



Tips for Parents

Parent involvement that makes a difference



In August 2011, People for Education released a report, *Doing what matters most: How parents can help their children succeed in school*, which reviewed thirty years of research from Canada, the United States and England.

The four key things that parents can do to help ensure their children's success are outlined here:

1. Have high expectations for your children.

Let your children know that you think it is important that they do well in school. High parental expectations have the greatest impact on student achievement. When parents consistently express belief in their children's potential and tell their kids that they expect them to succeed academically, students do better.

2. Talk about school.

Talk with your children about what's happening at school – activities, programs and what they are learning. Surprisingly, this has a greater impact on academic achievement than monitoring homework, being at home after school for your kids, or limiting the time they are allowed to watch TV or go out during the week.

According to our kids, we may not be doing such a great job in this area. In student surveys conducted by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), less than half of students in grade 3 (46%) report they talk to a parent or guardian "every day or almost every day" about their school activities. By grade 6, that percentage drops to 38%.

3. Help your children develop a positive attitude toward learning and good work habits.

The research shows that the greatest influence you can have on your kids' chances for success in school lie in how you influence their attitudes, their sense of personal competence, and their work habits, including persistence, seeking help, and planning.

So rather than trying to directly "teach" your children, focus on helping them handle distractions and crises of confidence, praise them for effort and persistence and demonstrate a positive attitude about school as a whole. Bit by bit, these are the attributes that will build solid foundations for ongoing success.

"The evidence is clear. Parents make a difference. And the way they contribute most to their children's education is through what they do at home. Being a parent can be challenging, but the good news is that you don't have to be 'volunteer of the year' or an expert on the war of 1812 to help your child succeed at school."

4. Read together (in any language)

Reading is one of the foundations of all education, and you can make a big difference by reading and talking about books and stories with your children. Reading with children is the best way to turn them on to reading. But this doesn't mean that you should be forcing them to sound out words. Instead of focussing on teaching your children the mechanics of reading, teach them to **love** reading. Make reading fun and enjoyable!

Once again, our kids are telling us that there is room for improvement when it comes to time spent reading together. The EQAO student survey found that only 21% of children in grade 3 report reading together with a parent or guardian "every day or almost every day".

The evidence is clear.

Parents make a difference. And the way they contribute most to their children's education is through what they do at home. Being a parent can be challenging, but the good news is that you don't have to be 'volunteer of the year' or an expert on the war of 1812 to help your child succeed at school.

Parent involvement in school activities

Whether it is attending a school concert, cheering on a school team, or participating in community events and meetings planned by your school council, parent involvement in school activities can foster a sense of community within the school. It can build stronger relationships between teachers and parents, and provide an opportunity for parents to connect with and support each other.

School-based activities may not have a direct impact on student achievement, but they can be a fun and engaging way to build a stronger school community. When you can, take advantage of the opportunity to participate in school events to show your support for your children's school.

For more information:

www.peopleforeducation.ca

Read People for Education's report on parent involvement, *Doing what matters most: How parents can help their children succeed in school*. It provides a background on all the research behind this tip sheet. You can also join our online community to connect with other parents, and go online and get your questions about education in Ontario answered.

www.eqao.com

To find out more about the questionnaires that students, teachers, and principals complete every year as part of the EQAO testing, or see the survey results, visit the Education Quality and Accountability Office website.

tvoparents.tvop.org

TVOParents has a wide range of useful resources for parents, including videos in many languages, interviews with experts and up to date research.



PIC Symposium 2013

USB Key Content

Homework Help – Independent Learning Centre (ILC)

Does Math homework make you cringe? Wish you could have your child's teacher at the kitchen table unpacking those problems?

Homework Help ontario.ca/homeworkhelp provides **FREE 1:1 tutoring** with an Ontario Certified Teacher 5 days a week: **Sunday-Thursdays 5:30pm-9:30pm ET**. Plus, **FREE online math resources available 24/7**.

Students can ease their math frustration by visiting homeworkhelp.ilc.org and accessing videos, online tutorials, and audio lessons 7 days a week. For those tough questions that need some explaining, **students work with tutors on a shared screen** and even draw on an interactive white board to build the understanding they need. All sessions are recorded, monitored and are available for review at any time.

Registration is quick and easy! Students create a free account using their Ontario Education number (found on any report card) and their date of birth. Educators and guardians are also able to register and access site resources, excluding the live chat.

Homework



One way that parents and caregivers can help students succeed in school is to support them as they do homework.

What is homework?

Types of work that students may bring home:

- finishing assignments that were started in class
- working on a research project
- studying for tests and exams
- practicing new skills learned in the classroom
- organizing binders or workbooks
- reading assigned parts of a novel or text book

Where and when should homework be done?

- Not all students study in the same way. Some like to work in a quiet place, some like to work with music in the background and other students find it is helpful to study with friends. You know your child best. Help him or her choose the best place to do their homework.
- It may help to have a regular time for homework. Students may try to put off homework while parents push to get it done, often ending in arguments. By having a regular homework time, it becomes part of the routine.
- Try to get the homework done earlier in the evening, when students have more energy. Allow time for them to relax before bed.

How much time should students spend on homework?

- There is no established "right" amount of homework. Researchers and educators agree that there should only be limited homework in the early grades, with the amount gradually increasing as students move into high school.
- Students work at different speeds, so the amount of time spent on homework will vary.

- Students should be able to do their homework and have time to participate in other activities, including sports, music lessons, religious activities, language classes, volunteer work, and free play.
- If you are concerned that your child is getting too much or too little homework, you should speak to the classroom teacher.

How can parents help with homework?

- Encourage older children to use their school agenda to keep track of assignments and tests. Help set up a work schedule or even a big calendar for larger projects.
- Unless it is a project, homework should be a review of what students are learning in class, so students should be able to do their homework on their own.
- While your children are doing their homework, you might do your 'homework', like paying bills, reading a book or writing a letter. It gives them company and keeps you close at hand. But only offer help if asked.
- Read together (in any language) with younger children, and encourage older students to spend some time each day reading by themselves.
- Talk to your children about school every day. Even if you don't understand the topic, and even if English or French is not your first language, you can be a good listener. Research shows that just by talking about school, parents can improve students' chances for success.
- Make sure students have all the homework supplies they need – pencils, rulers, markers, paper.



Homework

What if a student is having difficulty with homework?

- Encourage students to speak to the teacher if they need help. Let your child know that it is okay to ask for assistance if they don't understand something.
- If your child doesn't understand the homework, ask how the teacher taught the lesson. This may help the child to remember what was learned earlier and how to get to the answer.
- If your child is getting frustrated or upset, have them take a break, and try again a bit later.
- If the student cannot complete the homework after trying their best, it is okay to send the work back to school incomplete. You can write a note on the homework or in the agenda, explaining why it isn't finished. This helps the teacher understand what the problems are, and the teacher will be pleased to know that you are involved in your child's education.
- If your child is consistently unable to do his/her homework, make an appointment to speak to the teacher.

Other Sources for Homework Support

- Find out what kinds of homework support are available through the school or in your local library or community centre. Some schools and many public libraries have homework clubs after school.
- Students may be able to get help from friends or older siblings.
- Many high schools have peer tutors – students who have completed the course and can help with things like math and science.
- There is a free online tutoring service for high school students at www.ilc.org. Certified teachers are available on the site Sunday through Thursday, and they also offer an essay feedback service.
- Some school boards offer on-line lessons and learning activities for different grade levels. Check your school board's website for more information.

Investments in Aboriginal Education

The Ontario government's multi-million dollar investment in Aboriginal education has significantly increased. It now includes \$22.7 million in new resources, including funding for school boards to offer Native Language and Native Studies courses, and support programs that assist Aboriginal students. At the postsecondary level, the government has invested over \$13 million in 2007-2008 to improve programs and services for Aboriginal students enrolled in Ontario's colleges and universities and to assist postsecondary learners in Aboriginal institutions.

First Nation and Métis representatives serve on the Minister of Education's Partnership Table. As well, an Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Postsecondary Education, including representatives from 13 Aboriginal organizations, provides input and advice to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on priorities and issues related to access and Aboriginal student success.

Measuring Success – Self-Identification

To assess Ontario's progress in helping more Aboriginal students reach their full potential, it is necessary to have accurate and reliable data. A new resource is available to help school boards develop effective policies and practices for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification. This is done in consultation with Aboriginal families and communities. The information will help school boards improve programs and support for Aboriginal students and enable them to focus their efforts on student achievement.

Vision

"First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario will have the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to successfully complete their elementary and secondary education in order to pursue postsecondary education or training and/or to enter the workforce. They will have the traditional and contemporary knowledge, skills and attitudes required to be socially contributive, politically active, and economically prosperous citizens of the world. All students in Ontario will have knowledge and appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit traditions, cultures and perspectives."
(*First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, January 2007).



How to Learn More

Contact the Aboriginal Education Office at:

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Aboriginal Education Office

900 Bay Street

Mowat Block, 12th Floor

Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Phone: 416.326.3561

Visit www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal or

Contact your local school or school board for details.

Aboriginal Education in Ontario

New Resources
and Opportunities
for **Parents,**
Educators
and **Students**

2007

Dedicated to Excellence for all Students

THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT is dedicated to excellence in publicly funded education for all students, including First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. An exciting new strategy, described in the *First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, January 2007, will:

- Help improve student achievement among Aboriginal students
- Raise awareness about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures and perspectives for all learners.

Plans include:

- Increasing the number of Aboriginal staff working in schools and school boards
- Providing teaching strategies that are appropriate for Aboriginal students
- Improving literacy and numeracy skills
- Engaging parents in their children's education.

The Ontario government supports many programs and projects across the province to provide specific opportunities for Aboriginal students, including:

- **New Resources – *Aboriginal Perspectives: The Teacher's Toolkit*** to help teachers integrate Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum.
- **Alternative Secondary Schools within Native Friendship Centres Program** – to help First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students get their secondary school diploma.
- **Lighthouse Projects** – to support Aboriginal students through tutoring, skills development, transition programs, diversified instruction and oral language support.

Benefits for Aboriginal Students

Students can benefit from programs designed to improve literacy and numeracy skills, assist in transitioning from elementary to secondary school, create opportunities to meet and be Aboriginal role models, increase the number of Aboriginal resources found in libraries, and more.

Benefits for all Ontario Students

Students can learn one of the seven languages offered in the Native Language programs: Cayuga, Cree, Delaware, Mohawk, Ojibwe, Ojji-Cree or Oneida, and may have the opportunity to take one or more of ten Native Studies courses available in the Ontario Curriculum.

As well, Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives are being woven into many aspects of the curriculum in general.

Ask your local school or school board about availability.