

Information for parents

Fostering independence and success in primary aged children

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Parents are the most important people in a child's life and can do much to foster independence and success. Parents can and should work with their child's teachers to form a powerful relationship that can assist a child develop to his or her potential and become an independent learner.

- Parents need to initiate and maintain communication with their child's teacher from kindergarten to school leaving. They can exchange information about their child's personality, learning styles, the family situation, school activities and homework tasks, problems and extracurricular activities such as sport, debating and music.
- At least one parent should attend all scheduled school meetings and conferences. If you cannot attend, ring or contact the school to give your apologies and follow up afterwards to ascertain any relevant outcomes.
- If your child's teacher suggests you do an activity at home, such as reading every night to and with your child, try to do so. Supporting your child's teacher at home can support your child's progress and growth towards independence.
- One of the most important tasks to accomplish when helping a child who experiences difficulties in spelling, comprehension, reading or mathematics is to work with him or her to develop and enhance his or her skill strengths and reduce or overcome weaknesses in skills which are important. In particular, as the strong skills are identified, they can be used to assist your child attempt those tasks he or she finds challenging and difficult to accomplish.
- It is important that parents respond to all efforts by their child to communicate. Learn to be a good listener. Patience is indeed a virtue. Give your child feedback that you have understood what he or she has said, both the content and the feeling behind the content. Listening is more than a characteristic nod of the head or a smile. Your child will learn best when he or she is encouraged to try and when you reinforce and give approval for his or her attempts. Always accept all attempts made by your child to communicate.
- Talk to your child.
- Ask questions to find out what your child is doing, not just what he or she has learnt.
- Follow your child's lead. Your language should be functional. You need to talk about what your child is interested in and what he or she has been doing.
- Take turns with your child when you are talking together. Allow your child to begin a conversation and reply at an appropriate time.
- Talk at a moderate rate. Allow enough time for your child to process what you are saying to him or to her.
- Participate in conversations with all children you meet, not just your own child.
- Learn to be an active listener and to let your child know by your actions that you are listening to what is being said. If possible, always get down to your child's eye level and make eye contact with him or her. Listen to the tone of his or her voice and notice any body movements he or she may make. These are all clues you can use to help you understand what your child is saying.
- Sometimes it can be difficult to be an active listener, especially around that five o'clock mark when you are preparing dinner and trying to cope with homework and bath time, etc. On these occasions let your child know that you are interested in what he or she is saying, but that you are very busy for the next half hour or so. You may show your child on a clock face or tell him or her the time when you will be free and then stick to this. Ensure your child knows you will have time for a talk at story time or before he or she goes to bed.



- If you are having difficulty understanding your child, keep smiling, acknowledge your child's attempts at talking and ask him or her to show you what he or she is trying to tell you. Always give your child time to respond. Some children take time to hear a comment or a remark, process what has been said and then respond. The important thing is to keep talking fun and enjoyable.
- Encourage your child to talk about what he or she has done at childcare, preschool or school during the day. What things did he or she make? Did he or she play with the plasticine or did he or she paint? Did your child listen to a story? What was the story about? Who were the characters in the story? "Could he or she please sing you the new song learned today?" Who did he or she sit with at lunchtime?
- Plan and discuss what you may do after school on a particular day, at the weekend or during the next school holidays. What would your child like to do? Has he or she any suggestions about an outing? Who would he or she like to go with you on this excursion?
- Give your child a series of instructions to follow. Initially, give only one or two, but gradually you can increase the series of instructions to three. Teach your child to listen carefully, to verbalise the tasks, and to complete the instructions, for example, "Please put away your blocks, wash your hands and come to lunch". Remember to encourage your child while the job is being done and to reinforce him or her when the task has been completed. "Thank you, I liked the way you listened and then put away your toys and came to lunch."

For more Information

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