

“Hands-On” Parenting Promotes School Success

Parents often ask whether they can really make a difference in how successful their children will be in school or in other aspects of their lives. The overwhelming answer from experts and research is “YES!” When parents are involved, children do better in school. They do better on tests, attend school more, and get higher grades. When a significant number of parents are involved in a school, the whole school improves providing a better education for the students. There are other positive effects, too. When parents are involved, kids use less alcohol and drugs, less violence occurs in school, and fewer students receive suspensions. It seems pretty obvious that parents should be involved and stay involved in their children’s lives from kindergarten through high school.

Parents should practice “Hands-on Parenting.” Know where your kids are at all times, who they are with, and what they are doing. Be supportive, but also have clear rules and consequences about expectations and behaviors. In homes where parents are “hands-on,” young people are at half the risk of average teenagers for involvement in risky behaviors like substance use and early sexual activity.

There are many ways parents and caregivers can be supportive at home, at school, and in the community to help encourage a successful school year. Here are twelve ways:

- **Start each day positively with a smooth takeoff.** Each morning, as young people head out from home, make sure they eat something healthy that will give them morning fuel... fruit and cereal, toast with peanut butter, or crackers and cheese. All kids are different, so you might have to be creative. Then, make sure they get a hug and you look them in the eye to wish them a good day or tell them how proud you are

of them. Help your kids pack healthy lunches and snacks. Sodas should be a treat, not a daily beverage. Try to provide at least five fruits and vegetables a day.

- **Prepare for a smooth landing** at the end of the day. Plan to take a little time together to talk about your child's day before getting busy with dinner or other tasks. Make sure to really listen. Some kids need to unwind a bit when they get home, so don't rush them if they aren't ready to talk right away.
- **Meet the teacher(s).** Let the teachers of your young children know what their hobbies and interests are. Let the teachers of older children know that you are interested and want to help any way you can.
- **Provide a place for homework and reading.** Make sure your students have well-lit study areas that are quiet and inviting. Let your kids help decorate the area with maps or interesting pictures from magazines.
- **Set up a system for easy storage of school items.** Make it easy for your kids to get organized for the next day. Shoes, backpacks, permission slips, and school supplies should be easy to locate.
- **Join the PTA, Parent Network, or Booster Club.** Attend school events like concerts and back-to-school celebrations. Get involved with other parents in making your school a better learning experience for all the students.
- **Check on homework.** With younger children, help them learn the value of getting homework done right after school or right after supper. Together, design a routine. It may include a snack and a reward of play, computer games, or television once homework is completed. Many schools have homework posted on websites or available by phone to help parents and students keep track of assignments. Help your

kids use an assignment book and calendar to track homework, school events, and after school activities.

- **Eat a meal as a family every day.** This is a great way to catch up on family happenings and enjoy some time sharing the day's events. Everyone can participate in the preparation or clean-up.
- **Attend Parent-Teacher Conferences.** Visit every one of your student's teachers. Check to see that your child is learning what he or she needs to learn to meet the standards and be successful at that grade level. Ask the teacher for help if needed, and find out what you can do to assist your student.
- **Know your school's policies, rules, and schedules.** Watch your school's website. Ask the principal for a rulebook and schedule. Keep up-to-date on changes and ask if there are opportunities for parents to be involved.
- **Advocate for any special needs your child might have.** Ask your school for resources to assist you if your child struggles in any areas. Learn about parent support systems for children with learning disabilities and special needs. Work with your children's teachers to explore assistance options if there are problems. Talk to other parents.
- **Make books a part of your daily family life.** Plan family trips to the library. Read books together, or discuss what you are reading with each other. Model the love of reading. Plan special reading times instead of watching television.

For more information on how to help you parent, check out the websites of the National PTA and the National Education Association (sources for this article), and look for parent involvement. Locally, contact the Women's and Children's Center at

Marquette General Health System for classes or the Great Lakes Center for Youth Development (formerly Marquette-Alger Youth Foundation) for information on the 40 Developmental Assets developed by the Search Institute.

The Great Lakes Center for Youth Development, formerly the Marquette-Alger Youth Foundation, was established in July 2000 “to serve as a catalyst for development of healthy youth in rural communities.” The Center works to strengthen organizations that serve youth through technical assistance, training, and services.

For more information, contact the Center through its website: www.glycd.org or call 906-228-8919 in Marquette. Positive youth activity information is listed by the Center at www.macyap.com.