

The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

Home & School

"Together We Can Make a Difference"



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HOW DO YOU SPELL...



Back in the day there used to be a TV ad that asked, how do you spell relief? The answer, R-O-L-A-I-D-S.

Let me ask, how do you spell success? Is the answer **S-T-A-A-R**? Good grades. Honor roll. Football or volleyball victories. Fine arts achievement. Athletic awards. First chair. Perfect attendance. High school graduation. Acceptance into post-secondary education. Increased reading levels. Girl scout or boy scout merit badges. Other?

The season for high stakes testing is rapidly approaching. In many schools and homes stress levels are beginning to rise. These tests are important, but remember, it is just one test with opportunities for retests.

Many students will face far more challenging tests with possible serious consequences. Parents divorce. The death of a family member. Homelessness. Chronic illness or injury that prevents them from participating in a favorite activity or sport. Persistent bullying and harassment. Teen pregnancy. Temptations to use drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Physical or sexual abuse by an adult. And the list goes on.

Yes, absolutely, educators and families want their students to pass the STAAR tests. But as mentors, role models, and parents we desire our children to excel in the tests of life. Success is spelled – Perseverance. Resilience. Forgiveness. Empathy. Purpose-driven. Goal-oriented. Compassion. Integrity. These essential character traits are not often printed in a curriculum or lesson plan, because they are more often caught than taught. It is up to us adults to demonstrate these traits daily. When we fail, be tenacious and try again. When we wrong others, including our children, genuinely apologize. When we are wronged, be quick to forgive. When we see a person in pain, be ready to listen and show tenderness. When we see others struggling, understand their need and share what we have.

Students can read about great men and heroic women, but the impact is more powerful when they see it lived out in the people they trust and respect. Perhaps the greatest gift we can pass on to our children are practical life skills. They will read it in our facial expression. They will hear it in our tone of voice. They will emulate our body language. In 2019 let's teach our children how to spell success.

If I had my child to raise over again

I'd build self-esteem first and the house later

I'd finger paint more and point the finger less

I would do less correcting and more connecting

I'd take my eyes off my watch and watch

with my eyes

I would care to know less and know to care more

I'd take more hikes and fly more kites

I'd stop playing serious and seriously play

I would run through more fields and gaze

at more stars

I'd do more hugging and less tugging

I'd see the oak tree in the acorn more often

I would be firm less often and affirm much more

I'd model less about the love of power

And more about the power of love

-Diane Loomans



Are you being bullied? Do you see bullying at your school? There are things you can do to keep yourself and the kids you know safe from bullying.

What Kids Can Do



Treat Everyone with Respect

Nobody should be mean to others.

- Stop and think before you say or do something that could hurt someone.
- If you feel like being mean to someone, find something else to do. Play a game, watch TV, or talk to a friend.
- Talk to an adult you trust. They can help you find ways to be nicer to others.
- Keep in mind that everyone is different. Not better or worse. Just different.

If you think you have bullied someone in the past, apologize. Everyone feels better.

Talk about it

Find “teachable moments” to talk about the dangers of alcohol and drug use. Be clear about your position on these substances, and the consequences for using them. One discussion about drugs and alcohol is not enough.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU’RE BULLIED

There are things you can do if you are being bullied:

- Look at the kid bullying you and tell him or her to stop in a calm, clear voice. You can also try to laugh it off. This works best if joking is easy for you. It could catch the kid bullying you off guard.
- If speaking up seems too hard or not safe, walk away and stay away. Don’t fight back. Find an adult to stop the bullying on the spot. There are things you can do to stay safe in the future, too.
- Talk to an adult you trust. Don’t keep your feelings inside. Telling someone can help you feel less alone. They can help you make a plan to stop the bullying.
- Stay away from places where bullying happens. Stay near adults and other kids. Most bullying happens when adults aren’t around.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CYBERBULLYING

Bullying does not always happen in person. Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that happens online or through text messages or emails. There are things you can do to protect yourself.

- Always think about what you post. You never know what someone will forward. Being kind to others online will help to keep you safe. Do not share anything that could hurt or embarrass anyone.
- Keep your password a secret from other kids. Even kids that seem like friends could give your password away or use it in ways you don’t want. Let your parents have your passwords.
- Think about who sees what you post online. Complete strangers? Friends? Friends of friends? Privacy settings let you control who sees what.
- Keep your parents in the loop. Tell them what you’re doing online and who you’re doing it with. Let them friend or follow you. Listen to what they have to say about what is and isn’t okay to do. They care about you and want you to be safe.
- Talk to an adult you trust about any messages you get or things you see online that make you sad or scared. If it is cyberbullying, report it.

STAND UP FOR OTHERS

When you see bullying, there are safe things you can do to make it stop.

- Talk to a parent, teacher, or another adult you trust. Adults need to know when bad things happen so they can help.
- Be kind to the kid being bullied. Show them that you care by trying to include them. Sit with them at lunch or on the bus, talk to them at school, or invite them to do something. Just hanging out with them will help them know they aren’t alone.
- Not saying anything could make it worse for everyone. The kid who is bullying will think it is okay to keep treating others that way.

GET INVOLVED

You can be a leader in preventing bullying in your community.

- Find out more about where and when bullying happens at your school. Think about what could help. Then, share your ideas. There is a good chance that adults don’t know all of what happens. Your friends can go with you to talk to a teacher, counselor, coach, or parent and can add what they think.
- Talk to the principal about getting involved at school. Schools sometimes give students a voice in programs to stop bullying. Be on a school safety committee. Create posters for your school about bullying. Be a role model for younger kids.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/kids/what-you-can-do/index.html>

When Your Child Doesn't Want to Go to School: Teen Depression and School Refusal

It is not uncommon for a child or teen with depression to avoid or refuse to go to school. Inability or reluctance to wake up and get dressed in the morning, frequent visits to the school nurse, skipping class, or frequent complaints of physical pain and sickness like headaches, stomachaches, nausea, or diarrhea can all be signs of school refusal. Anxiety and defiance may be present, as well.

As a parent, it is hard to know what to do. The behavior can be disruptive to the family and it's heart wrenching to see your child in pain and unable to manage school. However, the most important step in dealing with school refusal is to understand why your child is having difficulty getting to school in the first place. School refusal is often a manifestation of an illness like depression or anxiety, but it can also be the result of bullying or issues with friends or family members.

If your child is avoiding or refusing to go to school, talk to your child's therapist. He can help develop strategies to help resolve the situation, such as addressing your child's sleeping habits so that he is ready for school in the morning. If it is an issue of bullying, the school should be involved in order to mediate the situation between the bully and your child. If the school refusal is rooted in family problems, family therapy may be helpful.

Regardless of the reason for school refusal, it is probably a good idea to get your child's school involved. The school may have ideas about how to help. However, with more people involved, communication is king. Make sure releases are signed so that the school can work with you and your child's therapist seamlessly – resulting in a consistent approach that is supportive and, ultimately, effective.

Everyone's situation is different, and therefore, blanket advice on this topic is not fitting. However, there are a few tips that we have found helpful.

Avoid engaging in a power struggle. When your child is refusing to go to school, try to avoid getting upset. This can escalate the situation and cause both you and your child stress – not a helpful headspace for a child already having trouble going to and/or staying in school.

Validate how they must be feeling. Think about what would be helpful to you if you were in your child's shoes. It would probably feel pretty comforting to know that your mom or dad understands that you are in pain and that getting to school is hard.

Reinforce the plan. Remind your child of the plan in place. If part of the plan is using skills learned in therapy, ask your child's therapist to teach you the skills so you can help. Review those skills with your child each day until he starts to integrate them regularly. Ask your child if it's okay for teachers to be cued in so they can support your child when needed.

Establish a safe space. Often when a child is experiencing emotional difficulty in school, there is a fear of visibly "losing control" in front of his classmates. This may be why he is avoiding school. One way to make the school day feel safer for your child is to ask the school to establish a safe place where he can go to collect himself – a social worker's or nurse's office.

Practice patience. Be firm on the idea of going to school and also understand that overcoming school refusal may take time.

Reward and praise improvement. Make sure to point out the moments when your child is using his skills or making even the smallest steps in the right direction. Remember, when you are depressed, you see failure in everything. Positivity is very powerful.

Excerpt from Parent Handbook on Childhood and Adolescent Depression by Erika's Lighthouse.

The full handbook can be downloaded at

https://www.erikaslighthouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EL_ParentsHandbook_2016.pdf

Be a good role model!

We adults give up the right to preach and lecture if we don't exhibit the self-control and self-discipline we're expecting of our children. If our faces are buried in our devices, rather than interacting with our children, friends, and family, then we have no credibility.



Develop your children's self-esteem

By building your children's self-esteem, you will help them feel good about themselves and gain the confidence needed to meet life's challenges.

- ✓ Give compliments every chance you get.
- ✓ Acknowledge special efforts.
- ✓ Recognize each good decision.
- ✓ Avoid put-downs, even as jokes.
- ✓ Praise academic achievements.
- ✓ Don't compare your children.

Helping Your Child with Test Taking.

Helping Your Child Succeed in School.

You can be a great help to your child if you will observe these do's and don'ts about tests and testing.



Explain that tests are yardsticks that teachers, schools, school districts and even states use to measure what and how they teach and how well students are learning what is taught. Most tests are designed and given by teachers to measure students' progress in a course. These tests are associated with the grades on report cards. The results tell the teacher and students whether they are keeping up with the class, need extra help or are ahead of other students.

Tell your child that occasionally, he will take "standardized" tests. Explain that these tests use the same standards to measure student performance across the state or even across the country. Every student takes the same test according to the same rules. This makes it possible to measure each student's performance against that of others.

- **Do** talk to your child about testing. It's helpful for children to understand why schools give tests and to know the different kinds of tests they will take.
- **Do** encourage your child. Praise her for the things that she does well. If your child feels good about herself, she will do her best on a test. Children who are afraid of failing are more likely to become anxious when taking tests and more likely to make mistakes.
- **Do** meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss his progress. Ask the teacher to suggest activities for you and your child to do at home to help prepare for tests and to improve your child's understanding of schoolwork.
- **Do** make sure that your child attends school regularly. Remember, tests reflect children's overall achievement. The more effort and energy your child puts into learning, the more likely it is that he will do well on tests.
- **Do** provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home and make sure that your child is well rested on school days and especially on the day of a test. Children who are tired are less able to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of a test.
- **Do** provide books and magazines for your child to read at home. By reading new materials, a child will learn new words that might appear on a test. Ask your child's teacher for lists of books for outside reading or get suggestions from your local library.
- **Don't** get upset because of a single test score. Many things can influence how your child does on a test. She might not have felt well on test day or she might have been too nervous to concentrate. She might have had an argument with a friend before the test or she might have been late to school because the school bus got caught in traffic. Remember, one test is simply one test.
- **Don't** place so much emphasis on your child's test scores that you lose sight of her well-being. Too much pressure can affect her test performance. In addition, she may come to think that you will only love her if she does well on tests.
- **Do** help your child avoid test anxiety. It's good for your child to be concerned about taking a test. It's not good for him to develop "test anxiety." Test anxiety is worrying too much about doing well on a test. It can mean disaster for your child. Students with test anxiety can worry about success in school and about their future success. They can become very self-critical and lose confidence in their abilities. Instead of feeling challenged by the prospect of success, they become afraid of failure.

<https://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/succeed/part9.html>

Healthy Breakfast Burrito

Total: 38 min

Prep: 25 min

Cook: 13 min

Level: Easy

Yield: 4 servings, serving size 1 burrito



Ingredients:

- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1/2 small red onion, diced (1 cup)
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 cup drained, rinsed canned black beans, preferably low-sodium
- 1/4 teaspoon chili flakes
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 eggs and 4 egg whites
- 1/3 cup (about 1 1/2 ounce) shredded pepper jack cheese
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 4 (10 inch) whole wheat tortillas (burrito size)
- 1/4 cup reduced fat-free sour cream
- 1/4 cup salsa
- 1 large tomato, (4 ounces) seeded and diced
- 1 small avocado (4 ounces), cubed
- Hot sauce

Directions:

1. Heat the canola oil in a large nonstick skillet over a medium-high heat. Cook the onions and peppers until onions are softened and peppers are slightly charred, about 8 minutes. Add black beans and red pepper flakes and cook until warmed through, another 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and transfer to a dish.
2. Whisk together the eggs and egg whites then stir in the cheese. Spray the skillet with cooking spray, and reheat the skillet over a medium heat. Reduce heat to low and add eggs, scrambling until cooked through, about 3 minutes. Spread each tortilla with 1 tablespoon each sour cream and salsa, then layer with 1/4 of the black bean mixture, 1/4 of the scrambled eggs, some diced tomato and 1/4 of the avocado. Season, to taste, with hot sauce. Roll up burrito-style and serve.
3. Excellent source of: Protein, Fiber, Vitamin A, Vitamin C.
4. Good source of: Riboflavin, Vitamin B6, Folate, Vitamin K, Calcium, Iodine, Iron, Potassium and Selenium.

ENCOURAGING KIDS TO EXERCISE

To get your kids moving, limit the amount of time they spend watching TV, playing computer or video games or doing other sedentary activities. Replace these activities with other forms of physical activity which can be structured or play-based. Children need at least 30 minutes of exercise daily but will benefit from even more than this. Allow your child to choose activities that appeal to them and that are age appropriate. Keeping it fun will allow the child to stay interested and remember to exercise yourself to set a good example.



Should You Volunteer at Your Child's School?

As parents, most of our plates are not only full but overflowing; our schedules are so tight they're cutting off blood flow and our to-do lists are endless. The last thing any of us truly wants to do is commit to another project, group, or organization. But there's one area where we shouldn't be cutting corners or making excuses, and that's volunteering at our child's school. The ongoing social, academic and emotional success of our kids relies heavily on the amazing network of parents and guardians; plus, the school needs your voice and expertise.



Here are five reasons why you should get involved (and how to do it without getting overwhelmed).

It takes a village: As the saying goes, "It takes a village to raise a child," and the same is true for creating and maintaining a positive and nurturing school environment for an entire student body. Building a tight-knit community of volunteers who dedicate their time and resources to building a solid foundation of support creates a lasting impression on staff and students alike. Your child's school is the village and you, my friend, are a villager, so get to work.

A little goes a long way: Maybe you work full time. Maybe you haven't had a decent shower since your firstborn arrived in 2010. I'm busy too, and odds are so are the other parents at your child's school. The big mistake here is thinking volunteering has to be an "all or nothing" thing. It doesn't. When it comes to helping out, a little can really go a long way. Check your calendar and figure out how much time you can really devote to volunteer work, then make a commitment and stick to it.

Everyone has something to offer: Everyone is good at something which means everyone has something to offer. How can you apply your skills and passions to your child's school community? The trick is to find your niche and apply it to volunteer work accordingly. Whether it is helping a teacher set up her classroom or getting involved in site-based decision making; you have something to offer and something to gain from the experience.

Your child will benefit: Helping at the school will give your child a more meaningful school experience — and that should be motivation enough for anyone.

You'll feel good: Not only will your volunteer efforts pay off by enhancing your child's experience on campus, you'll feel pretty good about yourself too. Doing for others feels right, and it's contagious. I'm not going to try and sell you on volunteer work without tapping into the fact that it's sure to get those feel-good endorphins flowing.

So do your child's school – and yourself – a favor: become a volunteer in whatever capacity you are able to, and get ready to get your buzz on.

Call your school today and ask how you can be involved. You will be glad you did.

Excerpt from Orange County Register's parenting section. [5 Reasons You Should Volunteer at Your Child's School](#), by Jo Ashline, a freelance writer, former kindergarten teacher and mother of two.

Be a role model for learning. In the early years, parents are their children's first teachers — exploring nature, reading together, cooking together, and counting together. When a young child begins formal school, the parent's job is to show him how school can extend the learning you began together at home, and how exciting and meaningful this learning can be. As preschoolers grow into school age kids, parents become their children's learning coaches. Through guidance and reminders, parents help their kids organize their time and support their desires to learn new things in and out of school.

Strong Athletes, Smart Students: The Impact of Teens' Sports Participation on Academics

Teen Sport in America: Why Participation Matters + Academics

Sports participation is directly related to teens having a more positive attitude toward school work, improved academic performance and higher grades.

Previous research has shown that these academic factors are important predictors of future educational attainment and occupational success.

For measures of truancy, skipping class, and absence due to illness, researchers identified no statistically significant differences between athletes and non-athletes.

Sports participation is directly related to higher aspirations for earning a college degree and post-college education specialization.

Significantly higher percentages of athletes studied reported that they aspired to and "definitely will" graduate from a four-year college and aspired to and "definitely will" attend professional or graduate school after college.

Compared to non-athletes, a larger percentage of sport participants reported earning an average grade of "A" in school and rated themselves as "above average" on school ability and intelligence.

Teen Sport in America: Why Participation Matters + Academics, Sport Specific

In academic achievement and attainment, the likelihood of benefitting from sports participation increased with the number of sports in which youth participated.

Among all 20 sports studied, track and field stood out as having the highest percentages of youth who excelled academically. Track and field youth more often reported high academic achievement and positive academic self-concepts than other student-athletes. Further, track and field youth also held high aspirations and expectations of graduating from a four-year college and attaining additional education post-graduation than all other youth.

Lower percentages of track and field youth skipped class, skipped school, or experienced absences due to illness compared to youth in the other sports studied.

A greater percentage of youth participants from tennis, cross country, and soccer also excelled academically. These athletes were more likely to report having an average grade of an "A" in school and expectations to graduate from a four-year college.

Author: Lindsay Hock, The Women's Sports Foundation

Findings drawn from important research studies in *Teen Sport in America: Why Participation Matters, January 2018*. (Full report, <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/research/article-and-report/recent-research/teen-sport-in-america/>)



Fathers and Education

When fathers are involved in the lives of their children, especially their education, children learn more, perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behavior. Even when fathers do not share a home with their children, their active involvement can have a lasting and positive impact. There are countless ways to be involved in your child's education at all ages. This section of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse website highlights some of them.

According to a 2007 National Center for Education Statistics Report:

- 92% of students in grades K through 12 had parents who reported receiving any information from the school on the student's performance.
- 83% had parents who received any information about how to help with homework.
- 59% of students in grades K through 12 had parents who were "very satisfied" with their child's school; 55% had parents who were very satisfied with the school's parent-staff interactions.

Quick Tips for Dads

- ✓ Check your child's homework, make sure to see what was assigned, not just what was finished.
- ✓ Join a parent organization at your child's school, like the PTA, to show your child that you care about how he or she does in school.
- ✓ Be a chaperone at your child's next school function or field trip.
- ✓ Talk regularly with your child's coaches, teachers, and club leaders.
- ✓ Volunteer with your child's sports team. Bring water, or oranges to a game, or help keep score.
- ✓ Get everyone in the family a library card, and start visiting! Not sure where the nearest library is, try searching online, or ask your child's teachers.

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

<https://www.fatherhood.gov/content/fathers-and-education>



COMMUNICATING

with Children

Good parents spend a lot of time talking with their children. They know that both the quantity and quality of their conversations count! Set an example by the courteous, caring, attentive way you communicate with your children and others. Keep an open mind so your children feel free to readily express themselves to you.



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 **The Parent and Family Engagement Connection**
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Together We Can Make a Difference

The Parent and Family Engagement Connection is posted on our website four times a year for parents and educators of Texas. This newsletter is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, German and Korean.

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