

Parent Involvement: Keys to Success

A podcast series from the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center

Involve Parents in Reading: They really can make a difference!

Transcript

Narrator: When parents are involved in their child’s education, both parent and child are likely to benefit. Researchers report that the child’s self-esteem and academic achievement improves, the parent-child relationship is enhanced, and parents develop a better understanding of the schooling process. When we think of parent involvement, we often think of parents visiting the school. However, it is not always easy for parents to find the time and energy to become involved at school. In this podcast, one of a series about parent involvement in schools, we will explore strategies that parents can learn to use at home to help their child learn to read. Research indicates that these strategies can produce significant benefits for both parent and child.

Educators at the state level may seem far removed from the parents in communities across your state, but you can still provide guidance to district and school leaders who, in turn, work with those parents. Listen to this podcast about strategies parents can use at home to support children’s literacy, and follow the suggestions for ways state-level educators can support districts and schools in their efforts to engage parents. Helpful tools are available online at the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center’s Web site, www.arcc.edvantia.org, where other podcasts can also be accessed.

It is important for parents to understand what strategies they can use at home to support their child’s learning. Let’s listen as Anne Henderson, noted consultant in the area of parent involvement, reinforces this point as she discusses a research finding.

Anne: “Programs that help parents work with their children really pay off—if they are offered in a way that’s respectful, and at times that are convenient for parents, and in places that are convenient for parents. Sometimes the school isn’t the place. Parents will use that information to help their kids, and their kids will do better as a result.”

Narrator: Interestingly, research has shown that schools also improve when parents are involved with their children at home or at school. Parents need to be involved in their child’s learning because this has the most impact on student success. The goal for educators then is to help as many parents as possible understand the importance of their involvement with their child’s learning. To help parents, we must consider the parent’s comfort level for involvement and the individual student’s data when planning parent activities. Some parents will need to learn ways to help their child with specific skills, while others can learn more general activities that support student learning.

State educators can provide research and resources to school and district staff to help them help their parents. Providing sample parent workshop schedules and suggested content can give schools and districts a starting point for planning their own events. Also, a collection of ideas for when and where other schools have provided successful parent workshops can help educators learn from each other. State educators can also provide networking opportunities so district staff can exchange ideas, successes, and challenges. Finally, the strategies discussed in this podcast can be provided to school and district staff so they can share them with parents.

Parents want to help their children be successful and envision a bright future for them. Helping their children learn to read well is one way to ensure that success. Let's consider strategies that are proven to impact children's reading achievement. Here are three suggestions to share with parents.

First, **listen to your child read.**

When you listen to your child read, you are helping him to develop fluency. Fluency is the ability to read accurately, with appropriate speed and expression. A fluent reader sounds good, is easy to listen to, and reads with enough expression that the listener can understand and enjoy what is being read. Each time your child reads to you, he gains confidence. Praise him for the things you hear. You might comment on the way he used his voice or how he paused between sentences, not reading too quickly. Listen to your child read three or more nights a week for at least 15 minutes each time. The more often you listen to your child read, the more his reading will improve.

Use a variety of books on a range of topics, including fiction and nonfiction.

If your child makes a mistake, wait before helping him; he might correct it on his own. See if he can find clues to the word's meaning. Help your child use clues, such as the first letter of a word, to figure it out. Ask him to break the word into parts and sound out each syllable separately. Then ask him to put the syllables together to say the new word. Praise him when he corrects himself and uses clues to figure out words.

A second strategy is **paired reading.**

In paired reading, both you and your child read the same text aloud at the same time. When the child signals, the parent stops reading while the child continues. If she makes a mistake, say the correct word and give her time to repeat it without any discussion; then resume reading together. When you and your child do paired reading, make sure she tries to read every word.

Paired reading can help your child become a more confident reader, and it can make reading fun for both of you. Paired reading helps your child learn new words, read accurately, improve expression, and better understand what he reads.

The third strategy is to **read aloud to your child.**

When you read aloud, you are modeling fluent reading. Try to make your reading as expressive as possible. Draw attention to how you used your voice to show happiness or sadness in the story. Your child hears you read with expression and will transfer that into his own reading. Read aloud often—every day if you can! When you are reading to a young child, you can point to words as you share the cover, title, and author's and illustrator's names. Look at a few pictures before beginning to read. This helps your child think and talk about what he already knows and what he wants to find out or to learn from reading the book.

Encourage your child to read and say any words he recognizes, especially words that are simple or are repeated throughout the book. Talk about and ask questions about what is happening in the story.

Patricia Clark Brown, in an article titled *Involving Parents in the Education of Their Children*, suggests that teachers can provide questions for parents and children to discuss while reading assigned books. If there are no prepared questions, then invite your child to “Tell me about...” and ask, “What do you think?” Listen, repeat, and add new words and ideas to what he says. This helps your child learn new words and helps him think about the characters and the story.

Why should educators encourage parents to become involved in their children’s literacy activities? The National Literacy Trust, based in the United Kingdom, addresses this question in the paper, *The Importance of Parental Involvement in their Children’s Literacy Practices*. The evidence is overwhelming. According to this paper, the research indicates that parent involvement in a child’s reading is the most important determinant of language and emergent literacy.

Involvement with reading activities at home also has significant positive influences on students’ interest in reading, attitudes toward reading, and attentiveness in the classroom. In addition, the earlier parents become involved in their children’s literacy practices, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects. Additionally, of all school subjects, reading has been found to be most sensitive to parental influences.

We hope this podcast will be helpful as a tool to support parents in advancing their children’s educational success through reading.

Links for parent involvement resources are available at the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center Web site, www.arcc.edvantia.org. These tools provide examples of ways states and districts can guide and support school actions for improving parent involvement.

Join us for the next podcast in this series on parent involvement in schools.

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