

# How Parents Can Partner with Their Child's Teacher

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A child's first teacher is his or her parents. As an educator, I view parents as my partners in helping their children become well-rounded people who will grow up and become productive citizens locally and/or globally. For this partnership to work, it is important for children to also learn from their parents and have parental support inside and outside the classroom.

Good educators make efforts to ensure they are responding to the needs of all students by teaching culturally responsive lessons. Even the best educator cannot cover nor provide all of the experiences your child may need to become the best version of him or herself. Below, I have outlined three possible ways parents can partner with their child's teacher.

### **Talk to your child's teacher about the curriculum**

It is important for parents to know what topics, themes, and subject areas will be taught during the school year. For example, I have worked in a school where the administration decided to cut science and social studies to improve reading and math. If all subject areas are important to you and you don't have conversations with the school, you won't be able to advocate for your child.

Schools typically have a scope and sequence where they have mapped out the curriculum. If there is an area that is missing, inquire about it and brainstorm with your child's teacher ways he or she could incorporate it.

### **Volunteer and observe in the classroom**

My twin boys will be in second grade next year and I have observed them every year since preschool. As a parent, observing your child in the classroom is your right, but it is important to know your school's policy. When I have observed my children, I show up unannounced, but I have to check-in at the front office. In a school where I previously worked, parents could not show up unannounced; they had to notify the teacher at least a day in advance.

Observation allows you to get a feel of the culture and climate in the classroom and how your child is or is not adjusting. If your child seems to be having difficulty, then you will have a basis for discussion because you have viewed this also.

Teachers love volunteers and parents can be a good resource. Sometimes children need to hear information from a different voice. Also, you may have experiences that are helpful to the class. For example, my father fought in the Vietnam War. When I was studying it in middle school, my father provided information about his experiences during this war to my social studies class.

### **Visit local, national, or global locations**

Many times having a hands-on experience or a field trip is not an option due to curriculum constraints or the school's budget. There is no reason your child cannot continue to learn about a topic he or she learned in class or a topic of interest that was not covered in class.

Living within my means is important to me especially knowing that one day in the future I will have two children entering college at the same time. To stay informed about local activities, I sign-up for electronic mailing lists such as Visit Indiana. Many cities offer educational activities free of charge throughout the year. My boys have attended an international festival, participated in STEM activities, and visited many museums. Some museums, like the Smithsonian museums, are free and some museums have free or discounted days.

Two years ago, during spring break, we went to Washington D.C. That year in school, my boys had learned about Martin Luther King, Jr. They also learned there was a monument in honor of him in D.C. During our trip, we were able to take them to the monument and talk to them about his many achievements from our point of view. We also informed their teachers

about the trip which gave my sons the opportunity to share their experiences with their classmates.

### **Final thoughts**

Yes, if you send your child to school, the school should have a good plan in place to help your child learn, but the burden should not be carried by the school alone. If your child observes you being engaged in his or her education and partnering with his or her teacher, it will help your child take school more seriously and know how important obtaining a good education is.