

The Parental Involvement Connection



Home & School



September, 2013

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT NEWSLETTER

Vol. 10, Issue 1



The Big Rocks

By Skip Forsyth

As the school year commences the kids are ready – their backpacks are filled with school supplies, they have some new footwear and apparel, they are eager to reconnect with friends and participate in extracurricular activities, they are ready to resume the school routine. But, are you, the parents, ready?

We urge the kids to rest regularly and eat sensibly. Are you ready to set the example and have family meals at home? We assist our kids to identify their priorities at home and school and not become over-committed. Are you ready to focus on family and work commitments and say "No" to those things that steal time from your family? We caution our kids about excessive use of electronic media. Are you ready to turn off the TV and video games for a family night?

A story is told about a professor who addressed his eager learners on the first day of the new semester. He pulled out a glass vase and placed five big rocks in it, and asked if the vase was full? Some said "Yes" and others "No." He then added colorful stones filling the vase to the rim and again asked if the vase is full, receiving the same answers of "Yes" and "No." He next added sand which worked its way in between the stones and once again asked if the vase was full. Most were confident the vase was full. But the professor pulled out a thermos and poured coffee into the vase.

The professor explained. The vase is a person's life, and it can be filled in many different ways. But the successful life always starts with the "big rocks" which represent the most important relationships and commitments. It's your family, your best friends at school and work, your kindred spirits at places of worship and in the community. It includes giving your best efforts at home and school and work. The big rocks also include your physical and emotional and spiritual health; take care of yourself so you can take care of others. The colorful stones represent the recreational activities in our lives: athletics, music, social media, hobbies, vacations and travel, community service, and the like. These are valuable and enjoyable but usually are not critical to a person's well-being. The sand represents the minutia in our lives: watching TV, window shopping at the mall, staying up late to play video games, just cruising around, etc. Many of these things are done to fill a sense of boredom. The students asked, "What about the coffee?" The wise professor explained there is always time for a cup of coffee or a cool beverage with those who are nearest and dearest.

Families, as you look at your vase for 2013-2014, what are your "big rocks?" Who are your "big rocks?" Make a list of the "big rocks" in your life. Note some ideas that you will do differently this year to preserve and protect and prosper each of those big rocks. Then place that list in your wallet or at your bedside and read it daily. Give thanks for those big rocks every day. And, take care of yourself so you can take care of your "big rocks."

A graphic with the text "back to school" in a colorful, hand-drawn font, with a row of colorful crayons below it.

when children come home

At the end of the day,

The question they're asked as they scurry to play

is, "TELL me what you did today?"

And the answer they give makes you sigh with dismay.

"Nothing, I did nothing today!"

Perhaps nothing means that I played with blocks,

Or counted to ten, or sorted some rocks.

Maybe I painted a picture of red and blue

Or heard a story of a mouse that flew.

Maybe I watched the gerbils eat today,

Or went outside on the swings to play.

Maybe today was the very first time

That my scissors followed a very straight line

Maybe I lead a song from beginning to end,

Or played with a special brand new friend

when you're in pre-school

And your heart has wings,

"Nothing" can mean so many things!!

<http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/preschool>

1. Give positive feedback and show appreciation for teachers and principal.
2. Approach interactions with school administration and staff with a positive attitude and an open mind.
3. Listen to others' viewpoints when having a discussion.
4. Share your child's strengths, talents, and interests with teachers.
5. Share expectations and set goals for your child with his or her teacher.
6. Make appointments as needed to discuss your child's progress or concerns.
7. Attend parent-teacher conferences with specific questions you want to ask.
8. Decide with your child's teacher the best way to stay in touch (phone, e-mail, notes, etc.).
9. Understand and reinforce school rules and expectations at home.
10. Participate in informal opportunities to talk with and get to know school administrators, teachers, and other staff.
11. Address concerns or questions honestly, openly, and early on.
12. Attend PTA or parent meetings regularly.
13. Read classroom and/or school newsletters.
14. Visit your school's web page.

15. Know the names of your child's teacher(s), school principal, and school nurse.
16. Read and know your school's handbook.
17. Request that information be available in all languages spoken by school families.
18. Share your family's practices related to culture, values, and parenting with your child's school.
19. Communicate your perceptions of how parents are treated and, when necessary, work with school staff to improve perceptions and school climate.
20. Notify teachers of any significant changes that have taken place in a child's life (such as death of a pet, family move, loss of income, family member's illness, or divorce).
21. Meet your child's friends and get to know their parents.
22. Take advantage of family programs and resources offered at the school.
23. Work with others to establish a parent resource center at the school.
24. Help create a school book lending library and visit it regularly.
25. Assist in developing parent support programs/groups.

25 Ways to Help Your Child and School Succeed

<http://www.pta.org/>
Everychild.onevoice

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH THEIR HOMEWORK

There are many things you can do to help your kids start the school year on the right track, like replacing an old backpack or getting them the school supplies they need. But there's something more meaningful you can do that may not cost money, help them with their homework.

Students who do their homework consistently tend to have better grades. It's not always easy to get them to do their homework, especially after a busy day, but these tips can help:

- **Talk to your children about their homework.** It's important that your kids understand why it's important to do their homework and the positive impact it has on grades. Homework helps them practice what they've learned as well as prepare them for upcoming classes. Plus, by doing their homework they develop the discipline and skills they need to be successful throughout their school years.
- **Talk to the teachers.** Different teachers might expect different things from parents, so be sure to talk to them to figure out your role. For example, some teachers prefer parents review their kids' homework; others prefer parents make sure kids do their homework. Teachers can also tell you how much time your child should spend doing homework and what to do if the homework is too easy or too difficult.
- **Select a fixed time to do homework.** The best time to do homework is the one that works best for your child and you. It can be before or after playing, watching television or dinnertime. What's important is that homework time is consistent. Avoid leaving it for the end of the day, when your child is tired and sleepy.
- **Pick a quiet area and eliminate distractions.** To help your children focus on homework, pick a place in the house where there's plenty of light and no distractions. It doesn't have to be fancy. It can be the kitchen table or a desk. Make sure the TV is off and put away electronic devices, unless they're essential to doing homework.
- **Get them the resources they need.** You don't have to be an expert in all subjects to help your kids with homework. However, you need to make sure they have the tools they need to succeed. If you need expert help, you can always take them to the library or help them with their search online. You can also visit kids.gov to find information on homework topics. The Department of Education also has several resources to help your child with homework in different areas, including math, reading and writing.

<http://blog.usa.gov/>

High School Awkwardness

Teenagers who have difficulty making and maintaining healthy friendships with peers at age 13 continue to struggle with relationships long after high school, according to a new University of Virginia longitudinal study.

Early secondary school is well-known as the time social pecking orders are established, bullying and gossip proliferates, and kids start seriously thinking about jumping off that bridge if all their friends do. The study suggests that a student's ability to balance peer pressure with social desirability in early adolescence can predict how well they will handle social relationships in adulthood.

A team of researchers followed 150 students from a variety of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds from age 13 through age 23, collecting regular reports from the students and their parents, as well as directly observing their interactions with peers.

The researchers found that students who had trouble developing close friendships at age 13 were less able to manage disagreements in romantic relationships a decade later. Moreover, those who were more likely to join in friends' shoplifting or vandalism as young teenagers had a higher risk of drug and alcohol abuse in adulthood.

By contrast, the 13-year-olds who had a good sense of humor and were reported to have high self-control and empathy had both better romantic relationships as young adults and were rated as more successful by their parents at age 23.

Teens face a high-wire act with their peers. They need to establish strong, positive connections with them while at the same time establishing independence in resisting deviant peer influences. Those who don't manage this have significant problems as much as a decade later.

Teaching teens how to stand up for themselves in ways that preserve and deepen relationships—to become their own persons while still connecting to others—is a core task of social development that parents, teachers, and others can all work to promote.



<http://blogs.edweek.org> Sarah D. Sparks

School Climate Matters

Sustained positive school climate is associated with positive child and youth development, effective risk-prevention and health-promotion efforts, student learning and academic achievement, increased student graduation rates, and teacher retention.

- School climate affects middle school students' self-esteem and lessens the negative effects of self-criticism.
- A positive and sound socio-emotional climate at school is related to the frequency of students' substance-abuse and psychiatric problems.
- A positive school climate is linked to lower levels of drug use as well as fewer self-reports of psychiatric problems among high school students. In early adolescence, a positive school climate is predictive of better psychological well-being.
- A positive school climate is correlated with decreased student absenteeism in middle school and high school. A positive school climate is critical to effective risk prevention.

Improving school climate should help any school, but it particularly should be part of turning around a low-performing school. For low income communities with a lot of non-school problems, such as poverty, providing a safe, developmentally supportive school will help mitigate the risk factors."

<http://blogs.edweek.org>



Hidden' Bullying

Gossip and Rumor-Mongering.

Relational aggression, as opposed to direct physical violence is a mistaken notion that bullies are a hulking misanthropes lurking at the back of the classroom. While some are, others are extremely socially skilled and very good at hiding their intentions and actions from teachers.

...Those kids are rarely problems in class.

Gossip and social ostracization may come far down on the list of concerns for educators trying to prevent bullying, yet emerging research suggests relational bullying, though often the most frequently overlooked, may hold the key to changing an aggressive culture in schools.

Of the three major types of bullying—physical, verbal and relational—relational aggression, has been the latest and least studied, both because it involves less visible, immediately dangerous behavior than fighting or verbal abuse, and in part because it involved more nuanced relationships among the bullies, victims, and bystanders.

<http://blogs.edweek.org>

Stress and Exercise in our Schools

Exercise, Students and Stress

Students in a stressful situation—be it a week of standardized testing or a crime-filled neighborhood—might benefit from some extra running at recess or in P.E. class.

Higher levels of physical activity can buffer children from the chemical effects of daily stress.

Researchers tracked the physical activity level of 8-year-olds using wrist accelerometers. They then assigned the students to mathematics and public storytelling tasks which had been shown to cause stress. The students in the top third most physically active showed no increase in the stress hormone cortisol during these tasks, but the most sedentary third of students had surges of cortisol in response to the activities.

Clearly, there is a link between mental and physical well-being. These results suggest exercise promotes mental health by regulating the stress hormone response to stressors.

Why is this study relevant to education? Because we're learning more and more about the damaging effects of sustained high stress on students' physical and mental health, social relationships, and academic engagement and success. Yet high-poverty and low-achieving schools—those that typically have disproportionate numbers of children exposed to high stress—also frequently come under pressure to cut back on recess and physical education in favor of more study time.

Physical activity can protect students from damage caused by stress. Perhaps a little more time to run and play can be squeezed into the school day.

Condensed from <http://blogs.edweek.org> by Sarah D. Sparks



Mark Your Calendar!

2013 GALVESTON
Statewide Parental Involvement Conference
Hidden Treasures
December 5-7, 2013
Hosted By
Title I Statewide SS/FACE Initiative
www.esc16.net

Title I Statewide School Support and Family & Community Engagement Initiative

Learning for a "Change" Summit VIII
Crowne Plaza Hotel - Austin Central
February 10 - 11, 2014
8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.



Parental Involvement
February 10, 2014



School Support
February 11, 2014

Louder Than Words
Eric Davis

Transforming School Culture
Dr. Anthony Muhammad

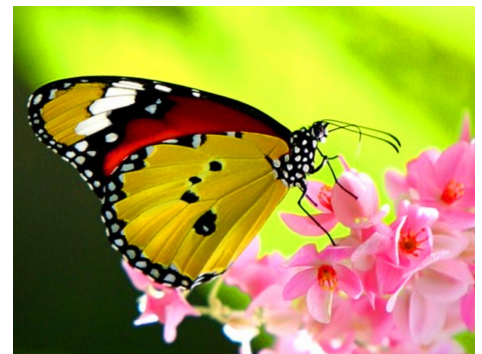
Summit Registration
Day 1 only - \$70
Session #387220
Day 2 only - \$70
Session #387221
Day 1 & 2 - \$125
Session #387222

For online registration and additional information, visit our website at www.esc16.net

Crowne Plaza Hotel Austin Central
6121 North IH 35 at Highway 290
Austin, Texas 78752
(877) 270-1393

A child

is like a butterfly in the wind.
Some can fly higher than others,
but each one flies the best it can.
Why compare one against the other? Each one is different. Each one is special. Each one is beautiful.



BETTER BREAKFAST OPTIONS

Skipping breakfast is a bad idea, no matter your age. Even on a hectic school morning, throwing together a quick and nutritious meal can help your children maintain a healthy weight and do better in school. On those mornings when the drive-through is your only option, we've given you some suggestions for lower-calorie, lower-fat choices at some popular chains. But remember: it's always easier to avoid excessive calories, fat, and sodium by eating at home.

Breakfast	Nutritional Info	Prep Time
Scrambled eggs & wheat toast	2 slices toast and 2 eggs: 300 calories, 12g fat, 18g protein	5 minutes
Cheerios (or other low-sugar cereal) with milk & fruit	1 c. cereal, 2% milk and banana: 425 calories, 8g fat, 13g protein	2 minutes
Oatmeal with fruit	1 c. oatmeal, 1/2 c. fruit: 250 calories, 4g fat, 6g protein	5 minutes (quick oats)
Frozen whole-grain waffles with syrup, turkey sausage	2 Eggo Nutri-grain waffles and 2 oz. turkey sausage: 290 calories, 8g fat, 12g protein	5 minutes
Yogurt & fruit smoothie	Recipes vary, but you can throw together a healthy, protein-packed version using Greek yogurt, your favorite fruits, etc.	3 minutes

On-the-go Options	Nutritional Info
McDonald's Egg McMuffin	300 calories, 12g fat, 18g protein
McDonald's Blueberry Banana Nut Oatmeal	290 calories, 8g fat, 6g protein
Subway Egg & Cheese Mornin' Melt	360 calories, 12g fat, 19g protein
Chick-fil-A Chick-n-Minis (4 ct.)	370 calories, 14g fat, 21g protein
Chick-fil-A Yogurt Parfait with Granola	290 calories, 6g fat, 7g protein

<http://www.imom.com/mom-life/wellness/5-better-breakfast-options/>

And now some weird (but yummy) ones:

- banana dog (peanut butter, a banana, and raisins in a long whole-grain bun)
- breakfast taco (shredded cheese on a tortilla, folded in half and microwaved; top with salsa)
- country cottage cheese (apple butter mixed with cottage cheese)
- fruit and cream cheese sandwich (use strawberries or other fresh fruit)
- sandwich — grilled cheese, peanut butter and jelly, or another favorite
- leftovers (they're not just for dinner anymore!)

<http://kidshealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/breakfast.html>



Discover a Personal Oasis

Take Care of Yourself,
So You Can Take Care of Your Child

Parents need time for themselves too.

Accept that you will make mistakes.
There is no such thing as perfection!
Mistakes are part of learning.

Try something new, like salsa dancing, yoga, fishing, or knitting.
Remember that it's never too late to try new things.

Learn to love yourself the way you are! Think of the many things that are great about you.

Set goals. Make a plan for what you want to accomplish. Stick with your plan and keep track of your progress.

Make a contribution. Help someone in trouble, participate in a good cause, or volunteer your time in some other way.

Exercise! You'll relieve stress, be healthier, and be happier. Exercise with your kids. They'll release stress and have fun too!

Have fun. Spend time with the people you care about and who care about you. Relax!

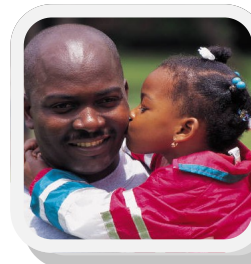
www.itsuptoyou.org



Reach for the Stars

5 Ways to Be a GREAT Dad

1. **Spend time with your kids.** Having quality time with your kids is priceless.
2. **Earn the right to be heard.** Take time to listen to your child's ideas and problems, even when they are not in trouble, and they will be more likely to listen to your advice when they really need it.
3. **Be a role model and a teacher.** Teach your kids about right and wrong, doing their best, and making good choices by being a good role model.
4. **Eat together as a family.** It gives your kids a chance to talk about what's going on in their lives. It also gives you a chance to listen and give them advice.
5. **Show affection.** Be comfortable giving and receiving affection from your kids. It will help them feel wanted, accepted, and loved. Give your child a hug to show them you love them.



www.itsuptoyou.org

TODDLERS CREED: *If it's mine it's mine. If it's yours it's mine. If I like it it's mine. If I can take it from you it's mine. If I am playing with something ALL of the pieces are mine. If I think it is mine it is. If I saw it first it's mine. If I had it then put it down it is still mine. If you had it then you put it down it is now mine. If it looks like the one I have at home it is mine. If it is broken it is yours.*

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The Parental Involvement Connection

is posted on our web site four times a year for parents and educators of Texas.

EDITOR

Terri Stafford, Coordinator

Title I Statewide School Support Initiative and
Family and Community Engagement



<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>

ADMINISTRATION

John Bass, Executive Director
Region 16 Education Service Center

Anita Villarreal
Division of Federal & State Education Policy
Texas Education Agency

Region 16 ESC

5800 Bell Street

Amarillo, TX 79109-6230

Phone: (806) 677-5000

Fax: (806) 677-5189

www.esc16.net