



“A” for effort

Working together: your child’s teacher and you

From the earliest grades on, it’s important to become actively involved in your child’s education. One of the best ways to do this is to establish a good working relationship with your child’s teachers. Aside from your family members, there are few people who influence children more than their teachers.

Stay informed

It seems like things are changing a lot these days. You want to make sure you’re getting the most current information and not relying on the rumor mill. Sign up for all school, district and teacher emails. You may also want to join any school-sponsored social media pages.

Specifically, you may want to learn about plans for:

- **The classroom** — How many children will be in each class? What are the planned safety measures? What will they do if someone tests positive for COVID?
- **The physical school** — How will they handle transitions, lunch or recess? What are they doing for children who ride the school bus?
- **Online learning** — What platforms will the school use? Will the teachers come from the district or your child’s school?

Introduce yourself

At the beginning of each school year, plan to meet briefly with your child’s teacher. If this isn’t possible, send a note or email. Express your desire to work with her or him for your child’s benefit.

Acquaint yourself with your child’s textbooks and work

Schools often have a “Back-to-School Night.” This provides the chance to get an overview of the year’s studies and their classroom practices. But many don’t know what school will look like this year.

If possible, try to see what material will be covered this year. You may want to ask about homework expectations, testing and grading. Schedule time each week to review your child’s homework and progress. If you have questions or concerns, contact the teacher as soon as possible.

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Offer your services

Many teachers are feeling overwhelmed right now. If you have the time, energy and resources, you may want to offer help. This could include:

- Creating spreadsheets
- Helping with technology
- Providing extra cleaning supplies
- Saying “thank you”

Plan for parent/teacher conferences

Generally, conferences will be scheduled to coincide with the first report card. If not, contact your child’s teacher and ask to meet to discuss your child’s progress. Ideally, this should be done at least twice a year. Present your expectations and ask the teacher what his or her expectations are.

How is your child meeting these standards? What areas need improvement? How can you help? Remember to discuss your child’s social development, as well as academic progress.

Let the teacher know you appreciate her or his efforts and you are eager to support these efforts at home. Encourage your child’s teacher to keep the lines of communication open and assure the teacher that you will do the same.

What you can do if there’s a problem

With so many new challenges these days, you may have concerns about your child’s education. What should you do?

- **Identify the issue.** Is there too much homework? Not enough homework? Is your child scoring poorly on tests? Is your child confused about what’s expected? Does your child feel unfairly treated?

Talk with your child to understand fully his or her sense of the problem and combine that information with your own observations.

- **Schedule a conference with the teacher.** When you meet with the teacher, be prepared to listen to her or his perspective on the situation. Avoid being confrontational. Explain your concerns and discuss possible solutions.

If you both agree the problem can be resolved, develop a plan of action, timetable and follow-up schedule. Make a communication plan to address any concerns as well as progress.

- **Involve your child in solving the problem.** Let your child know about your conversation with the teacher. If your meeting with the teacher resulted in a plan of action, go over the plan with your child. If your child has any concerns or suggestions, follow up with the teacher.

Once a plan has been agreed upon, clearly communicate both your expectations and support to your child. Stick with the plan, including checking with the teacher and your child, until the problem is resolved.

- **Believe your child can succeed and insist that the school believe it too.** Be an advocate for your child. And be sure to listen to both sides of any issue. It will not help your child if you either defend him or her blindly or assume the teacher is always right.

If you can’t resolve issues with the teacher and don’t think more talks will help, go to the principal or assistant principal. Discuss the situation and seek resolution.

Sometimes there may be a mismatch of personalities. And sometimes it’s better to place your child in another class. This is rare. But allow for the possibility should it occur. Such a change must be carefully weighed against the disruption that comes with moving to a new class.

Remember that you and the teacher are on the same team. Open communication is vital. But it’s even more important during these uncertain times.

The EAP is administered by Resources For Living, LLC.

All EAP calls are confidential, except as required by law.