

Progressing Parental Engagement Parent Fact Sheet

What you can do at home – Parental engagement in early childhood

A child's early years before they start school (0-4 years) are fundamental to shaping their life chances. Research clearly shows that what parents do at home matters; it is crucial for brain development, readiness for school and for learning throughout life.

Children do better at school if they start well - successful transition to school leads to better attendance, adjustment, engagement and achievement. Parents play the most important role as a child's first teacher in these foundation years and throughout life.

The impact parents can have

Many things which families do so that children thrive help their learning as well – healthy eating, being active and showing affection. Parents have the biggest impact on children's learning when they help children to believe in themselves and to enjoy learning new things.

Tips for parental engagement in early childhood

Children learn by doing, through touching, tasting, smelling, seeing and hearing and through sharing their understanding of these things with others – playing and talking! For parents of children in the early years the key things you can do to help your child learn are:

Play

- Play with your children whenever you can and encourage your children to switch off and just play and explore

Talk

- Talk with and listen to your children as part of your normal everyday activities

Learn

- Read and count with your children every day
- Involve your children in everyday activities of family life which provide endless opportunities for learning

This fact sheet has some tips and ideas about the simple things parents and carers can do at home to help their children's learning. The tips include little things you can fit in to your daily routines and things you can do as a family.

Tip 1: Use play and fun ways of getting children involved everyday

- Use lots of different fun language - play name games, sing, recite names, play nonsense rhymes
- Use things in the home to build experiences for touch, taste, and smell and talk about colour, smell, and shape. For example, how an orange is round, how an orange smells, how it feels outside and inside its peel, how it can be cut into pieces, how it tastes etc
- You can try stringing beads, playing with clay or play dough, cutting with scissors and drawing with crayons to help children develop the skills they need for holding pencils and writing
- Play ball games, run, jump, skip, and hop. Go out where children have lots of room to run, can explore and climb safely, and can play with different things like water, sand, sticks and stones
- Use creative games like making up stories, pretending to be different people or characters, dress ups and puppet shows for fun, make believe play.

Tip 2: Talk! Talk! Talk!

- Talk about everyday things as you do them at home – sorting the washing, setting the dinner table, writing the shopping list. Point out things you see when out in the car, shopping or walking in the park. Talk about street signs, patterns, numbers on houses or cars, plants and animals. Play 'I Spy' together
- It doesn't matter if children don't talk back at first, eventually they will! You can also start to ask questions like 'which sock goes with this one?' and 'how many plates do we need on the table?' Older children can then get involved in activities like sorting the washing, or writing and reading the shopping list.

Tip 3: Help your child develop social skills

Children learn social skills by mixing with different people and trying new things with encouragement and praise.

- Talk to children about things they need to learn, ways they should act in different circumstances and what is expected of them when they are at home or outside of home (e.g. at the shops, at school)
- Help build independence, responsibility and skills for teamwork by involving them in shared family activities like preparing meals, setting the table, unpacking the shopping
- Play team games helping them in taking turns in a game, understanding rules for a game, and resolving arguments without fighting
- Provide encouragement and praise. Tell them what they are good at. Tell them when you are proud of them. Thank them for their helpfulness.

Tip 4: Help your child develop thinking and problem solving skills

- Talk about everyday things at home and their colour, shape and size. Match and label items e.g. a breakfast cereal in a bowl - the bowl is round, is red, is heavy, is light etc
- Particular toys and games help develop these skills such as constructing a block tower, following directions in a game, doing a puzzle, matching shapes and pictures, and stringing beads in a repetitive pattern
- Discuss ideas and opinions. For example, talk to children about and encourage children to make decisions themselves about what to wear in different weather and for different types of outings
- Allow children to make mistakes and to learn. Help children solve problems themselves – when something happens or goes wrong, ask them 'what should we do?'

Where can I find more information?

Launching into Learning - Parent booklets on home based learning activities and ideas for transition to school

http://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents_carers/early_years/Programs-and-Initiatives/Pages/Launching-into-Learning.aspx

Raising children – Ideas for learning and play with primary school aged children

http://raisingchildren.net.au/play_learning/school_age_play_learning.html

Transition to school - Engaging with schools and choosing schools

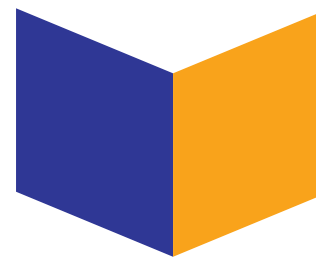
<http://www.transitiontoschoolresource.org.au/tts>

Schoolatoz: Practical help for parents – A comprehensive guide for parents of school aged children

www.schoolatoz.nsw.edu.au/

Parent involvement toolkit – Information on parental engagement and family-school partnerships

www.peopleforeducation.ca/how-does-education-work/training-and-resources/helping-children-succeed-the-parent-engagement-toolkit/



About this project

The ACT Education and Training Directorate partnered with the non-profit Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), The Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, the Catholic School Parents Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn and the Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools. Together, the alliance developed a shared understanding of parental engagement in the ACT, based on what the evidence shows has the biggest impact and the things that matter most to ACT families and schools. The international evidence has been reviewed and parents and teachers have been consulted on what is important to them.

Our Partners

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More resources will be available in 2015.

