



Parents Club Updates

Here are some updates from our member clubs. Remember that we love to hear from you, so write any time!

Dear Parents Club

As we begin our new school year, we are very much in appreciation for all that we have received since we first joined. Our club meets every Friday morning; however, as the first week of school begins we are meeting every morning. We are now into our third year with various plans created until Christmas.

We have plans to provide a clothing giveaway for parents and students. Our Homework club will meet 45 minutes once per week (Mondays). Our parents club will meet once per week on Friday mornings, with planning parents on weekends, family outings/activities, and networking. Seasonal events will include a Halloween Haunted House (parent run) at the school, family Christmas cards, and a Christmas family photo opportunity. School initiatives will include family borders, alphabet workshops etc.

Our parents truly enjoy all of the incentives we receive as club members. As our year begins, we hope our dedication continues, as does the strength of our little spirits.

Fran Bolton,
First Nations Worker
Queen Alexandra Elementary,
"Honouring Our Little Spirits"
Club

On August 17th, 2005 we had a "Family Night" to celebrate the school year of 2004/2005. The night turned out to be a huge success. We had parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and friends all gathered together. All of our programs were included in our Salmon Feast. There was a lot of laughing and talking among the parents and the teachers. The children had all of their most important people attend the evening. This was a strong message we sent the children. We told our young children that they are important and so is their education.

This evening was very casual. We started out with people gathering for food after one of the Head Start parents cooked the salmon, sang, and said a prayer. After everyone was finished their meals, we acknowledged all of our children for their hard work and participation in our programs. We are looking forward to another year of fun, learning, and beautiful friendships.

Tanya O'Neil,
Head Start Coordinator
Tseil-Waututh Child and Family
Development Centre

Recipe

Here is a recipe for lovely smelling ornaments that you and your children can make and give as gifts this holiday season.

Mix 1 to 2 tbsp. of applesauce into a 3.5 ounce can of ground cinnamon until the mixture has the consistency of stiff dough.

Knead the mixture slightly to make it smooth and roll it out to 1/8 inch thick.

Cut the dough into pieces with a small metal cookie cutter. Then use a plastic drinking straw to cut a hole in the top of each piece.

Allow the cinnamon ornament to dry at room temperature for a day or so. Then insert a piece of ribbon through the hole in each cinnamon ornament.



Need more information?

Is this the first time you've heard about the First Nations Parents Club? If you would like more information about the initiative, please contact our office at (604) 925-6087. The First Nations Parents Club is sponsored by the First Nations Schools Association to recognize the tremendous dedication of parents who support their children's learning. All Club materials and activities are available for free. To start a Club in your community, just contact us and request a Parents Club start-up package. We'd love to hear from you!

FIRST NATIONS PARENTS CLUB



BULLETIN

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Features

1

Hello Again Parents Club Members

2

Helping with Homework

Quick Tip

3

Getting to Know Your Children's Teacher

Three Daily Priorities for Teens

4

Parents Club Updates Recipe



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Hello Again Parents Club Members

With the fall now well underway, we hope that the back-to-school chaos has ended for your family and that you and your children are finding some time to relax and enjoy yourselves. Getting back into the groove of the school schedule can be tough, but we certainly hope that this year's transition was a smooth one.

This edition of the Parents Club newsletter shares a few ideas about how you can make a real difference in your children's education. Inside, you will find a few tips for helping your kids with homework and for finding out more about your children's lives while they are at school. Both of those things can really help parents connect to their kids. When you are more aware about what they are doing at school, you are better prepared to really talk to your children about that important part of their lives.

Getting kids to open up about what is really

happening in their lives isn't always easy, but trying to do that is definitely worth the effort. We really hope some of the ideas we've shared work for you.

We also hope that you have a fantastic holiday season with your kids. Don't forget to find some time for rest and fun in the midst of the holiday stress, keeping in mind that family time is what the holiday season should really be about. We'll be in touch again in the new year.



And on the topic of talking with your kids ... here are a couple of simple suggestions that might get some fun conversations started in your home.

1 You can bring up some important topics in a non-intimidating way by playing a game.

- First give each family member two index cards – one with "yes" and the other "no."
- Next, write some "yes/no" questions on some other index cards, such as "do you like school/work?" "if you felt that your teacher/boss was being unfair, would you tell someone?" "if you were at a friend's house and something yucky was being served for supper, would you eat it anyway?" "if you forgot to do an important homework/work assignment, would you make up a lie about why it wasn't finished?" (Maybe your Parents Club can brainstorm some questions together).

Include some fun and some important topics to keep the game comfortable for everyone.

- Have one family member pick a question card. Everyone else then guesses whether his or her answer to that question is yes or no.
- Show your guesses using the yes/no index cards, and then talk about all of the guesses and the real answer.

2 At dinner, instead of asking "how was school today?" (are you tired of hearing "fine?") ... ask your children "what can you teach us tonight?" Your kids might find that question much more stimulating. You can even keep some paper and pencils handy in case they're needed for the "lesson."



Helping with Homework

With all of us leading such busy lives, sometimes by the end of the day we just want to sit back and relax. While we know that helping our kids with their homework is important, it isn't always our first choice of how to enjoy the evening.

On those nights when you're all tired, it is so important to remember that parental involvement with home learning really **does** make a big difference to your kids. It helps them perform better in school, and it shows them how much you value their education. Being involved with homework allows you to keep track of your children's progress so you don't find yourself surprised by their next report cards! Being a homework helper also helps you connect with your kids.

With all of those benefits in mind, here are a few tips for helping with homework.

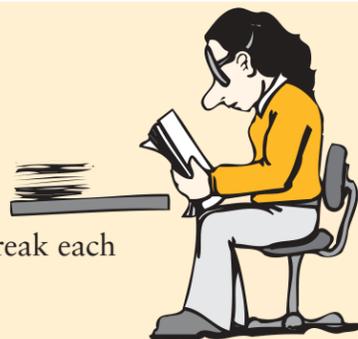
- **You'll be better able to help at home if you get to know the people who are with your children throughout their day.** Talk to your kids' teachers about your expectations for homework, studying, and classroom behaviour. That way
- **you can give your children common messages and reinforce the same ideas at home and at school.** Knowing your children's teachers will also help if you have questions throughout the year.
- **Make study time a priority and set clear expectations for completing homework.** Establish some basic homework rules, such as "assignments must be done before watching TV," "no phone calls until after homework is done," or "you must do one hour of quiet study or reading at least four nights each week."
- **Children respond well to structure and consistency, so set a regular homework schedule and try to stick to it.** As a family, agree which hours of the day would be the best study time. Just keep this tip in mind: if homework is to be done before dinner, remember that children may have trouble concentrating if they're hungry, so offer them a healthy snack, such as fruit or cheese.

- **Create a study area that is free from distractions, and check your children's homework to make sure it is completed.** Try to act as a positive role model when your children are studying: quietly read a book or write a letter. Remember ... research has shown that parents who read raise children who read.
- **Monitor your children's homework and success.** Find out what assignments have to be completed and when they are due, and check in after to find out whether the assignments were done as the teacher expected. If not, help your children to find out what was wrong so they can make improvements next time.

Making homework a priority is challenging for everyone, but once you have practiced for a few weeks it *will* get easier. And once you are all used to your homework schedule, you can be flexible when the need arises!

Quick Tip

Particularly in the upper grades, children can sometimes become overwhelmed by the amount of homework they have to do. You can help! Encourage your kids to think calmly. What needs to be done and how much time will it take? Help them create a plan. Break each assignment down into manageable steps and create a schedule.



Getting to Know Your Children's Teacher

Getting to know your children's teachers is very important. It shows your kids that you are interested in their school-life. It also helps you relate to stories your children share about their school and talk with them about their everyday experiences. Here are a few things you can do when meeting with teachers.

- **Share information about your children.** What are their strengths? What do they do well? What do they find challenging? What strategies do you find useful for your kids?
- **Ask about the classroom routine.** How can you help your children prepare for assignments and tests? How else can you support their learning at home?
- **Discuss your expectations for your children.** Are the teacher's expectations consistent with yours?
- **Talk about ways that you can assist with school activities.** Can you help in the classroom, supervise a field trip, or volunteer on the parent advisory committee?

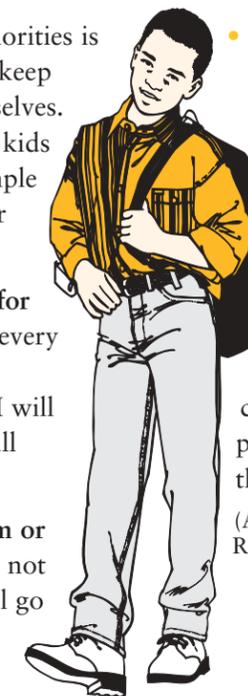
Keeping in touch with school staff is a good way to eliminate, or at least minimize, any future challenges. Also, educating children is a shared responsibility of parents and teachers, and good communication can make the education process far more effective and enjoyable for everyone.



Three Daily Priorities for Teens

Having your teens create three daily priorities is a great way to help them set goals and keep them from focusing too much on themselves. How can you do that? Encourage your kids to get into the habit of setting three simple goals each day – one for school, one for themselves, and one for others.

- **Think of one important school goal for that day.** For example: "I will get to every class on time," or "I will return that library book I keep forgetting," or "I will tackle that essay I've been avoiding all week."
- **Think of one important focus for him or herself that day.** For example: "I will not drink any soda pop today," or "I will go on a long walk after school," or "I will go to bed earlier tonight."



- **Think of one thing to do for someone else.** For example, "I will take my little sister swimming," or "I will walk my neighbours' dog while they are on holidays," or "I will do the dishes after dinner."

Encouraging your teens to work on three daily priorities will help them to practice setting and achieving goals. It will also help them learn to take control and not focus so much on things that they cannot change. And of course, it will make your kids feel great and provide you with plenty of opportunities to give them praise each day!

(Adapted from *Teaching Your Children Values*, Linda and Richard Eyre, Simon & Schuster, 1993).