Why Family Engagement Matters for Student and School Success

PTA works with families, schools and other organizations to help all children be successful throughout their school years and prepare them for college and a career. As an engaged family member—parent, grandparent or other caregiver—you make essential contributions to your children’s education to make their potential a reality.

The research is clear. Findings from the Global Family Research Project report show that when families and teachers join together to support children’s learning and development, children are more likely to succeed in school, graduate and stay on their path to college or a career.

How You Engage in Your Child’s Education Matters

Research Shows That Children Learn Anywhere, Anytime.
Children achieve more in school when their families engage in activities such as reading, asking thoughtful questions, and providing the structure children need to complete assignments. Discussing with your child your expectations for his or her future and monitoring their progress has also been linked with higher achievement. You can also promote your child’s learning out of school through activities such as library visits and participation in after school and summer programs.

Family Engagement is Crucial All Along Children’s Learning Pathways From Birth Through High School and Beyond.
Your involvement in your child’s education and school matters not only when he or she is in a young child but all through adolescence. Your engagement, however, changes as your child grows up. You will likely take an active role in supporting your child’s learning during the early grades. But as your child gets older, ask him or her to teach you what they are learning, encourage them to take ownership of their progress, and help them navigate pathways for college and career.

Children and Families Aren’t the Only Ones Who Benefit When Families Are Engaged in the Educational Process.
Your participation also contributes to the overall success of your school. And research shows that when families advocate for school improvements, such as backing educators to develop strong family engagement practices, all children receive a better education. When families are engaged, teachers also feel more supported and the atmosphere at the school is more positive and welcoming.

5 Ways Families, Teachers, Schools and Communities Can Work Together to Support Children’s Learning and School Success

Research suggests that there are five especially powerful areas for engagement.

1. Ensure Children Attend School Regularly
Children can’t make academic progress if they aren’t in school—especially if they miss several days over the course of the school year. Regular attendance keeps children from falling behind, which could then lead to behavior problems, frustration, and, ultimately, dropping out. Communicating with children even in the preschool years about the importance of attendance can help build strong habits as they get older.

Consider: How do you and your school support regular attendance?

2. Share Information About Student Progress
use multiple ways to communicate how children are doing—conferences, report cards, standardized tests, and more. Some schools are trying to improve how they communicate with families so that families don’t get mixed messages and more easily know whether their child is on grade-level. Talk to teachers and school leaders about whether there are ways to clearly communicate how students are doing.

Consider: What questions do you have about how your child is doing, what different tests and measures mean, which results are most important, and what you can do to support your child’s progress?
Reflect on Where You Are and Potential Solutions

Here's an exercise to reflect about what you are doing now and what you could do better to promote student success in partnership with your PTA and school community. Think about how you, your PTA, teachers and school administrators are working together and identify new opportunities and next steps.

1. Making Sure Children Attend School Regularly

2. Sharing Information About Student Progress

3. Reinforcing Shared Learning

4. Using Digital Media in Positive and Safe Ways

5. Transitioning to New Schools and Classrooms

We'd love to hear from you! Share your experience and ideas at PTA.org/FamilyEngagement/ShareYourStory

Resources:
Global Family Research Project • National PTA