



Getting Involved in Your Children's Education

Working effectively with your children's schools can make a big difference for your children. In addition there are many things you can do to make learning exciting for your children.

Talking helps children learn. Even before children can understand the words you say, talking to them is a way they learn to connect with people. Talk with them. Imitate them. As they get older, encourage them to talk and share ideas with you. Listen to the things they say. Ask questions.

Show an excitement for learning at home. Make your home a learning place. Read together. Go to the library. Tell stories. Give books as presents. If you read books and magazines and if you talk about new ideas, it sends a message to your children: "Learning is important - and fun!"

Learn in many ways. In addition to reading, you can make visits to interesting places. You can talk with interesting people. You can encourage hobbies. You can provide your children with drawing materials and building materials. Provide a combination of learning experiences: hearing, telling, seeing, touching, doing. Share with your children the exciting things you are learning in your own life.

Control the TV and movies that your children watch. Be actively involved in helping them make good choices. Too much TV crowds out reading and active learning. Draw your children into other activities. (See the unit in this series: Parenting in a Technological Age.)

Stay in touch with your children's schools. There are a variety of ways you can help your children do well at school. Go to parent teacher conferences. Visit with teachers and counselors at your children's schools when they need extra help. Attend school activities. Volunteer at your children's schools.

There are times when almost every child has a problem at school. **Work with the schools to solve problems.** It takes some patience, but, when you work with the school, you are teaching your children how to work with other people in the community.

Provide a good place in your home for each child to study. Different children have different needs. Some children need a quiet place with everything organized in one place. Another child may prefer to study at the kitchen table. Another may plop on the sofa. Help each child find a pattern of studying that helps him or her learn.

Learning can be a lifelong adventure both for us and for our children.

Applications:

Talk about interesting things in the car or at dinner. For example, you might ask, "What do you think are the most important ideas in the world?" Don't argue with anyone's choices. Invite each person to make his or her own contribution. Enjoy the different ideas that each person thinks are important.

Think about the most excited learners you have known. What are some of the things they have studied? You may want to tell your children about the excited learners you have known. Or, if possible, you may want to take your children to visit them.

Help your children appreciate the many subjects to learn about. Some people love to understand how cars work. Some like to study plants. Some like to understand history. There are so many things to learn about!

Think of learning outings that you can have with each child. One child may love going to the library. One may want to go into the woods with a field guide looking for certain flowers, trees, and bugs. One may want to visit a factory. Notice what each child is interested in and help him or her explore that interest.

Invite people who are important to your children to visit your family and tell about the most exciting things they have learned.