



Supporting Parents
Supporting Children

Getting Involved in Your Child's Education

The Why and How of "Parental Involvement"

Why should you get involved in your child's learning?



Research shows us that children do better and are happier in school when their parents are involved in their learning

“Research suggests that parental involvement in a child's learning has more of an impact on a child's educational outcomes than social class, level of parental education or income”

(Feinstein & Symons, 1999)

Parents who get involved with their children's learning are giving them the best possible help and support.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING?

At home

From the earliest days when a child is starting to pay attention to the world around them, parents can get involved in their child's learning. Playing with your child, telling them stories, showing them books and singing to them will all stimulate their love of words both written and spoken.

As your child grows talking to them about the world around them will get them interested in nature, animals and other people. Involving your child in your daily tasks such as sorting laundry, setting a table and cooking can set them on a path of discovery in science and maths. In many cases we don't even realise we are getting involved in their learning by doing this.

Once your child starts school the first and most important thing you can do to get involved in your child's learning is to show that you value education. This can be done in a very practical way by ensuring the child attends school regularly and on time. Ensuring your child has the correct equipment and is appropriately dressed shows your child that you value and respect their learning in school.

Children will always seek attention from their parents. By showing an interest in their school lives, asking questions and commenting on work, you are giving attention in a very positive way.

By regularly talking to your child about the work they are doing in school, encouraging them to do their best, praising and/or displaying the work they bring home, you are showing how important school work and learning is.

Having high but realistic expectations for your child in school will support them to do their best.

Homework gives parents an opportunity to get involved in their child's learning in a very real way. Therefore you should show how you value homework by setting aside a particular time and place for homework. You should show an interest in what is being done and be available to discuss any problems (see also NPC leaflet on homework).

In school

When your child is in school they are part of a whole different world from the familiar world of home and your close community. If you are familiar with and comfortable in the school environment, your child will feel more secure and relaxed there. This will obviously help them to learn. If you are familiar with the routines of the school, knowing the names of the staff, where the children play, where they go to read or for learning support etc, it will help your child to feel that they belong in this school community and that their family is also a part of this.

At least one parent teacher meeting will be held in the school during the academic year. You should make best use of these meetings by making some simple preparations. Be familiar with your child's copies etc, read any comments from the teacher so that you will have a starting point for discussing any difficulties your child might be experiencing. Ask your child how they are getting on generally and if there are any specific problems, questions or concerns they would like you to raise. It is important to tell the teacher what your child has particularly enjoyed during the year. It is also important that you are prepared to listen. This is your opportunity to hear how your child is progressing, how they are getting on with the other children and if there is anything you need to be concerned about. Although these meetings are usually only scheduled once per year, you should aim to have regular contact with your child's class teacher in a less formal way throughout the year. Many schools have an open door policy but it is a good idea to make an appointment so that the teacher can be prepared to give you their full attention.

You can also show support for your child by attending other meetings in the school such as open days, information sessions etc. If your school has a sports day or your child represents the school in sports or other activities, your attendance at these can show your child that you support them in school in every way possible

In your Parent Association

The Parent Association has an important role to play within the school and in supporting parents to be involved in their children's education. The Parent Association is ideally situated to be the link between home and school and should be actively engaging with all of the parents in the school. They should be information givers and information receivers for all of the parents on how to create positive parental involvement in the home and in the school. The Parent Association should work with the teaching staff to identify ways to support and encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's learning and to look at ways for parents to avail of opportunities to participate in family literacy programmes either in local libraries, VECs or in local community groups. NPC can also help your Parent Association with this through the different training sessions we provide. You can get details of all our training on our website www.npc.ie or by telephone on 01 8874475.

Being a member of the Parent Association in your child's school enables you to gain an insight into your child's school life and their learning. In the Parent Association you can influence the school plan and school policies. You can organise after school activities for children and parents and social events for parents and children. These can improve the holistic education of children; also giving parents an opportunity to network can improve the overall atmosphere of the school.

FINALLY

Research shows us that when parents are involved with the school, the teachers have higher expectations of the children and higher opinions of the parents. So why not get involved?

We know that the attitude of parents and their involvement with the school will have a positive impact on the learning outcomes for children. Acting on the ideas raised in this leaflet will improve your child's learning and help make them happier in school.



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