

USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: The School-Home Team

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Children have been students again for several weeks, and it is about this time of the year when parents begin to contemplate how the kids are doing. Am I getting all of the information? Is there bad news about homework assignments? Is my child turning in all of his work? Is my child *making it* in school this fall? Should I call the teacher?

It is always good to call the teacher, email the teacher or to drop in to see the teacher before or after school hours. Don't sit at home or work and just worry. Having a worried parent gives your child the message that you don't quite trust him. Taking action can clear the air and keep you all informed and in touch with the reality of what is working well, and what needs some attention.

Read the school newsletter, the website, and the school handbook.

If your school holds a Parent Night, go and listen well. It is usually the one opportunity that teachers have to announce their goals for students, their calendar for homework and special projects and their favorite times for communication. *Your first goal is to hear* the important information, not to compete for the teacher's time. You will have additional opportunities later to get to know the teacher and to ask personal questions regarding your child. Try to take time to meet the teacher. Introducing yourself as "Jake's dad" can help to break the ice. Add something personal like, "I work for a computer company" or "Your classroom has a really friendly and exciting feel to it." Write a note before the open house event and leave it for the teacher to read later if you want to have a personal conversation as a follow-up to the event.

Take notes. The teacher will undoubtedly tell you important things. *Policies* may be discussed. "I allow 2 days for each day of absence when your child gets sick." "I allow extra credit to students, but only 10 points per semester by doing a project on the approved list."

Resources may be mentioned. "I suggest you look on the website we use to post your child's homework assignments. I post assignments every Tuesday, and their grades every Friday. If you see a zero, it means the homework has not been turned in, or has not been given credit."

Remember, the goal of communication is to gain insight.

-Encourage your child to be captain of his own education team by sharing in a positive way when you have concerns. "I know you are a responsible student, and your teacher and I want to help you succeed this year. What can I do to help?" Discuss "school stuff" together weekly.

-Help the teacher see the responsible and positive sides of your child's personality by not pointing out negatives. "Abby loves school, she was very excited about the book you read last week."

-Get with it! Don't let the new computerized assignment or grade-posting system intimidate you. Consider it an asset and help your student use it as a tool, not a problem. Model patience and get assistance with using it from another parent or in the school library. It is a great new tool!

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