com:** This site has worksheets, activities and, of course, book recommendations, all broken down by grade level. <http://www.scholastic.com/parents>
- **SchoolFamily.com:** This site has links to dozens of articles and ideas on helping your child at home, as well as tips for solving every conceivable school problem and worksheets galore. Geared toward grades pre-K through 8, but includes some high school resources. <http://www.schoolfamily.com>
- **Exploratorium:** This famous science museum in San Francisco has fantastic make-and-do resources for parents. Make a sound sandwich or calculate your weight and age in other worlds. <http://www.exploratorium.edu/explore>
- **The Khan Academy:** The Khan Academy site provides a free online collection of thousands of free video tutorials stored on YouTube. <http://www.khanacademy.org>

LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL



MIDDLE SCHOOL IS
NOT TOO SOON TO
START THINKING
ABOUT LIFE AFTER
HIGH SCHOOL!

Middle school parents: Come learn about...

- College and career options
- Preparing your child for college and career
- Paying for college and career training

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

Featured Speakers: _____

IT'S TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT COLLEGE



Get your questions answered!

- Is my child on track to attend college?
- What kind of grades and test scores are needed?
- How can I motivate my child?
- How do families pay for college?

For parents of eighth graders.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

JUST-FOR-FUN PIZZA PARTY



We've all worked so hard getting ready for the CRCT! Children perform best when they're not stressed. Let's get together, eat pizza, relax and have fun.

FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

ARE YOU STRESSED ABOUT THE TEST?

It's normal to be nervous. But if you are really stressed out, join us to discuss ways to worry less about the test.

Test stress support for parents:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

Test stress support for children:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

Moderated by:

TEST DAY TIPS



- Be positive about the test
- Remind your child that they simply need to do their best
- Review with your child any test-prep materials the teacher sends home
- Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep
- Feed your child a healthy breakfast
- After the test, allow time for your child to play and relax

Need help? Call your Parent Resource Center: _____

SAT AND ACT SUPPORT AND WORKSHOP



STUDENTS AND PARENTS WELCOME!

Learn about...

- Why the SAT and ACT are important
- Managing SAT and ACT stress
- Finding resources for SAT and ACT help

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

PREPARING FOR THE SAT AND THE ACT

What is the SAT? The SAT is a standardized test used for college admission and placement. It tests your knowledge in reading, writing and math. Your SAT score will be just one piece of information colleges use to determine admission. Your grades are also very important.

What is the ACT? The ACT is a different standardized test used for college admission. In Georgia, the SAT is more popular. But colleges also accept the ACT, which measures reading, math, English and science. The ACT has an optional writing test.

Which test should students take? It's totally their choice. The best way to see which test plays to your strengths is to take a practice test of each one.

When should students take the SAT or the ACT? Generally, students take a standardized college admissions test in the spring of their junior year or the fall of their senior year. Many students take the test more than once. Students in 9th and 10th grade can take the PSAT, a practice test.

How should I prepare for the SAT or ACT? The best way to prepare for a standardized college admissions test is to take challenging courses, study hard and read and write outside of the classroom. It's also helpful to take practice tests. The College Board, which oversees the SAT, offers a free practice test as well as a practice question each day. Go to <http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice>. The ACT has practice tools at <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep>.

If a student does poorly on the SAT or ACT, does that mean they won't get accepted to any colleges? No! Students can offset a lower score on the SAT or ACT with good grades in challenging courses and a track record of hard work and participation in school life. Many two-year colleges accept students regardless of test scores. If students work hard, they can transfer to a four-year college.

How do students sign up? Go to <http://www.collegeboard.org> to register for the SAT. Go to <http://www.actstudent.org> to register for the ACT.

10 WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WHEN YOU'RE SHORT ON TIME

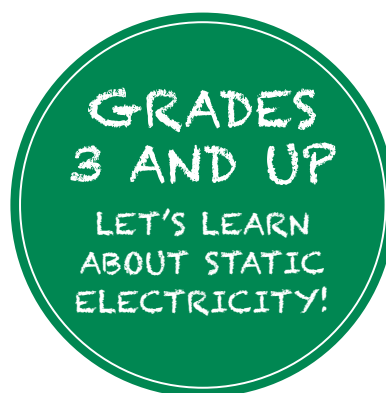
Parents may think involvement in their child's education has to be time consuming, but it doesn't. Encourage a reluctant parent to commit to just one activity each week.

1. **Read a story to your child's class.** Ask the teacher if you should bring your own book or if the teacher will provide one. Read with enthusiasm. After the story, ask students questions about the story.
2. **Help out during center time.** This is when children rotate through several different activities. When a volunteer staffs one of the centers, the teacher is free to work with a small group of children without interruption.
3. **Help your teacher with a hands-on activity.** Teachers often need help with science experiments and other hands-on lessons or crafts.
4. **Work a stop at the library into your hectic after-school schedule.** Let your child select a few books. Promise to read them with your child.
5. **Read one chapter of a book to your child.** If time permits, have your child read the next chapter to you. A children's librarian can help you make a good choice based on your child's interests and reading level.
6. **Play a board game as a family.** Monopoly, Clue, Sorry, Candyland, Scrabble, Chutes & Ladders. There are countless board games that offer great opportunities for learning while laughing and chatting about what's going on at school.
7. **Use flashcards to help your child learn math facts or sight words.** You can also make flashcards to help an older child study for a test in science, social studies or language arts.
8. **Conduct a simple science experiment at home.** Find easy experiments to help your child connect with what is going on in school. Or just show your child that science can be fun.
9. **Help your child write a letter to a family member or friend.** If your child is just learning to write, offer to let the child dictate the letter while you write it. Then ask your child to read it out loud before mailing.
10. **Play catch with your child while calling out spelling words or multiplication tables.** When children are physically active, their brains are active too.

A HAIR-RAISING EXPERIMENT

What you need:

- A cool, dry day
- Two round balloons, inflated and tied
- Two 20-inch pieces of string
- Wool or acrylic sock
- Mirror



What to do:

Have your child tie a string to each inflated balloon. Then tell them to rub a balloon on their hair for about 15 seconds – help them to rub around the whole balloon. Have everyone take the balloon away and see what happens to their hair. Then have them observe what happens when they bring the balloon back close to their hair.

Next, stand a few feet away from and facing your child. Have them rub the balloon on their hair again as you do the same with the other balloon. Tell them to hold the string to the balloon, letting it hang freely but without letting it touch anything. (You do the same with your balloon.) Slowly move the two balloons toward each other, but don't let them touch. Have your child tell you what's happening: Do the balloons push away from each other, or do they pull toward each other? Have them place their hand between the two hanging balloons. What happens?

Give your child a sock to place over one hand. Tell them to rub the balloon with the sock, then let the balloon hang freely. Have them move the sock-covered hand near the balloon. What happens? Have them try rubbing both balloons with the sock and then letting them hang near each other. What happens now?

About protons and electrons:

All materials contain millions of tiny particles, called protons and electrons. They have electric charges. Protons have positive charges and electrons have negative ones. Usually, they balance each other, but sometimes when two surfaces rub together, some of the electrons rub off one surface onto the other, and we can have static electricity. Materials with like charges (all positive or all negative) move away from each other; those with opposite charges attract each other.

PLAYING DETECTIVE

What you need:

- Cooking oil
- Empty glass
- Stamp pad
- White index cards
- Cocoa powder
- Small paintbrush
- Clear tape



What to do:

Have a family member secretly dip a finger in oil, and press it to a glass. Then challenge your child to figure out whose fingerprint it is. Take fingerprints of each family member by pressing a finger onto a stamp pad and onto separate index cards. Next, dust the glass with cocoa powder, lift the print with tape and put the tape on a new card. Finally, match up the print to the fingerprints of family members. Whose fingerprint is it?

All about fingerprints:

Each fingerprint will only have one match, because every person has a unique pattern of ridges on their fingers. That is why detectives dust crime scenes for fingerprints and search criminal databases for matches.

ALL ABOUT BUBBLES

What you need:

- 8 tablespoons of dishwashing liquid
- 1 quart water
- 1 drinking straw
- A shallow pan



What to do:

Mix the dishwashing liquid with the water and pour it into the pan. Give your child a straw and tell them to blow through it as they move it slowly across the surface of the solution. Ask them to notice the size of the bubbles they're making.

Next, have your child try to make a very big bubble that covers the surface of the pan. Have them do the following:

- Dip one end of the straw into the solution.
- Hold the straw slightly above the surface.
- Blow into it very gently.
- It may take several tries to get a really big bubble.

After making a big bubble, have your child touch it gently with a wet finger to see what happens.

Make another big bubble, and then touch it with a dry finger. What happens?

Look closely at the bubbles. How many colors does your child see?
Do the colors change?

More on bubbles:

Bubbles are bits of air or gas trapped inside a liquid ball. The surface of a bubble is very thin. Bubbles are particularly fragile when a dry object touches them. That's because soap film tends to stick to the object, putting a strain on the bubble.

PARENT HOMEWORK CHECKLIST

Are you doing your part?

- ✓ My child has a regularly scheduled time to do homework.
- ✓ My child has a quiet place to do homework.
- ✓ I make sure the TV is not blaring when my child is doing homework.
- ✓ My child has the supplies required to do homework.
- ✓ I maintain a positive attitude about homework.
- ✓ I know my child's homework policy.
- ✓ My child can call me for help with homework.
- ✓ I limit the time my child spends watching TV and playing video games.
- ✓ I talk to my child about homework assignments.
- ✓ When my child is frustrated with homework, I try to help.
- ✓ I review my child's homework when my child says it's completed.
- ✓ I praise my child for a job well done.
- ✓ I talk to my child's teacher about homework concerns, such as when it appears my child does not understand the assignments and when homework seems to be taking too long.

BULLYING FACT SHEET



Children should not be afraid to go to school. Children do not have to live with bullying. If your child is being bullied, report it!

What is bullying?

Bullying is unwanted aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

What is cyber bullying?

Cyber bullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology, including cell phones, computers, tablets, social media sites, text messages and websites. Examples of cyber bullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or text or posted on social networking sites, embarrassing photos or videos distributed or displayed in a public place and fake profiles.

How can you talk to your child about bullying?

Help your child understand what bullying is and how to get help. Check out your child's school's discipline policy. Check in with your children often, realizing children don't always tell their parents when they're being bullied. Know your child's friends. Listen when they have problems. Find ways for children to do things they enjoy, such as sports, scouts or the arts. Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.

FOR HELP, GO HERE: www.stopbullying.gov

SIGNS A CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

Look for changes in your child's behavior. However, be aware that not all children who are bullied exhibit warning signs.

Some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplained injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches; feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating; students may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves or talking about suicide

If your child is in serious distress or danger, don't ignore the problem. Get help right away. Your school's counselor is a good place to start.

SIGNS A CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS

Children may be bullying others if they:

- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently
- Have unexplained money or new belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions

If your child is bullying others, seek help through your school's counselor.

CYBER BULLYING: WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

How your child's cell phone can become a tool for bullying.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

- What is cyber bullying?
- What should your child do if she is being cyber bullied?
- What are the consequences if a child cyber bullies my child?
- What is the school doing to prevent cyber bullying?
- How can I monitor my child's cell phone activity?

Hear from Principal _____, School Resource Officer

_____ and School Guidance Counselor _____.

Bullying is not tolerated here!

LITERACY TIPS FOR PARENTS

Helping your child learn to read doesn't require a lot of time or money. Words are everywhere, and you can help your child just by reading them together.

Here are some ways to help your child learn to read:

- Keep short books in your purse or backpack and in the car, so you'll always have some handy when you have a few spare minutes.
- Talk to your child! Spoken language is part of literacy. As you and your child chat, your child builds vocabulary and confidence.
- Don't just read your child books; tell your child stories, too.
- After reading a story, have your child tell the story back to you. Make up new endings together.
- Show your child how you read packaging at the grocery store. Cereal boxes are packed with words.
- Point out letters and words everywhere you go. Street signs, license plates and menus are great examples.
- Play store, housekeeping, doctor or restaurant with your child at home.
(For example, if you play restaurant, let your child write down your order.)
You don't have to play for a long time.
- Come up with silly rhymes with your child. For example: I saw a cat/I saw a rat/I was so surprised/I slipped on a mat.
- Don't think bedtime is the only time to read your child a story. Children love it when their parents read to them, no matter what time of day it is.

READING NIGHT HOW-TO



Reading Night activities are a fun way to get students and parents together to celebrate books. Remember, you don't need a big crowd to have a successful Reading Night. You can have a meaningful program with a small group. Still, you want to attract as many people as you can.

Here's how to plan a successful reading night:

- Work with teachers to select the right book or theme. Choose a book students have studied in school and one that has widespread appeal. For younger students, choose a theme and read several books along that theme. For example, "The Wonderful Work of Eric Carle" or "Stories About Friendship."
- Plan activities. For younger children, plan a craft and a couple of games. For older students, enlist teachers to refer you to students who can read passages from the book. Teachers and parents may also read from the book. Work with the teacher to have students put on a dramatic performance of a scene in the book.
- Plan discussion. For older students, discussing the book will provide a great opportunity for dialog. Keep discussion groups small, about 10 participants each. Make sure each discussion group has a moderator who has read the book. Prepare questions in advance to get the discussion started.
- Offer incentives. Give away small prizes that will appeal to the target audience. For example, if the book has been adapted into a film, give away the DVD.
- Provide books: Send everyone home with a copy of the book you read or a book with a similar theme or by the same author.

HINTS FOR SPECIFIC READING NIGHT EVENTS

These Reading Night themes are just suggestions. Work with teachers to identify the best books and themes to focus on for Reading Night. The best books to celebrate are those magical books that appeal to students, parents and teachers.

For a monkey and ape Reading Night for younger children:

- Serve bananas and animal crackers. Fill celery sticks with peanut butter or cream cheese and stand the animal crackers up so they look like they're grazing.
- Play Act Like Animals: A child draws an animal out of a hat and pretends to be that animal. The other students guess which animal.
- Play Which Animal Doesn't Belong: Hold up pictures of four animals, three of whom live in the same habitat and one that does not. Students identify which animal does not belong.
- After reading several stories, have children act out one of the stories. The other children have to guess which story.
- Make monkey masks: Use paper plates, felt, glue and markers to make masks. Precut as many items as possible to make the craft quick and easy. Glue the mask to a wooden stick.

For a *Charlotte's Web* Reading Night for older elementary children:

- Serve spider snacks made of Ritz crackers. Spread peanut butter or cream cheese between two crackers. Insert eight pretzel rods as legs. Make eyes out of raisins, M&Ms or chocolate chips, using peanut butter or cream cheese as glue. Students can make their own spider treats!
- Watch scenes from the movie, *Charlotte's Web*. Talk about what happens before that scene and what happens in the next.
- Play Guess Who's Talking. A teacher reads a passage of dialog out of the book. The student guesses the speaker.
- Talk about the theme of the story. Have students share what they think the theme of the story is.

HINTS FOR SPECIFIC READING NIGHT EVENTS (Continued)

For a Reading Night for middle school students celebrating *To Kill a Mockingbird*:

- Watch clips from the movie and discuss the scenes. Were the right actors cast to portray the characters? How is watching the movie different from reading the book? Is it better to watch the movie or read the book first?
- Play Guess Who's Talking. A teacher reads a passage of dialog out of the book. The students guess the speaker.
- Play a trivia game. Students can compete individually or in teams. Call out a question about the book. Students take turns trying to answer, cumulating points for correct responses.
- Work with teachers to have students make brief presentations on other historical events from that time and on the life of author Harper Lee.
- During discussion groups, talk about why this book remains so popular. Have parents and teachers talk about the impact of the book on them when they read it in school. Have them talk about the impact the movie had on them.

For a Reading Night for high school students celebrating *The Book Thief*:

- Serve food related to the book, such as apple slices with caramel dipping sauce or other apple treat.
- Work with teachers to enlist students to give a presentation about the time period. Or enlist someone from the community to give a brief presentation on the Holocaust.
- During the discussion, talk about how this book compares to other books set during the Holocaust, such as *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl*. How do students feel when they read these books?

FAMILY READING NIGHT... COME READ WITH US!

Celebrate classic books featuring your favorite apes and monkeys!

- *Goodnight, Gorilla*
- *Hug*
- *Curious George*



For families of children in
pre-K, K, 1st and 2nd grades.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

FAMILY READING NIGHT

Celebrate *Charlotte's Web*

A timeless classic for children and parents of all ages.



For families of
3rd, 4th and 5th graders.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

FAMILY READING NIGHT

Celebrate *The Book Thief*

A story of the Holocaust.



For families of
high school students.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

FAMILY READING NIGHT

Come celebrate the great classic: *To Kill a Mockingbird*



For families of
middle school students.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

READING WORKSHOP



- Reading with your child every day will help your child do better in school.
- Come learn tips and tricks for helping your child become an A+ reader.

For parents, grandparents
and caregivers.



Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

READ WITH YOUR CHILD...
TODAY AND EVERY DAY.



BOOK DRIVE



- Books need to be read
- Bring the books your family has outgrown so other children can enjoy them
- For every **10 books** you bring in, receive a coupon for a **free ice cream cone**

Drop-off spot: _____

Donate your books by: _____

Picture books! Board books! Paperback books! All kinds of books!
Graphic novels! Audiobooks! Series books! All kinds of books!
Well-loved books! Duplicate books! Long-ignored books!
All kinds of books! All children need books!

SUMMER READING CLUB

Instructions:

Read books all summer long. Get them at your local library or a bookstore. Borrow books from friends. Trade with friends. Listen while an adult reads the book out loud or listen to an audiobook. It's reading with your ears!

Record each book you read on your reading log right after you finish it! Write the book title and the author's name. It's okay for a grown-up to help.

When you finish your 20th book, deliver or mail your reading log and this form to this address: _____

Don't wait too long. The Summer Reading Club ends on Labor Day!

**SOON, YOU'LL RECEIVE
A SPECIAL PRIZE!**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

What is your favorite book you read this summer? _____

MY SUMMER READING LOG

Write the title and author of each book you read.

Name: _____ Age: _____

1. _____ _____	11. _____ _____
2. _____ _____	12. _____ _____
3. _____ _____	13. _____ _____
4. _____ _____	14. _____ _____
5. _____ _____	15. _____ _____
6. _____ _____	16. _____ _____
7. _____ _____	17. _____ _____
8. _____ _____	18. _____ _____
9. _____ _____	19. _____ _____
10. _____ _____	20. _____ _____

LET'S PARTY!



Make new friends. • Get excited for school to start. • It's going to be a great year!

For families of rising
kindergarten students.



Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

WHAT TO EXPECT IN KINDERGARTEN



**SNACKS
AND CHILDCARE
PROVIDED!**

- Will my child take tests?
- Will my child learn to read?
- Is my child ready?

For parents of rising
kindergarten students.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

READING IN KINDERGARTEN WORKSHOP



Yes, children learn to read in kindergarten!

Help your child by:

- Reading with your child
- Playing reading games
- Filling your child's world with words

SNACKS
AND CHILDCARE
PROVIDED
YOU WON'T LEAVE
EMPTY HANDED.

For parents and caregivers of
kindergarten students.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

CALLING ALL FIFTH GRADERS: IT'S TIME TO GET READY FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL!



Come get the scoop on:

- Lockers
- Homework
- Classes
- Extra-curricular activities
- Teachers

For fifth-grade
students and parents.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

CALLING ALL FIFTH-GRADE PARENTS! COME LEARN ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL!

Let our panel of experts answer your questions!

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Students
- Parents

Let's discuss:

- Academic expectations
- Discipline
- Common misconceptions

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

EIGHTH-GRADE PARENTS AND STUDENTS, COME TOUR THE HIGH SCHOOL

- Meet the principal
- Hear from students
- Check out the Ninth Grade Academy
- See the track, theater, art studio and other great facilities
- Ask questions
- Get ready for high school

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE QUESTIONS: KINDERGARTEN

If you're not sure what to ask at your first parent-teacher conference, these questions can help get you started:

- What do the grades on my child's report card mean?
- Is my child doing the type of work that is expected?
- How do I know if my child understands what I am reading to them?
- What sorts of questions should I ask my child as we read together?
- How can I help my child if they are struggling with math homework?
- What are some math learning activities I can do at home?
- Does my child get along with the other students in school?
- Does my child have difficulty following directions or doing what is asked of them?
- What do you do if this happens in class?
- What can you tell me about how my child learns?
- Are there any additional services during school or after school that could help my child? If so, how can we get that extra help for my child?
- What are some things I can do at home to help my child do their best in school?

Adapted from the New York City Department of Education

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN MEETING FOR KINDERGARTEN

It's easy to feel intimidated and tongue-tied at an IEP meeting. A list of prepared questions will help you stay on task and get all the information you need. These are some suggested questions:

- How has the teacher made accommodations for my child's learning and behavioral needs?
- What can I do at home to support the IEP goals?
- What type of learner is my child?
- How does the teacher use my child's strengths when teaching?
- How frequently is my child's progress monitored?
- What are the best ways for me to stay in touch with my child's teacher?
- Is my child making progress toward the IEP goals?
- If a service is not working, how can I access different services?
- What sorts of programs or other supports might help my child, and how can we access them?
- What are the promotion criteria for my child, and how is my child progressing toward those criteria?
- In high school, what progress has my child made toward graduation goals?

PARENTS, SCHOOL & YOU



Learn how to help your child do well in school.

- Homework
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Attending school events
- Volunteering at school



Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR ADOLESCENT



Moderated by: _____

Discuss:

- Having a conversation with your child
- Getting to know your child's friends
- Talking about tough subjects like sex and peer pressure
- Getting ready for high school

For parents of eighth graders.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____

ARE YOU ENGAGED IN YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION?

A checklist for parents:

- ✓ I make sure my child gets a good night's sleep each night.
- ✓ I make sure my child eats healthy food, including breakfast.
- ✓ I have a morning routine we follow to get to school on time and prepared.
- ✓ I work with my child to establish a homework routine.
- ✓ I review my child's homework each night to make sure it is complete.
- ✓ I know the general topics my child is studying in school.
- ✓ I ask my child to tell me about school.
- ✓ I maintain a positive attitude about my child's school.
- ✓ I make sure my child knows what I expect at school and at home.
- ✓ I am consistent in giving out consequences and rewards.
- ✓ I read with my child every day.
- ✓ I know my child's teacher and my child's teacher knows me.
- ✓ I attend parent-teacher conferences at least twice a year.
- ✓ I volunteer at school whenever I can.
- ✓ I belong to a parent organization.
- ✓ I take advantage of educational resources in the community, such as science museums, public libraries and parks with nature trails.
- ✓ I find fun ways to enrich my child's education at home, such as cooking and going grocery shopping together.
- ✓ I limit the time my child watches TV and plays video games.

**"EDUCATION IS
ALL A MATTER OF
BUILDING BRIDGES,
IT SEEMS TO ME."**

- RALPH ELLISON

The Parent Resource Center helps parents, students and teachers work together to build bridges that lead to bright futures.