

Teacher Wish List

By Jeanne Kraus

STRONG HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS ARE VITAL for our kids' educational needs. What steps can parents take to be supportive members of the team? I interviewed a number of teachers at my own Margate Elementary School to get their perspective on this question. They were all too happy to help me with my research.

The "teacher wish list" below comprises the top ten priorities those teachers consider necessary for optimum student learning. The items are not in any particular order, because the teachers considered all of them very important. While it may not be possible to implement each item all the time, try to be as consistent as possible.

1. Check your child's homework and sign the planner every day.

Make homework time an every-night routine with a high priority. In most schools the planner is the communication link between parent and school. Your signature tells the teacher that you have checked to see the homework was done. It also tells the teacher that you are aware of what is being studied in the classroom. By setting up a regular study time, you let your child know that you value his or her learning.

2. Attend Open House and parent conferences.

Teachers love full classrooms at Open House. The information shared is vital for parents to know. Homework, behavior programs, organizational skills, and teacher preferences are all discussed at Open House. Parent conferences are also important. Face-to-face conferences are the best but phone conferences can be substituted.

3. Use teacher-recommended method to communicate.

Each teacher may prefer a different way of communication. Check with the teacher to find out his or her preferred method of communication—phone, email, note in planner, separate note. Be cautious with written communication. Both teachers and parents know that it is always a good thing to re-read a written message or have someone else read it for you before you send it. Hidden agendas often appear in written communication.

4. Make sure your child comes to school on time and stays the entire day.

Getting to school on time each day shows your child that you value his or

her education. It shows the teacher that you value his or her instructional efforts. Make doctor appointments for after-

school times. Take vacation during scheduled vacation times.

5. Make sure your child has a nutritious breakfast and lunch.

Check their lunchboxes if they pack their own lunch. Assisting daily in the cafeteria has made me all too aware that many children pack their own tasty lunches of chips, candy and cookies... with sugary juice to wash it all down. Talk to your children about not trad-



ing away their food. I have rescued many lunches lovingly packed by Mom before they are traded away for a bag of chips.

6. Remember to be positive and proactive with your child.

As parents, we want our children to exhibit good behavior. Sometimes we don't realize how much negativity they hear in one day. Listen to your tone and be aware of your body language. Are you finding ways to compliment your child? Being proactive means that you do not wait for behavior to become a problem. Set your child up for success.

7. Listen to your child and teach him or her listening skills.

Model good listening skills for your child. If you are busy when your children are talking to you, they learn that it is okay to not be good listeners. If it is a bad time, let your child know that you can talk in a few minutes. Make an appointment for your undivided attention.

Then give your child every bit of your

attention. Get on his level, eye to eye. We teach the kids that good listeners make eye contact, head slightly forward, maybe nodding a little in response to the speaker, hands and feet still. Model how you want your child to listen to the teacher.

8. Spend quality time with your child.

Turn off the TV and the video games. Have conversations with the family. Try to spend one-on-one time with each child when possible.

9. Foster a love of reading.

Be sure your child has a library card and uses it. Read with your child. Talk about books together.

10. Let the teacher know what problems you are having at home with homework or other school or home-related issues.

Don't let it get to be a big problem before you seek help.

Sometimes it is not easy to maintain the working school-home relationship. Daily life

stress can be a factor for all people involved. Open and honest communication, in good times and bad, facilitates understanding between parents and teachers. And the best thing? Your child reaps the benefits from a positive and supportive school and home connection. 🗣️



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