

## Teacher's Tips: How Parents Can Help

Communicating with your child's teacher is one way to help him/her succeed at school. But just how often should you contact the teacher, and what questions should you ask? And when do a parent's questions or behavior tip from appropriate to meddlesome?

### What differences do you notice in your child with involved parents?

Parents who take an active interest in their child's work and school well-being are one of the biggest contributors to a student's success. Children of involved parents typically have higher self-esteem and have fewer behavior problems in school. And a child's grades usually improve when a parent is involved.

### How can parents stay informed about their child's school performance?

If your school posts grades online, be sure to check them often. Emailing the teacher is also a very good way to get a quick status report. I feel email has been a godsend, because it is less intrusive for the teacher and less threatening for the parent.

### What are some questions parents should ask about their children?

Ask the teacher whether he/she thinks your child is giving their best effort in class and whether they have noticed any significant changes in your child's behavior or grades. It's also a good idea to find out whether the teacher has concerns about the friends your child has chosen. Make sure you understand the teacher's policy for making up missed work, and don't forget to ask about the best way to keep in touch throughout the year.

## What should parents do if they feel the teacher assigns an excessive amount of homework?

First, try to find out whether the amount of work really is excessive. Ten minutes per grade level each night is about right. If the level of homework does seem like too much, think about whether it happens often or only once in a while. Some units and projects simply require more homework.

## How should a parent approach the teacher about this?

Don't go in with the attitude that the teacher is wrong. Instead, ask for advice on how you can help your child deal with the excessive homework. Allowing the teacher to suggest solutions is far more effective than challenging their wisdom.

## How should a parent address a Grade that your child feels he or she did not deserve?

Instead of being confrontational, calmly explain that your child is upset or confused about the grade. Ask the teacher how your child's grade compared with the rest of the class or the overall grade level. This will give you the information they really want to know without making your child's teacher feel threatened. It may also help the teacher realize whether the assignment was too difficult for all the students.

## Some parents are just not comfortable approaching teachers. How should they get started?

Keep in mind that teachers may also be nervous about talking to parents. Break the ice by sending the teacher an email or personal note at the start of the school year, and be sure to attend your school's open house to meet the teacher. If the teacher has done something that made a difference for your child, schedule a meeting to thank him. Finally, join the school PTO. There is security in numbers!

## Top 5 Ways Parents Can Help Their Child Succeed in School

1. Make sure your child is at school every day possible. Missed work is generally more of a loss than made-up work is a gain. There is no substitute for attendance.
2. Designate a time and place for your child to do homework. If they don't have homework, have them use the time to read. Routine is the essence of your child's life.
3. Keep in touch with teachers, but don't overdo it. Most teachers appreciate parents caring enough to keep in touch a few times a term but do not appreciate parents expecting contact on a regular basis.
4. Teach your child character—it will improve social and academic skills more than anything else. Some things are simply wrong, and the world your child will grow up in will punish crimes, so give your child a head start.
5. Make time every day to talk with your child about the day's activities. Let them know you care, and really listen to what they have to say.