

TIPS FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT



**FAMILY NETWORK
ON DISABILITIES**



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Striving for complete integration and equality of people with disabilities
into a society without barriers.

FND



FAMILY NETWORK ON DISABILITIES

Family Network on Disabilities (FND) was founded in 1985 by a group of parents of children with disabilities who came together for mutual support and information-sharing. FND is a grassroots organization for persons with disabilities and their families that is family-centered and family-driven.

Family Network on Disabilities is a national network of individuals of all ages who may be at-risk, have disabilities, or have special needs and their families, professionals, and concerned citizens. The mission of FND is to strive for the complete integration and equality of persons with disabilities in a society without barriers and to serve families of children with disabilities, ages birth through 26, who have the full range of disabilities described in section 602(3) of IDEA. FND is a parent organization as defined in section 671(a)(2) of IDEA 2004.

POPIN-PSN-PEN help to ensure that parents of children with the full range of disabilities have the training and information they need to prepare their children for not only school, but to be able to lead productive, independent lives to the fullest extent possible.

How do we foster relationships between home, schools and school districts?

What makes a Family Friendly School? All schools and neighborhoods have their own personality. This includes the school's philosophy, structure, curriculum, its administrators, teachers, staff and their reputation. What is the school's culture and how it relates to student achievement, the neighborhood and the relationship with families? We've all heard of that "bad" school that even the ninety year old neighbor knows not to recommend to others to send their children to. So how do we build and strengthen partnerships among parents, students, teachers, principals, superintendents, personnel and the community? First, we need to identify what a Family Friendly School looks like, and the different types of personalities a school may or may not have.

School Personalities

What personality does my school have?

Fortress School:

- The school does not share information with parents and is not friendly.
- A parent group is hand-picked by the school.
- Parents are afraid to complain or ask questions.
- Families feel like outsiders and do not feel they can talk to the school.

Come-If-We-Call School:

- The information is never clear.
- Teachers see parents only at conference time.
- An "in-crowd" of parents do all the work.
- Families have no say in school decisions.

Family Friendly Schools (cont.)

Open-Door School:

- Families receive information on what their child is learning.
- The school has a center and a parent group.
- Parents helped write the school handbook, compacts and policies.
- The school values its parents and shares all information with them.

Family Friendly School:

- Families and staff set the school values together.
- Families and staff talk all the time about how students are doing and who needs extra help.
- Parents are on all committees and committees meet when it's convenient for parents; they are a part of all big decisions.
- Information on student progress is shared in many ways.
- There are no barriers so all parents can participate.

Why should I work for my school to be a Family Friendly School?

Research shows when schools and families work together to support learning:

- Children do better in school.
- Children stay in school longer.
- Children like school more.
- Children are more likely to go on to college or continue their education.
- Families feel welcome and encouraged to support their schools.
- Children and families feel valued.
- Teachers feel supported by their families and administrators.

How can I make my school a Family Friendly School?

- The school environment is friendly and welcoming. Front office people must be welcoming and eager to help.
- Communication between school and home must be clear and frequent.

- Parents must be invited to be a part of the educational team and feel welcomed.
- Parents must feel informed about school guidelines, policies and compacts. They must be part of the decision making process.
- Parents should have opportunities to volunteer and participate in school activities and events offered to them. Include new approaches to reach all parents.
- Parents should have opportunities to receive training on understanding all programs, services, guidelines, policy writing, and voice how funding is spent.
- Parents, teachers, administrators, students and community leaders should have a partnership attitude in increasing student achievement.
- List strategies that support family involvement.
- Develop a family friendly plan of action on how to be more involved in the school and community.

Helping parents feel welcome is the first step to creating family friendly schools.

“True family engagement not only helps students, but impacts the education culture of the families. Relationships with families will bring about learning benefits for each and every student.”

-Engaging All Families by Steven Constantino



Parental Involvement

Ten tips on how parents can be involved without ever setting foot in the school!

All parents want to be involved in their child's lives, interests and educational experience. Times are busy, and parents are struggling with juggling work and everyday living. How can parents be more involved and supportive of their child's education? Here are ten tips to help with Parental Involvement!

1. Talk to your child every day. Learn about their day at school, their relationship with their teacher and other students. Ask about how they feel about school in general. Ask them to talk about one good or bad thing that happened at school and why they think it happened.
2. Strengthen parent-teacher relationships. Keep the lines of communication open by deciding how to communicate with your child's teacher regularly. You can also ask your child's teacher about ways you can help with school projects from home (helping with cut-outs and coloring, copying class materials, donating box tops, gathering supplies and materials for class projects, etc.).
3. Take time to work with your child. Reading can be a fun experience and is a great opportunity to bond. Have a private book study with your child. Visit your local library. Ask your child to pick out a book that he or she likes (make sure it's age appropriate and at their reading level) and get a duplicate for yourself. Read a chapter together every night and have a discussion about the book. Monitor your child's class work and study habits. Make sure homework is being done and projects are turned in on time.
4. Make sure your child is at school on time and prepared with all materials needed. If getting materials is difficult, speak to the teacher, guidance counselor or parent liaison for suggestions on free resources.

5. Join the PTA. By paying the one-time annual dues, you would be supporting one of the oldest advocacy groups around for parents. You may not be able to attend every PTA, School Advisory Council or Parent Advisory Committee meeting, but you may be able to participate by teleconference. You may also ask to be a member of their listserv if they have one, and request the minutes (record of the meeting) to be sent to you for your review. This helps you have access to information and still participate by offering suggestions or your opinion on meeting topics. Then you can decide how and when it's possible for you to help.

6. Offer to start a phone tree for the classroom. Ask your child's teacher if she needs help communicating with other parents about upcoming events, volunteer lists, class supply needs, field trip volunteers or fundraising initiatives. This takes a load off the teacher's mind and is extraordinarily helpful.

7. Start a Parent Networking page. There are many free online websites that offer easy ways to communicate with one another and are easy to manage. Among the most popular are Facebook, MySpace and Ning. These are easy and fun to maintain. It's also a great way to connect with other parents, school faculty, community agencies and learn of other resources available.

8. Start an online Parent Support Group. Yahoo.com offers a free way to create a strictly email-based dialogue between members on various topics posted. This does not require a great deal of set-up and is pretty easy to monitor. Posting school events, helpful information about school policy, school improvement plans or simply a great way to connect with other parents and educators in the community. Inviting parents, teachers, faculty, district personnel and local businesses is a fantastic way to build the relationships between school, home and community. This has always been a great source of information for parents about community events, sharing opinions about doctors and dentists, teachers and schools.

Parental Involvement (cont.)

9. Don't stow it, show it! Instead of stowing class work or artwork from your child in a drawer, showcase it on the refrigerator door! Hang a cleverly crafted project on a wall in a common area at home. This helps build your child's self-esteem and will be sure to spark a smile in your child and anyone who sees it!

10. "I can" can. Give your child an empty coffee can covered with contact paper and labeled "My 'I CAN' Can". Whenever your children learn a new skill, whether it's academic, artistic or athletic, write it on a piece of paper and stuff it in the can. Review the contents of the cans periodically and watch your children's self-esteem soar.



***Use your smile to
change the world.
Do not let the world
change your smile.***

A Meeting of the Minds: Ideas for Teachers and Parents

Parent-teacher conferences gives the parents, teachers and the child (when appropriate) an opportunity to exchange ideas on ensuring a successful educational experience for our children. Sometimes these meetings can be stressful for parents, teachers and students. However, it doesn't have to be. The following are some great ideas to get the most out of your parent-teacher conferences. Keep in mind cultural differences and how they may affect all aspects of the conference, from its timing and location to how information is delivered and an action plan is developed.

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility is the key to conferencing! While it may be difficult for teachers to schedule meetings after school hours, it is just as difficult for some parents. If scheduling meetings before or after school hours is not possible, try to consider teleconferencing or online meetings.

INFORMATION

Forms are great for gathering information on communication preferences of both parents and teachers. Early in the school year, a form should be sent home asking parents about the best time to meet, expectations for their child and other needs such as childcare, language barriers or transportation concerns. Closer to the conference, send a second form with a few time choices for the meeting and a request for another date and time if none of the choices are possible.

Just for Teachers:

- Give parents plenty of notice about the conference, provide them with the topics of discussion, the child's interests, likes and dislikes, and study habits at home.
- Try to arrange for a table (with a bowl of candy) and two chairs set outside the room. This makes for a great waiting area!
- Be sure to have all student files up to date and organized for discussion.

Parent-Teacher Conferences (cont.)

- Make a packet comprised of tests, assignments, class work and projects; leave them ready for parents to review on the student's desk.
- Identify multi-lingual administrative staff members; ask if they would help with translations if needed.
- Try to have a list of community and online resources ready to give to your parents.
- Discuss class routines, rules and homework policies with parents. Ask if they have questions or concerns.
- Discuss the child's learning style and preferred learning strategies or activities. Be sure to begin any discussion regarding concerns with behavior or difficulties with learning on a positive note.
- Share any and all strategies and material that parents may use at home that address difficulties with learning or behavior.
- Conclude meetings with a mind hopeful of building a relationship with your parents. Remind them that you are a team and want the best educational experience possible for their child.

Just for Parents:

- Ask your child if there is anything he or she would like you to discuss with the teacher.
- Note everything you want to talk about at the conference. Think about positive things working at home as well as concerns to share or ask about.
- Be sure to arrive promptly or a few minutes early.
- If you've had an unpleasant experience in the past with a conference, try to be objective with your child's new teacher. You may want to share any negative previous experiences with him or her and let them know you hope for a positive working relationship.
- Begin the meeting with positive comments about the classroom and the teacher.
- Prioritize your concerns to be sure the most important topics are covered.
- Allow the teacher to lead the conference and express his/her views, but be sure to cover your topics, as well.

- Ask the teacher about how you can work together and what you can do at home.
- Try to avoid a lengthy conversation on topics not related to the purpose of the conference.
- Try to be open-minded to suggestions made by the teacher.
- Remember to ask as many questions as you need to. Make an effort to take notes about what is talked about during the conference. You'll refer to your notes later.

ACTION PLAN!

An effective conference should always end with a plan of action. As a team, the parent and teacher may decide you want the child to participate in the conference. If everyone agrees this is appropriate, the child can help develop the action plan. Write down what actions will be taken. The plan should tell the story of how everyone is going to support the student. Note a follow-up date for a phone call or another meeting. End on a positive note. Smile and shake hands!

A TEAM EFFORT

Children are not the only family members with homework. Together, parents and teachers can contribute to the outcome of their children's success by doing the following:

TEACHERS ARE DIFFERENT

Each teacher may have different expectations for their students. Parents should ask for a written copy of each teacher's classroom and homework guidelines. Ask your child's teacher how you can help improve your child's academic experience.

PARENTS ARE DIFFERENT

All parents are different. Making an extra effort to learn about your student's parents, their schedules and maintaining communication with them regularly is important. Offer different ways they can participate and remain involved in their child's educational experience, even when they cannot participate in person.

Parent-Teacher Conferences (cont.)

COMMUNICATION

Keep the lines of communication open. Most teachers send home daily notes on progress or daily experiences. Keep an ongoing dialogue by replying to each other's notes. For older students, exchanging email addresses or periodic telephone calls about shared tips on what's working at home and at school helps increase student academic success. These efforts help establish a relationship between home and school.



We should all be working together to meet the needs of our students, families and communities. If we are not, no matter the reason, we must figure out a way to turn that around.

Today, we all experience the increasing difficulties of educational changes and financial struggles - both personally and professionally. There is a frightening disconnect among our schools, homes and communities.

It makes sense to collaborate in addressing these global issues that affect us all.

What are the advantages of Collaboration? Why should we bother?

Everyone benefits through collaboration when trying to achieve common goals. Collaboration gives us wonderful opportunities. It enables us to learn and discover the talents and capabilities of people and agencies in our communities we may never have heard or known of. It helps by alleviating the burden of one single individual or organization having to solve a difficult task by changing it to an effort successfully carried out by a group of people with various resources in half the time!

Building relationships between organizations, schools, community leaders, faith-based communities and families can only improve and enrich the lives of our children and our future as a society. Be sensitive to cultural differences and how they can impact relationships.

What are the Key Elements of Successful Collaborations?

- Establishing a common goal.
- Identifying shared philosophies of your roles.
- Maintain a healthy balance between a set goal and other responsibilities.
- Exercise respect and the ability to disagree, work together and maintain equality in the group.
- Trust that each organization member will be accountable for their responsibilities in the shared project.

Successful Collaborations (cont.)

- Coordinate and plan schedules with fairness and flexibility, ensuring every stakeholder has an opportunity to participate meaningfully.
- Conflict Resolution. Decide how to handle disagreements early in the planning phase as a group so there is a strategy unanimously chosen in place to resolve difficult issues fairly and quickly.
- Hard work. Nothing great comes easy. Acknowledge that the established outcomes are worth the effort!
- Evaluation and monitoring your group efforts is an absolute way to verify what is working and what isn't.

What tools or ideas are available to help organizations collaborate with little or no cost?

For those communities that have access to it, improved technology in communications make it easy for us to collaborate more than ever before, without interfering with other jobs or free time. The following are free resources to help assist with building a strong, collaborative committee or team:

- Social Networking. Facebook, MySpace and Twitter are just a few of many free sites that make it possible to share information, market and network with other organizations - worldwide!
- Google offers quite a few helpful applications such as shared calendars, budget and management planning forms, and more... free and easy to use!
- GoToMeeting.com enables organizations to host meetings or presentations online. It's not free to hosts, but it is free to participants. Fees are nominal, but worth the price for saving money on travel and time!
- Yahoo.com hosts a series of parent support groups online for free on just about any parent topic. This provides a great forum for networking with parents, educators, professionals and community leaders directly through email.

Although the internet provides various ways of communication, sharing information and planning, we should always include a person to person conversation and a handshake at the end of a meeting, even if it's only virtual!

Consider Your Child and Your Family

Your child's strengths, learning styles, needs, location, transportation, school hours, costs (if applicable) and programs all affect your choice in schools. Also consider the way schools handle safety issues, violence and bullying. What about the school's belief system in regards to behavioral issues? Most schools post their guidelines, policies and program information on their websites. You may decide to send your child to the school zoned for you, based on your location and distance from the surrounding schools. If your state or district has a school choice website, you can check on it to get more information. You can also call your local school district to get more information. Learn about what choices of schools are available to you.

Research and Gather Information About Schools

Be prepared to do quite a bit of homework when you begin your quest for a school for your child. Begin by making phone calls to arrange visits and tour several school properties. Try to attend parent fairs or school open houses. The internet is also a great source of information. Some PTA's or schools now have social networking pages, such as on Facebook or MySpace. This will provide great insight into the culture and philosophy of the school, and its personality with its students, families and community. Other sources of information can be found on websites such as **www.greatschools.net** and **www.schoolmatters.com**. A list of contacts to determine whether a school is listed as unsafe can be found at **www.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/index.html?src=ln**. You'll also want to know about the school's policies and programs, before and after school programs and extra-curricular activities. Find out if the school has programs available through additional funding, such as art classes, sports, chess clubs or academic enrichment. How the school is funded is key, whether it is private or federally funded. You'll want to make sure the school is sustainable if it's privately funded.

How Do I Choose a School for My Child? (cont.)

Many new private schools open and close annually because of funding issues. You may also want to consider whether transportation is available and, if so, when it is available. Does the school have any programs such as bilingual or multicultural support programs?

Check the School's Academic Performance

The “No Child Left Behind Act”, which began in January 2002, was created to ensure that every child has an opportunity to excel in their education. It also ensures that the State, School Districts and their administrators, Schools and their faculty are held accountable for the academic success of their students. Student academic success is measured by the school's State Assessment Scores (standardized tests). These assessments are studied carefully by the Department of Education. All students must succeed academically in order for the school to receive a good report card. Report cards are created and distributed annually by school districts and must be prepared by the beginning of each school year. It is required that these reports be made available to parents, whether it is mailed to the parents or posted on the school district websites.

What's on the Public School Report Card?

- Student scores on state tests broken down by student sub-groups: Migratory Students, Students with Disabilities, Students with Limited English Proficiency, Homeless Students, etc.
- How many students performed at the basic, proficient and advanced levels on the test.
- Percentage of students not tested.
- Graduation rates.
- Numbers and names of schools that need to improve in the district.
- Qualifications of teachers.

www.ed.gov/parents/schools/find/choose

Deciding on which school to choose for your child is one of the most important decisions you'll ever make. Take your time and do the research. Remember that there are many resources available to assist you.



Does Your Child Attend a Title I School?

If so, did you know that Title I is a federal program designed to:

- Help children do better in school and receive skills to be successful.
- Provide resources for children to help them achieve their potential.
- Encourage parents to be more involved in their children's education.
- Provide opportunities for more teachers and aides in the school.
- Help schools to facilitate activities designed to promote family involvement.

I've heard the term "Title I School", but what does it mean?

The Title I Program is one of the nation's oldest and largest federally funded programs. Title I is committed to increasing student achievement in low-income students by providing additional services to their educational needs. The Department of Education's official purpose of Title I funding is, "To ensure that all children have a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach, at minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic assessments." This means that schools with a large number of low-income students will receive additional funds to assist in meeting those students' educational goals with supplemental services. For a school to qualify for Title I funds, at least 40% of its students must be enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. Use this link to determine if your child attends a Title I school:

www.titlei.org/

How are Title I funds used?

How Title I funds are used depends on the school, the students and their needs. Title I funds can be used to improve curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, and increase staff and program improvement. Title I funds usually support supplemental instruction in reading and math.

What else should I know about Title I Schools and Funds?

As a parent of a Title I school student:

- The school should host an annual meeting explaining its participation in the Title I programs and requirements.
- You may request teacher and paraprofessional qualifications.
- You may participate in the development of the Parental Involvement Plan and School Compact.
- You may request information and training on Title I services provided by the school.
- Your child may be eligible for Supplemental Educational Services.
- You may request information on programs available that your child is eligible for.

What can Title I funds do for me and my child?

The programs and services provided by your child's school under the Title I Program depends on two things:

- The annual assessment of the needs of your child's school.
- Whether or not your child is eligible.

Some services may include:

- Small group instruction outside the classroom.
- Assistance or additional instruction inside the classroom.
- Tutorial services may be offered.
- Summer school activities.
- Early childhood services.
- Parental Involvement activities.

It's important to know that all Title I services are additional to what schools are already providing. Title I services are eligible for students. There is criteria that must be met in order to receive those additional services. This depends on individual student assessments and grades. A school should notify parents of their child's eligibility for Title I services.

Does Your Child Attend a Title I School? (cont.)

What can I do to help my child succeed in a Title I School?

Understanding Title I services is a great start! Build a relationship with your child's teacher, the school staff and faculty. You can be involved with school events even if you can't attend them in person. Try to connect with the school's Parent Liaison, or the person working with Parental Involvement activities.

Join the PTA or PTO. If you may not be able to attend meetings because they're held during the day, talk to the PTA president about participating by teleconference. Ask how you can help at home, even if it means contacting other parents by phone or email letting them know about school events or activities. Remember to keep the lines of communication open. Ask your child's teacher what strategies you can use at home to help improve study habits and retain learned information.



Parents and families are so busy, how can they find more time to practice standardized test skills at home?

Do you do any of the following:

- Grocery shopping?
- Going to the doctor?
- Watching TV?

If you do, these tips can help you practice standardized test skills with your child!

What can parents do to help their kids?

- Ask kids to explain what they are learning in school.
- Know what your kids are doing for homework assignments.
- Communicate with the school and teachers frequently.
- Read with your kids as often as possible.

I already do that. What else can I do?

- Involve your kids in household chores! Remember to ask them high order questions while you're both doing chores and running errands.
- Do your kids play video games? Ask high order questions about their favorite games. Ask your child to write an outline of all the characters in their favorite video game, describing powers, looks, features, etc. Then ask your child which character or hero would best fit their mother, father, sister, brother, other relatives or friends and why.
- Make charts for family events and commitments.
- Keep a family event and school calendar displayed and updated.
- Encourage your child to keep a journal.
- Start a book study with your child and invite friends. Allow your child to pick a book of their interest and buy one for yourself as well. Have the two of you read a chapter a night and discuss the book and what may happen next!

Standardized Test Skills at Home (cont.)

What are some easy things to do to promote critical thinking?

Laundry Tips:

- How big is the load of clothes?
- How to separate darks from whites; towels and delicates; and why?
- How much detergent should be used?
- How long will it take to wash the clothes? Dry?
- What water temperature should be used?

Shopping Tips:

- Categorize items when putting them in the cart and on the conveyer belt at the check-out (frozen items, soap, etc.).
- At the check-out line, read the headlines on magazines and newspapers and determine if they are fact or fiction.
- Discuss why certain items are put near the check-out line.
- Subtract coupon amounts from product prices.
- Use a calculator to total up prices as you shop.
- Read product labels and discuss nutritional information.

Cooking Tips:

- Have your child help with cooking and following recipes. If the recipe calls for a cup of something, give a half cup measuring cup and have your child figure out how to convert it.
- Half and double the recipe. Use a variety of measuring cups and spoons.

Waiting Room Tips:

- What time do we have to leave in order to be at the appointment on time?
- How long did we wait to see the doctor?
- Why do we usually have to wait past our appointment time to see the doctor?

Television Tips:

- Use a TV Guide to allow your child to schedule programs for the week. Give your child a highlighter and a daily viewing limit, and have your child make a schedule for the week.
- Watch TV with your child and make predictions of what will happen next. Check your predictions.
- Observe commercials and discuss what's being sold and why it's advertised that way. Ask why certain commercials are shown at certain times of the day (toys in the afternoon, car ads during football, etc.).

Car Tips:

- Ask your child to draw a road map to destinations you frequent often. Ask them to record the length of time and mileage it took to reach each destination. Note landmarks and discuss the difference between rural and urban settings.

Remember:

- Build a relationship with your child's teacher. Keep communication open and constant.
- Talk to your child about their day; what they liked and what they didn't like.
- Give your child a set time and place at home for studying and reading.
- Review class work and homework assignments and ask your child's teacher how you can reinforce lessons learned at home.
- Make sure your child is well-rested before standardized testing.
- Be sure to have your child at school on time!
- Even if your child is not hungry in the morning, make sure they have a snack before the test. A banana, fruit snack or granola bar are healthy ways to start the day!
- Have fun learning with your child. Try to come up with new ideas and ways to keep your child intrigued with learning new things.

Helping With Homework

Why do teachers assign homework, and how do I know if it's really helping my child learn?

We know through research that good assignments, when completed successfully, can help children develop healthy habits and attitudes.

Homework helps students remember the lessons learned in class and get ready for the next day's class. It also helps build study skills such as using resources like libraries, reference materials and encyclopedias.

Homework can also help parents learn about their children's education as well as help build relationships between home and school. Homework encourages a lifelong love of learning for the whole family.

Working with Power!

Teamwork! Communication! Support! These are powerful words that can help build a powerful partnership between children, parents and educators.

Does homework have to be so stressful for my child and me?

Does this sound familiar?

- How can I get Richie to do his homework? Every night is a struggle to get him to do anything!
- Why isn't Victoria getting more homework? Why is Xavier getting so much homework?
- When is Tiki supposed to do homework? He takes piano lessons, plays basketball, and soccer. There's hardly any time to study.
- How can I help Samantha with her math homework when I don't understand it?

What about these?

- I don't have any homework.
- I did it at school. Can I play now?
- I just remembered my science project is due tomorrow, I need a poster board.
- I left my books at school and I have a test tomorrow!

What's the right amount of homework?

The National Education Association and the National PTA suggests ten minutes of homework per night with each grade level, as a general rule.

A first grader gets a total of ten minutes, a second grader gets twenty, and so on, not to exceed two hours total per night in high school.

Tips for parents:

Be consistent. It takes about 21 days for something to become a habit. Make sure your child knows that homework assignments are done at a regular time, at a regular place, every day!

Pick a place. A study area doesn't have to be fancy. A desk in any room or kitchen table is just fine! There should be plenty of light, and it should be fairly quiet.

Remove distractions. Turn off the television, do not allow telephone calls, unless of course it is about the assignment. While some work well with soothing music, loud noise from a radio or wearing headphones isn't ok.

If you live in a noisy household, try having all family members take part in a quiet activity during homework time. You may need to take a toddler into another room to play.

Provide supplies. Kids lose things all the time, so try to keep a steady supply of pens/pencils, rulers, writing paper, glue, pencil sharpener, a calculator and a dictionary handy. If it's hard to provide these things, ask your teachers, guidance counselor or parent liaison for resource assistance.

Set a good example. Children are more likely to read if they see their parents reading, writing or researching things using resources. Visits to the library, watching documentaries or educational television, such as the History Channel, will help create an interested learner.

Helping With Homework (cont.)

Ask about the school homework policy. When first meeting with your child's teacher, ask the teacher these questions:

- What kinds of assignments will be given?
- How much time is given to complete assignments?
- What kind of help does the teacher expect from me?

What can teachers do to help?

Spend time explaining the expectations for homework.

Make sure students know what to do and can complete the assignments on their own.

Give clear directions and discuss what is being done.

Grade or comment on all homework papers that have been turned in.

Send home meaningful, interesting assignments that help encourage practice of the learned skills in class.

Use information and resources that are easy to access and available to parents.

Try not to make assignments too long. For longer assignments, like projects, reports or experiments, give students an extended time frame, and offer suggestions on how to break down the assignment into manageable segments.

- Understand cultural differences.
- Create a homework log or notebook that parents and teachers can use to write notes to each other.

For many parents and children, homework is a daily battle. Don't give up! There are things you can do to help your kids get in the homework habit.

How can I teach my child better eating habits?

It's no secret that children can be picky eaters. Sometimes, as parents, we're fine with whatever we can get into them! Let's consider a new strategy. Introduce new meals to your child as often as possible. As they mature and grow, so does their taste in foods as well as their knowledge base on nutrition. Get them to try as least one spoonful or taste of any food, even if they've rejected them in the past. You'd be surprised at what foods become favorites when reintroduced on their menu options! Snacks are a must with children; however, try replacing foods heavy in refined sugars and empty calories with healthier options:

- Instead of potato chips, try popcorn.
- Instead of Skittles or M&M's, try chewy fruit snacks. Fruits like bananas, strawberries and oranges are classic favorites.
- Instead of pudding, try yogurt.
- Instead of cookies, try goldfish crackers.
- Instead of chicken nuggets, try roasted chicken.
- Instead of empty calorie soft drinks and soda, try Gatorade and water (kids love water bottles with the spout, it's trendy and fun!). Fruit juices are good, but not recommended as the best choice of beverage for children. Stick to 100% fruit juices that are low in sugar, low in fructose or corn syrup, and remember to dilute each serving with water.

Don't be afraid to serve your child healthy entrees like chicken caesar salads! You'd be surprised to learn it's among one of children's favorites in the salads category!

Another great idea is to provide three dinner choices for your child. "Would you like roasted chicken, pasta or meatloaf for dinner?" This gives your child some control over what he or she chooses to eat, while staying within your healthy guidelines. Just be sure to include one of your child's favorites as one of the three choices you present, whenever possible. A great resource:

www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov.

Parent Tips on Healthy Habits for Children (cont.)

Ideas for an active lifestyle for you and your children:

Our lifestyles as families have certainly evolved. The internet, television and hand-held video games have taken the place of running, climbing and swimming! Counting calories isn't the only thing we need to consider when thinking of a healthier lifestyle. We want to make sure we're doing some exercise, as well.

Help kids stay active! Children and teens should have at least sixty minutes of some kind of physical activity daily. This helps maintain healthy bones, circulation, decreases anxiety, increases self-esteem and is a fantastic way for the family to engage in activities together.

Shut off the television, put away the video games, and try doing activities as a family that will not only help maintain a healthy lifestyle, but bring you closer together.

- Brisk Walks
- Basketball
- Swimming
- Playing Tag
- Jump Rope
- Trampoline
- Dancing
- Baseball/Soccer
- Horseback riding
- Running

Try to limit television, video games and internet surfing to at least two hours daily. Instead, think up fun ways to spend time together as a family.

- Story telling.
- Act out a scene from a favorite book.
- Sneak a fun activity into watching television by asking your child to do jumping jacks during commercials, then ask how many they did!
- Playing Dodge Ball is a fun, family classic!
- Make walking the dog a family activity.
- Hiking or nature walks.
- Create your own family scavenger hunts in your back yard or local playground.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is not a diet regime, but a way of life. It not only promotes healthy living, but promotes stronger family ties and values. Great resource:

www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html



This program provides PTI services the following counties:

Alachua, Baker, Bay, Bradford, Calhoun, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Escambia, Flagler, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Gulf, Hamilton, Holmes Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Marion, Nassau, Okaloosa, Putnam, Santa Rosa, St. John's, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Volusia, Wakulla, Walton, & Washington.



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Family Network on Disabilities is striving for complete integration and equality of people with disabilities into a society without barriers.

The contents of our materials were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H328M150043, #H328M150042 and #H328M150041. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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