

The Value of Parents' Support for Schools

Family involvement in schools has a positive effect on student achievement. Education is a shared responsibility, and cooperative efforts lead to student success.

The Research is Clear...

Children of parents who are active in the school ...

- ▶ often get better grades.
- ▶ perform better on tests.
- ▶ have better attendance.
- ▶ have fewer behaviour challenges.

- ▶ If you are able to volunteer in the school, you will get to spend valuable time with your children and learn more about their life at school.
- ▶ Getting involved is a great way to show children and teens that you are interested in their education and that you think school is important. Your visibility in the school helps all students.
- ▶ Volunteering allows you to get to know school staff, which is really helpful if you need support or information.
- ▶ Family volunteers are essential for organizing all kinds of school activities. Volunteers are a valuable resource and they make schools better for kids.
- ▶ Volunteering reinforces to your children the importance of contributing to their school and community.

Even if you haven't been involved in the past, it's never too late to start. In fact, there is often a shortage of parent volunteers at the high school level, even though parental involvement is just as beneficial as students advance to higher grade levels.

► **Parent volunteers can contribute to schools in many different ways. You can:**

- share your special knowledge and skills, such as your talents for sewing, cooking, carpentry, carving, speaking your language, etc.
- read with students, either individually or in small groups.
- listen to students read to you.
- help with music, arts and crafts, dancing, and other learning activities.
- lend a hand during field trips.
- help with breakfast and lunch programs.
- tutor students one-on-one.
- assist in the school library.
- help coach a sports team.
- take photos at school events.
- help keep bulletin boards neat and up to date.
- talk with students using your traditional language.
- assist students with extra math drills.
- volunteer in the computer lab.
- organize or assist with an after-school club.

The list of things you can do to help is almost endless. And even things that seem small can make a big difference for school staff and students! You don't have to share dozens of hours to make a real difference.

If you need other ideas, ask your child's teacher or principal for help.

Remember ... not all activities will be right for everyone. You might need to try a few different activities before you find a role that is comfortable for you.

If you are not able to regularly volunteer in the school, that's fine, too! You can still make an important difference by visiting the school when possible.

- **Students love seeing their families and community members attend special events or performances. Having an audience to support their efforts is exciting and builds students' self-confidence. And attending school activities is a great way to show your children that you care about their life at school.**
- **Attending the school for meet-the-teacher night, student concerts, family fun nights, sporting events, or other social gatherings will show your kids that you value the school and their education.**
- **Participating in fun, informal events can help you become more familiar with the learning environment. It will also give you a chance to get to know your children's teachers in a relaxed atmosphere.**

- ▶ Parents can also provide invaluable support by helping to make decisions for the school. If your school has a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) or some other type of parent leadership group – get involved if you can. If your school doesn't have a PAC, you can ask why. You do not have to be an education expert to contribute. Sharing your thoughts and ideas is enough.

Tips For Volunteering

If you are able to volunteer with the school, here are a few tips to remember.

- ▶ Read the school handbook so you are familiar with the school's rules and procedures.
- ▶ Be clear about how much time you have to help.
 - Don't be afraid to say no if a job will be too time consuming.
 - Be clear about what you can and cannot do up front, before plans are made.
- ▶ Talk to your children about your volunteering.
 - Remind them you are there to help everyone.
 - Most children like having their parents involved, but if your children seem uncertain about your role, tell them you aren't there to watch them; you are assisting because the teacher and school need your help.
- ▶ If you see something that makes you uncomfortable, talk to the teacher or principal about it. Don't just talk to other parents about an issue; let school staff know if you have a concern.
- ▶ Let the teacher or school staff know if your plans change and you can't follow through on a commitment. People are counting on you to be there.
- ▶ Always be positive about the school, students, and families while you are volunteering.
- ▶ Remember to respect the confidentiality of other families and all students.
- ▶ Appreciate the importance of your contributions. Remember that volunteering not only benefits your family. It helps the classroom, the whole school, and the community by showing that education really matters.

And remember that parent volunteers are often asked to complete a criminal record check. This is a very common practice most schools, as asking all adults in the school to have a check keeps students safe.

