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Workshop – School Smarts Committee
The Magic of Family Engagement, Education and Empowerment
Handout 1

Reference Material:

School Smarts Parent Engagement Program

California State PTA Toolkit

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100 WAYS FOR PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Communicating – Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.

1. Give positive feedback and show appreciation for teachers and the principal.
2. Approach interactions with a positive attitude and an open mind.
3. Listen to others' viewpoints.
4. Share your child's strengths, talents, and interests with your child's teachers.
5. Share expectations and set goals together for your child.
6. Make appointments as needed to discuss your child's progress or concerns.
7. Attend parent-teacher conferences with specific questions you want to ask.
8. Indicate the best way to give you information (phone, e-mail, notes, etc.).
9. Understand and reinforce school rules and expectations at home.
10. Participate in informal opportunities to talk with and get to know school staff and educators.
11. Address concerns or questions honestly, openly, and early on.
12. Attend PTA or parent meetings regularly.
13. Read classroom and/or school newsletters.
14. Visit your school's web page.
15. Know school staff's extensions and office hours.
16. Read and know your school's handbook.
17. Request that information be available in all relevant languages.

Parenting – Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

18. Share your family's culture, values, and parenting practices with your child's school.
19. Share your perceptions with educators and school staff of how parents are treated.
20. Work with school staff and educators to revise and improve perceptions and school climate.
21. Meet your child's friends and get to know their parents.
22. Contact your school for information on family programs and resources.
23. Help establish a parent center at school and use its resources.
24. Help create a toy/book lending library and visit it regularly.
25. Assist in developing parent support programs/groups and attend them.
26. Attend workshops or seminars on various parenting topics.
27. Participate in parenting classes on child development, expectations, discipline, etc.
28. Attend parent fairs and other events especially for parents and families.
29. Start a parent book club to discuss current publications.
30. Help create and/or contribute to a school newsletter on parenting.
31. Assist in creating and/or offer your services to before- and after-school programs.
32. Build a child file with medical records, pictures, fingerprints, etc.
33. Make donations and/or offer to work at clothing drives or swaps, food co-ops, etc.
34. Talk with your child's teacher for ideas on parent/child games and activities.

Student Learning – Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

35. Discuss your child's school day and homework daily.
36. Learn your child's strengths and weaknesses in different areas of school.
37. Provide a quiet, well-lit place with basic school supplies for studying/homework.
38. Help your children break down projects into smaller, more manageable steps.
39. Develop a consistent daily routine and time for studying and homework.
40. Provide encouragement and approval for effort and schoolwork.
41. Share your interests, hobbies, and talents with your children.
42. Provide children with books, magazines, and so forth, and develop a night-time reading routine.
43. View selected TV programs together and then review and discuss them.
44. Make family trips to the library, zoo, museum, or park a fun learning experience.
45. Talk with your child's teacher on creating home learning games and activities.
46. Complete interactive homework assignments with your child.
47. Attend meetings on learning expectations, assessment and grading procedures.
48. Help set goals and develop a personalized education plan for your child.
49. Participate in activities that help you understand school technology.
50. Help plan and attend family nights on improving study habits, doing homework, etc.
51. Help develop, visit, or offer services to your school's study/tutor center.
52. Participate in fairs and tests for math, science, history, and so forth.

Volunteering – Parents are welcome in the school and their support and assistance are sought.

53. Respond to school surveys on your interests, talents, and skills.
54. Let school staff know your availability to volunteer (days, times, and how often).
55. Supervise and coordinate evening and weekend volunteer activities at school.
56. Assist your child's teacher in the classroom or on field trips when you are able.
57. Work with school staff and teachers to develop volunteer activities you can do from home.
58. Assist school staff and educators in creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere for parents.
59. Help provide childcare and/or transportation for volunteering parents.
60. Help develop creative ways to use volunteers at school.
61. Actively help school staffs recruit parents and community members as volunteers.
62. Attend training and orientation on how to be an effective volunteer.
63. Learn and uphold school discipline, confidentiality, and other policies as a volunteer.
64. Plan a regular time each week to talk with school staff and educators with whom you are working.
65. Help develop volunteer job descriptions and evaluations.
66. Participate in organizing and planning ways to recognize and appreciate volunteers.
67. Respond to school surveys/questionnaires on how effective volunteer programs are.
68. Help develop and distribute a volunteer directory to parents, school staff, and teachers.
69. Provide volunteer consulting services to school staff or educators on your areas of expertise.

School Decision Making and Advocacy – Parents are full partners in decisions that affect children and families.

70. Learn of school and district policies and practices that affect children.
71. Voice your support or concerns on any issue that will affect your family.
72. Be involved in decisions on student placement and course and textbook selections.
73. Participate in meetings to determine special educational needs and services.
74. Attend workshops on problem solving, conflict resolution, public speaking, and so forth.
75. Serve on school advisory councils or committees on curriculum, discipline, and so forth.
76. Serve on a site-based school management team with teachers and the principal.
77. Encourage and support older children in serving in student leadership positions.
78. Help your school create a student's rights and responsibilities guide for families.
79. Attend PTA, school board, and/or town meetings and speak to issues of concern.
80. Learn representative's backgrounds and participate in school board elections.
81. Work with teachers and school administrators to develop a parent involvement policy.
82. Write, call, or travel to state capitals to support or oppose proposed legislation.
83. Participate in petition drives or letter-writing campaigns to Congress on legislation.
84. Give testimony at public hearings in support of or opposition to education legislation.
85. Vote in local, state, and federal elections for public officials who support education.

Collaborating with Community – Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.

86. Help your school develop a directory of social and community services.
87. Find out information on community resources and organizations and use them.
88. Help develop and/or distribute a community newsletter to local agencies and businesses.
89. Help coordinate and participate in an event to raise money for a local charity.
90. Talk with employers about holding parent meetings or parenting workshops on-site.
91. Advocate for flexible work schedules and leave time to attend school functions.
92. Encourage employers and local businesses to make donations and support school programs.
93. Help organize and/or participate in community health fairs.
94. Help recruit community members (seniors, businesspeople) to volunteer at school.
95. Become active in community groups such as YMCA and Boy and Girl Scouts.
96. Serve on local community advisory councils and committees.
97. Work with local authorities and public officials to sponsor community events.
98. Help organize and/or participate in a community "clean up" or "beautification" project.
99. Encourage and help facilitate your child's participation in community service.
100. Be a role model, be active in community service yourself or together with your child.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR AT-HOME LEARNING

Parents are their children's first teacher. That dynamic is unique for each parent and child, however the learning that takes place at home is crucial to a student's academic, social and personal life development. Having a caring adult who is engaged and supportive of a child's education is the best predictor of how much they will enjoy, and thrive, in school. Here are a few creative and meaningful ways you can help your child learn at home.

Make Reading a Habit at Home

Research shows that children who read books for just 20 minutes a day perform better in school.

1. **Set aside a reading time** that is good for everyone.
2. **Pick a reading place** that is comfortable so you can settle in and enjoy the time.
3. **Read together** taking turns reading to your child, having them read to you or inviting younger siblings to read with older ones while you listen.
4. **Involve and engage your reader**, pointing out the book's title, author and illustrator. Before you read, ask questions like 'what do you think the story is going to be about?' As you read, stop to ask 'what, why and how' questions that encourage analytical and creative thinking.
5. **Keep favorite books around** and easily available to your readers. It's comforting for new readers to build confidence and fluency by re-reading what they love.

Make the Most of 'Teachable Moments'

Teachable moments are opportunities to learn that aren't forced or structured, but rather honest, unplanned, everyday moments to share in meaningful conversation or experiences that teach, encourage or inspire your child.

Look for 'IRL' opportunities: Reinforce what your children are learning by practicing 'in real life.' Learning fractions? Bake a double or triple batch of cookies or help them slice an apple into halves, thirds and quarters for an afterschool snack. Struggling with percentages? Take a shopping trip and figure out the cost of items at 10%, 15% or 30% off.

Teach values in everyday situations: Much of what children learn is 'caught, not taught.' You can tell them the values you want them to adopt, but what they see

you do matters. If the supermarket checker accidentally gives you too much change or fails to charge you for an item, that is a teachable moment to show what honesty, integrity and good citizenship look like.

Listen, ask, lead: Spontaneity doesn't always happen at the most convenient time, but when your child comes to you with a burning question, turn it into a teachable moment. Listen, then rather than offer a quick solution, ask curious questions like 'what do you think you should do?' or 'what would you like to happen next?' This encourages problem solving and might even give you an opportunity to share a life lesson!

Alternatives to Punishment

Parenting isn't easy and when necessary, appropriate punishments teach our children that there are consequences to their actions. Particularly when stress levels are high, here are some alternatives to consider.

- Take a time out to regain your composure. Call a friend, cry, meditate or get some fresh air.
- Be honest about how their behavior is affecting you or others and why it is not acceptable.
- Show, don't tell. Demonstrate what the behavior you desire looks like in action.
- Hold a family meeting and let them be a part of the solution, even setting their own punishment.
- Negotiate to reach an agreement: 'If you do your homework now, we can go to the park later.'
- Find an alternative to 'NO' by offering an 'instead' that redirects behavior in a positive direction.
- Adjust expectations. We have bad days and so do our kids. Make allowances and give grace.
- Offer options that empower your child. 'Would you like to take the trash out now or after dinner?'

7 THINGS TO TELL THE TEACHER ABOUT YOUR CHILD

What can you tell a teacher that will help him do his job better? You might be surprised. While your child's teacher is the expert in education, no one knows more about your child than you do. It's just as important for parents to tell teachers about issues at home that may affect school performance as it is for teachers to report how children are doing in the classroom.

Students do best when parents and teachers work together as partners. The start of a new school year is a great time to open a dialogue with your child's teacher. Not sure where to start? Here are seven things teachers wish you would tell them. Sharing this information with a teacher will help her better understand your child's needs and lay the groundwork for a cooperative relationship throughout the school year.

- 1. Health conditions:** If your child is diabetic, uses an inhaler, is allergic to peanuts, or has a serious health condition, her teacher should know. It's also helpful to let the teacher know whether your child has been diagnosed with conditions like **ADHD**, which may affect behavior and concentration.
- 2. Family issues:** Fill in the teacher if your family is going through a major change that could affect your child, such as a divorce, a death in the family, or a move. Even if your child seems to have adjusted well, alert teachers so they can watch for behavioral changes.
- 3. Personality traits or behavior issues:** Maybe your son is painfully shy and is worried about making friends at a new school. Or perhaps your kindergartner has been having tantrums at home and you're concerned she'll do the same at school. It's best to make teachers aware of these issues before they become a problem at school.
- 4. Strengths and weaknesses:** Your daughter is a star student in math but is embarrassed to read aloud. Your son loves language arts but struggles with science. If you tell teachers these things up front, they'll have more time to help your children improve in the areas they need it most.
- 5. Learning style:** You've spent years teaching your kids, from potty training to tying shoelaces, so you have a good idea of their learning styles. If your child learns better through hands-on activities than through listening to explanations, mention that to his teacher. Also share any teaching strategies that you've found work well with your child.
- 6. Study habits:** Does your son speed through math homework but labor over reading assignments? Do your daughter's grades suffer because she spends so much time at skating lessons? Tell teachers about your children's study habits and any issues they face in completing the work. Teachers often can offer suggestions to make homework time go more smoothly.
- 7. Special interests:** Knowing more about your child's hobbies or interests can help the teacher forge connections in the classroom. Let the teacher know that your young son loves a particular comic book superhero and that your middle school daughter is a gifted painter.

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