

The Playbook for Parents & Families

Schools are **not the only**
places kids learn!



A good educational system provides many tools that help children learn. Parents and families are a big part of a child's success team because a great deal of learning goes on outside the classroom. As critical parts of the team, families and parents can not only reinforce and support a child's learning, they model the behavior they want to see in young people. Following are ideas and action items for you to consider when you think about the needs of your students and local schools.

Ideas to Help You Support Students, Teachers and Schools

Idea #1:

Take steps to make sure your child is a healthy learner.

Healthy young people are healthy learners. Just as we feed our bodies, we need to feed our minds! Your child spends more time outside of school than inside. You can and MUST leverage that time to its fullest.

TAKE ACTION BY

- ❑ Take your children for annual check-ups with their doctor or the local health agency. Children who feel well enjoy school more.
- ❑ Have your children's vision and hearing checked.
- ❑ Limit the amount of screen time your child gets, online and television.
- ❑ Have your children read to you every day! For young children, let them "read" before they develop the skills; allow them to aspire to be readers.
- ❑ Make sure your children get healthy meals and time to rest. Avoid high-sugar foods and drinks. Fruits, vegetables, dairy products, proteins and breads are best for your children's health and success.
- ❑ Use complete sentences with descriptive words.
- ❑ Insist that your children avoid risky behaviors, especially alcohol, drugs, sex and violence.
- ❑ Provide your children with a quiet place to study.
- ❑ Get a library card so that your children have access to free reading materials and all the other great resources libraries offer.

Idea #3:

Be actively involved in the life (and learning) of your child.

Children need to know that caring adults are aware of what is going on in their lives, whether it is getting to know their friends or checking in on their online activities. We have to be present!

Be Supportive and Nurturing:

- ❑ Tell your children that you love them – and tell them again and again.
- ❑ Tell your children that you have confidence in their abilities to succeed in school.
- ❑ Ask your children how they feel and listen to their concerns; help them resolve their problems. Encourage, encourage and challenge your children.
- ❑ Use family occasions as times to celebrate the progress of your children.
- ❑ Check in on your student's online activity. Supervise and monitor when you can. Set guidelines and expectations when you can't.
- ❑ Meet your children's friends and make certain they are good role models. Invite the friends to your home so you can get to know them.
- ❑ Get to know the families of your children's friends and establish common rules.
- ❑ Ensure that after-school and summer activities are supervised by caring adults.
- ❑ Establish rules regarding visitors when no adults are home.

Be Involved in Their Development:

- ❑ Learn more about what your children should be learning at each grade level and in each subject. Family-friendly tools can be found at www.scfriendlystandards.org.
- ❑ Expect your children to do their best, both in and out of school. Make sure they know that it is ok to fail. We often learn the most from failure.
- ❑ Encourage your children to be self-reliant and not be afraid of challenges and obstacles. Those challenges are tremendous opportunities to learn, and self-reliance is one of the leading indicators of success in life.
- ❑ Get creative when asking your child about his/her day. What challenged you today? Who made you smile today? What is your teacher's most important rule?
- ❑ Play games with words so that your children use them to describe their world and expand their vocabulary.
- ❑ Encourage your children to ask "Why?" and then find the answer through reading or discovery.
- ❑ Develop a summer calendar for your kids during the summer months with themed activities which incorporate learning. See some sample calendars at www.helpwithmathsc.org.

Idea #3:

Communicate often with your child's teachers and school, and be involved when you can.

Your child's educational team doesn't just sit in a classroom. You are ½ of your child's "team". It is important to communicate with your child's teachers and their school, either by email or phone. Let them know that you're invested in your child's success and find ways to support them in and out of the classroom.

TAKE ACTION BY

- ❑ Develop deep, supportive relationships with your students' teachers. Tell teachers about your children's interests, talents and problems. The better your teachers understand their students, the more effective educators they can be.
- ❑ Treat Parent-Teacher Conferences like any meeting. Show up on time, be engaged, ask questions, seek input and leave with a goal and an agreed-upon plan for helping your child.
- ❑ Seek solutions, not blame. Understand that you are half of your child's educational support system and those systems only work when everyone is on the same team.
- ❑ Volunteer for school committees, School Improvement Councils, and PTAs. School leaders are always looking for parents!
- ❑ Collaborate with your teachers to develop learning approaches for your children when they are not in school. Chances are, your teachers have more ideas than they have the ability to execute.
- ❑ And while you're at it, work with your employer to set up policies that are more supportive of parents investing time during the work week to be present for their children's educational needs.