

Dropout Prevention

What Families Need to Know

Family engagement is one of the most important contributors to school completion and success. The research of Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies (2007) shows that when families are involved in their children's education, students are more likely to:

- earn high grade-point averages and scores on standardized tests or rating scales
- enroll in more challenging academic programs
- pass more classes and earn more credits
- attend school regularly
- display positive attitudes about school
- graduate from high school and enroll in postsecondary programs
- refrain from destructive activities such as alcohol, drug use and violence



Birth - Early Childhood

Young children benefit most from their school years if they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Family support in these early years can help build a foundation for success that directly impacts a child's school performance in a positive way, from birth to high school graduation.

- Talk to your child, beginning at birth. Babies learn language by listening to voices. Non-responsive voices, such as from a television or radio cannot replace a live person. The more babies are spoken to, the more they learn.
- Read aloud to your child every day. Children of all ages love to be read to, beginning at birth. Excellent reading skills are not required to enjoy reading aloud together. When children are read to, they associate warm feelings of being with you to a lifelong love of reading.
- Give your baby or toddler plenty of attention, encouragement, hugs and lap time. Children who feel loved are more likely to be confident. Repetition creates a sense of stability in the lives of children.
- Set a good example. Children imitate what they see others do and what they hear others say. Your child is more likely to show a positive attitude toward learning and toward school when you do.
- Provide opportunities for repetition. It takes practice for a child to learn to crawl, pronounce new words or drink from a cup. Children do not get bored when things are repeated. Repetition helps children build the confidence needed to try new things.
- Learn and use appropriate discipline. All children need to have limits set for them. Help children develop good social skills by setting reasonable limits.
- Children learn independence and confidence when they are allowed to practice tasks such as dressing themselves and putting their toys away. When a decision needs to be made, provide opportunities with limited choices.
- Give your child opportunities to play. Play is how children learn. It is the natural way for children to explore, to become creative, to learn to make up and tell stories and to develop social skills.

- Encourage your child to play with other children and to be with adults who are not family members. Preschoolers need social opportunities to learn to see the point of view of others. Young children are more likely to get along with teachers and classmates if they have had experiences with different adults and children.
- Good television programs can introduce your child to new worlds and promote learning. Learn about and make an informed decision about what kinds of shows and how much television your child should watch and watch them together!
- Provide opportunities for your child to do and see new things. The more varied the experiences that children have, the more they will learn about the world. Every community can provide new experiences. Go for walks in the neighborhood or take the bus. Learn about and visit museums, libraries, zoos and other places of interest.

-Compiled from the "Helping Your Preschool Child" booklet developed by the US Department of Education

Kindergarten - Elementary

Children begin to spend significant amounts of time outside of the home, attending school and participating in activities when they reach school age. Strong family engagement at both home and school is very important during this transitional time. Be sure to communicate that education is essential for a successful future.

- Continue to practice the suggestions for the early childhood years.
- Ensure your child attends school regularly and on time. When children miss school, an important opportunity to learn is missed.
- Note your child's progress in school. Monitor grades, report cards and standardized test reports. Attend parent-teacher conferences. Perhaps most importantly, work with the teacher if your child is falling behind academically.
- Communicate regularly with your child's teachers. When families and teachers share information about what's going on at home or school, children benefit.
- Get involved at your child's school. Whether volunteering in a classroom, sorting books in the school library, or planting flowers outside the building, donating an hour or two of time can show your child that you value education.
- Help your child with homework. When families guide children's homework with helpful and appropriate support, children perform better in the classroom. Additionally, when families have a positive attitude toward homework and use homework as an opportunity to teach study skills and time management, children are more likely to believe that homework will help them learn.
- Read daily with your child. Family engagement in reading-related activities outside of school is strongly related to children's positive reading performance.



- Talk with your child about future goals and current interests. Help your child see the connection between goals or interests and school subjects.
- Children have their own special thoughts and feelings, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. Listening to your child is the best way to learn about these feelings. It shows that feelings and thoughts are valuable.
- Set high standards and encourage your child to try new things. Children who aren't challenged become bored and children who are pushed along too quickly or who are asked to do things that don't interest them can become frustrated and unhappy. Work to establish a happy balance for your child.

Middle School - Junior High

Middle school can be a confusing time, for families as well as for students. Children become more independent, yet still need support. While families may decide to allow more freedom in some areas, it is important to stay actively involved in your child's education.

- Continue to practice the suggestions for the elementary years.
- Get to know your child's teachers. It's a good idea to meet each of your child's teachers. Ask about their expectations and the best way to get in touch if you have questions.
- Find a niche for yourself at your child's school. Serve as an adviser for an extracurricular activity such as the school paper, chess club, or science fair. If you can't be in school during the day, ask teachers and other school personnel to pass along some work that you can do on your own. Photocopy homework assignments; collect recyclables for a science or art project; serve on a parent-school advisory council; join your middle school PTO or PTA.
- Go to school meetings and events. Attending concerts, plays, assemblies, parent-teacher conferences, and other activities is a good way to become familiar with your child's school community.
- Find out about homework assignments and school tests. If your school has a website where teachers list homework assignments, get in the habit of checking it regularly. If not, contact your child's teachers and ask them to alert you when there's an important project or test coming up.
- Talk to your child about school problems and achievements every day. Ask specific questions to draw out your child. The more specific you are in your questions, the more of an answer you're likely to get.
- Give your child a quiet place to study and do homework. Find an area in your home that is free of distraction where your child can concentrate on homework. Set aside time every day for homework.
- Check your child's homework. Offer to check math problems, proofread written papers, and look over spelling words. If you find a mistake, point it out to your child and help him/her figure out the correct answer.
- Post a family calendar in a central place. Write down important school dates, including parent meetings, due dates for projects, and tests. Encourage your child to add to the calendar and to check it daily. This will help your child learn time management for school, extracurricular and home responsibilities.
- If your child is struggling, seek help. Parents and other adults can reduce the likelihood of dropout if they take steps to help youth cope with their problems.



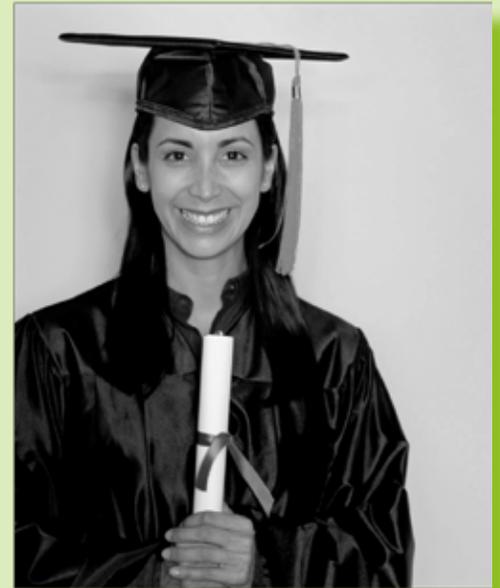
"The American family is the rock on which a solid education can be built. I have seen examples all over this nation where two-parent families, single parents, stepparents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles are providing strong family support for their children to learn. If families teach the love of learning, it can make all the difference in the world to their children."

Former U.S Secretary of Education, Richard Riley

High School

While students figure out their place in high school, parents have to find their place, as well. Even if you feel like your efforts are going unnoticed by your child....don't give up! It is crucial to stay involved.

- Continue to practice the suggestions for the middle school years.
- Stay involved throughout high school. Go to every meeting that is announced. Stay in contact with the teachers and counselors. If your child participates in an activity, show your support by attending the events. It is important to show your teenager that you are invested in his/her life.
- Maintain high expectations for your child. Communicate with your child the importance of setting and meeting challenges in school. Do not let your child settle for less than his/her best.
- Tell your child that you care about his/her future. Caring, knowledgeable adults can establish a climate of trust and support that lets youth know someone is paying attention.
- Monitor school attendance. If your child is skipping school, it may be a warning sign that he/she is having trouble.
- Encourage your child to seek out extracurricular activities. Students who actively participate in and identify with their school are more motivated to stay in school and more likely to graduate than those who are not involved with their school. It is important for your child to develop positive relationships and have success outside of a classroom setting.
- Help your child establish graduation as a priority. Keep track of the credits he/she needs in order to graduate.
- Help your child explore career options that interest him/her and the education needed to be successful in those careers. Vocational education, career development, and work-based learning can promote successful careers for students.
- Encourage your child to pursue postsecondary schooling. Constant encouragement and discussions about school and higher education promote students' college aspirations and preparation. There are many postsecondary opportunities your child could choose to pursue including: technical certification, apprenticeships, technical college, two-year community college and four-year university.



Resources

Kansas DropINs: www.kansasdropins.org

US Department of Education: Parent Power-Build the Bridge to Success (booklet)

US Department of Education: Helping Your Pre-School Child (booklet)

Henderson, T.A., Mapp, L.K., Johnson, R.V., & Davies, D. (2007) *Beyond the Bake Sale*. New York: The New Press.



For copies of this resource and other informative resources on family engagement in education, please contact the Kansas Parent Information Resource Center at 1-866-711-6711 or visit our website at www.kpirc.org

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