### Parent and Community Engagement Framework

Education Queensland has developed the Parent and Community Engagement Framework to help schools, parents, and the community work together to maximise student learning.

#### Why is parent and community engagement important?

Research tells us parent and community engagement that is effectively focused on student learning can deliver powerful outcomes (OECD, 2011). When students know learning is valued by their family, learning is a high priority for students. 

#### Why should you be engaged in your child’s learning?

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<th>Your child benefits</th>
<th>Your benefits</th>
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<td>Students get better grades and test scores</td>
<td>You can learn how to help your child with homework</td>
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<td>Students have greater self-esteem and greater motivation</td>
<td>You can provide feedback to your child’s teachers</td>
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<td>Attendance at school is better</td>
<td>You can support your child’s learning outside of school</td>
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<td>The number of suspensions is less</td>
<td>You can access resources about parenting strategies</td>
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<td>Students stay in school longer and have higher graduation rates</td>
<td>You will find it easier to create a healthy home environment</td>
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<td>The number of cases of alcoholism and drug addiction are reduced</td>
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#### 5 Key Elements to the Framework

**Communication - Strategies for Parents and the Community**
- Take an active role in communicating with teachers and the school.
- Make your child’s learning the main focus of your communication with the school.
- Provide information about your child’s needs and discuss support strategies with your child’s teachers.
- Find out about what your child will be learning (subjects, tasks, content) and how they will be learning (classroom activities, processes, technology).
- Remember that today’s classrooms may be different from your own school experience. Talk to your child’s teachers about aspects of the class program that seem different and the reasons for these approaches.
- The language of learning to talk to your child about their day to day experiences. Discuss with teachers the terms and phrases they would make you both have a common understanding.
- Make use of the range of communication tools and channels provided by the school, including newsletters, websites, emails, assemblies, parent/teacher interviews, P&C meetings, social media and text messages.
- Find out how the school communicates about opportunities for parents and the community to engage in school activities.
- Discuss your communication needs with your child’s teachers or the Principal.

**Learning Partnerships - Strategies for Parents and the Community**
- Make the school aware of special skills and knowledge you have (e.g., literacy coaching, cooking, awareness that may contribute to learning, or in the case of community organisations, the services you provide such as any early years intervention, health and teen support.
- Ask your child’s teachers for practical literacy and numeracy activities that can support what they are learning in class.
- Discuss with your child’s teacher, or the school, ways you can contribute to your child’s learning progress. Discuss and organize school calendars that help you develop knowledge or skills in special areas of interest or need such as student resilience, literacy and numeracy.
- Remember that you don’t have to be an expert in curriculum subjects to help your children. You can support them in other ways, for example:
  - Show an interest in your child’s progress, interests and difficulties.
  - Help your child with effective study habits (e.g. setting dedicated time and space for homework and organizing tasks)
  - Provide access to reading materials (e.g. from your local library)
  - Help your children seek assistance from their teacher.
  - Encourage your children to share their experiences.
  - Celebrate your child’s achievements and efforts and encourage them to meet appropriately high expectations.
  - Discuss the school’s curriculum with your child and your child’s teachers.
  - Put a priority for students.

**Decision Making - Strategies for Parents and the Community**
- Participate actively in school consultation and decision making activities. Talk to school leaders about consultation activities so they understand what forms of consultation you prefer.
- Seek information about school consultation and decision making activities so you can choose activities that are most suitable for you.
- Seek feedback from the school about the outcomes of consultation and how your input was used.
- Make sure your child’s input is constructive and considerate of the views of others. Remember that a school community is a diverse place and there will be a range of views expressed on any issue.

**Participation - Strategies for Parents and the Community**
- Take an active interest in the school’s program of events and activities. Talk to your child and/or their teachers to decide which activities to participate in especially those that support their learning needs and interests.
- Share your own interests, knowledge and skills with the school and discuss with your child’s teachers how these could be drawn on to support learning in the classroom or across the school.
- Volunteer to help out with school learning experiences, school events and extracurricular activities.
- Participate respectfully and constructively in discussions with other parents, school officials, and other community members. Remember that a school community is a diverse place and there will be a range of views expressed on any issue.
COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Good communication involves meeting with the teacher, being a positive and courteous partner in your child's learning, and keeping the lines of communication open in various ways throughout the year.

Meet the teacher. Go to your child's school open evening event. Even though time may be short, a few simple steps can show your interest and support:

1. Introduce yourself and your child.
2. Collect any information provided.

Go to parent-teacher conferences. Often schools schedule these sometime during the year. Make sure that you schedule a conference if:

- Your child has special needs and your teacher needs to know this early in the year.
- Your child's grades drop suddenly.
- You suspect that your child is having difficulty understanding her or his homework.
- Your child is upset about something that happened in school, either with peers, or with the teacher.
- Your child does not seem to have any homework.
- Something happens at home that may affect the student's learning (e.g., newborn, parental illness, divorce, or upcoming move).

Find the right time to talk to the teacher. If you are at school, you may run in to teachers and be tempted to ask how your child is doing.

- At school, talk to the teacher if this is a good time to talk or when most convenient for her or him. Just before or after school may be the best time.
- If you run into the teacher around town, simply hug or pat. This is not the time for a parent-teacher conference.

Write short notes and follow up. If you want a quick response to a question:

- Send a brief written note or an email message to the teacher with your question clearly stated.
- Include your phone number or email address.
- If you don't hear back in a few days, follow up with a phone message to the teacher.

Follow email etiquette. Email is a convenient and helpful way to communicate with your child's teacher, but should follow the same guidelines for any professional communication.

- Be sure to address that teacher with the correct name and have many other responsibilities during their day and may not be able to respond immediately.
- Identify your child and your name.
- Instruct a phone number where you can be reached if needed.
- Be diplomatic. You can put back an email message and email can be easily forwarded. Be calm, clear your words carefully and avoid criticizing the teacher.
- Don't write an email when you are angry.
- Be brief and stick to the point. Don't include animations, pictures, and graphics.
- Use upper and lower case, not all caps (that's considered shouting).
- Stick to school-related matters, don't forward email lists, jokes, or infomercials.
- Don't forward someone else's email, including a teacher's, unless you have their permission.
- Watch out for typos and spam, don't spread these around.

Be positive and courteous. Many teachers are overwhelmed and overworked. Speaking in positive ways opens up the lines of communication so you can work together to help your child succeed in school.

Open up communication with phrases such as “Can we talk about…?” Avoid criticizing and blaming the teacher with comments such as “You should have…,” “You must be mistaken.”

- Make respectful requests, such as “Could you send home the information about…?” Avoid giving orders to the teacher by saying, “You have to…,” or “You need to…”
- Use a polite word rather than fighting phrases. For example, “Please, could you…?” “Thank you for all you did,” go a long way in building a good relationship.

Accept differences. Sometimes you may have a difficult time with the teacher and other times it may seem a struggle to keep the lines of communication open.

- Listen to the teacher to get a sense of who she or he is.
- Hear what the teacher has to say about his or her expectations, classroom, and your student.
- Don't argue with or criticize the teacher in front of your child.
- Don't send email messages with strong language.
- Try to work things out with the teacher before going to the principal.
- If you have conflicts with the teacher, remain calm, listen, be positive, and talk things out.

Be a partner with the teacher to support your child's learning. Thirty years of research shows that children do better in school when their parents are involved.

Some of the most important things you can do are to:

- Help with homework as needed and appropriate.
- Help your child learn the skills needed to manage time and stay on task.
- Ask for clarification on instructions and assignments as needed.
- Talk about school matters with your student at home.
- Ask teachers what you can do to help your child at home. At the same time, as your children get older, teachers expect them to be able to take on more responsibility and function independently. Your child will likely want more and more autonomy as well. Help them build these skills while also continuing to be supportive.

Keep the lines of communication open year.

- Send a note of appreciation to the teacher when something goes well in her/his class, and mention this to the principal.
- Give the teacher your phone number and email if they change.
- Check the school and teacher Web sites (if available) to keep up with what is going on, in and out of the classroom.

TIPS TO ENGAGE WITH YOUR CHILD

BE A COACH
- Show an interest.
- Make every day an opportunity to learn.
- Encourage your child to investigate. Discover and imagine.
- Work and play together.
- Read with your child.
- Help them find math everywhere.

BE AN ADVOCATE
- Communicating on behalf of your child helps teachers get a bigger picture of your child's strengths and weaknesses.
- Build a good working relationship with the school and your child's teachers.
- Teachers like to know they have your support.

FITTING IT ALL IN
- Post pictures of your child getting ready for school on the fridge to help them set up a routine.
- Use travel time to talk about school.
- Schedule a time for schoolwork.
- Create a school space at home.
- Bike, hike and keep fit together.

DOES YOUR CHILD NEED EXTRA HELP?

Many children need extra help. In fact, many adults are successful today because they received extra help when they were in school. So you should not be upset if your child needs extra help right now.

As a parent, it is important to recognize your child’s challenges and work together with the teacher to make sure the necessary help is received.

Recognizing that your child needs extra help is not always easy. Here are some common signs to watch out for.

Your children may need extra help when:

1. Marks are below average.
2. A teacher talks to you directly on the issue.
3. There seems to be too much homework.
4. Homework seems consistently too difficult.
5. Talking about school or a certain subject puts a child in a bad mood.
6. They don’t do their homework.
7. They have a hard time remembering assignments.
8. They are easily and happily distracted from homework.
9. They are easily upset by what is going on, in and out of the classroom.
10. They are easily distracted by other things.
11. They have a hard time learning, and keeping the lines of communication open in various ways throughout the year.
12. They have a hard time learning.
13. They have a hard time learning.
14. They have a hard time learning.
15. They have a hard time learning.

Tips to helping your child succeed with extra help:

1. Get them involved in the plan. Give your child the chance to have some say in when the work will be done, how much time is given for each task, and what the goals are.
2. Make the grade is not all about marks. Help improve your child's self-confidence by letting him or her know that marks are only one way of evaluating performance and ability. Marks alone can't measure your child as individuals.
3. Finish what they start. Help children understand it is important to stick with an assignment until it is completed. Make sure your children know you are proud of them when they master something.
4. Be positive and give praise. Be sure to congratulate your child with each success and milestone reached.
5. Talk to the teacher. Keep in touch with the teacher to learn about your child’s progress. Work together if a new action plan is required.

BE A MENTOR
- Praise successes.
- Don’t dwell on mistakes.
- Give them the confidence to seek help from their teacher.
- Help them track their progress.
- Use a problem solving model to work on assignments and projects.

STAY INFORMED
- Talk to your child's teachers by agenda book, telephone, face-to-face and email.
- Check for information on the school website.
- Hang a wall sized planning calendar to remember assignments, due dates and school events.
- Seek help from families in the community who can translate.
- Network with other parents.

THE TEENAGE YEARS
- Use open-ended questions.
- Take an interest in what they are learning online.
- Help give confidence to overcome barriers.
- Support them if they make mistakes. Wrong answers lead to right answers.
TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH MATHEMATICS

1. Computers + math = fun. There are great computer games available for math – ask the town library or check out computer stores. Make sure they are “parent approved”. There are also super websites that have fun math games, or do an internet search for other sites.

2. Start Easy and Work Up! Once they have got the hang of counting by 1s, introduce skip counting, such as counting by 2s and 5s.

3. Use household items for counting practice. Practise adding and subtracting with objects found around your house like spoons and pots and pans. When they’ve become good at these skills, move on to simple multiplication.

4. Tap into your child’s curiosity. Go on a number hunt together and discover places where numbers are used such as a clock, TV, computer keyboard, calendar, telephones and licence plates.

5. Use everyday activities. Your child’s world is filled with everyday math problems that can be solved. For example, “There are four people in our family and we each need a knife and a fork to eat dinner. How many knives and forks do we need to set the table?” Let your kids know the importance of math in day-to-day living. Talk about the ways you use math in your job and around the house. Show them a tax form or how you pay the bills. Ask them how they used math during the day.

6. Kitchens can be math zones. Bake some muffins or cookies and ask your child to help you measure out the ingredients. It may be a bit messy but it’s fun family time and there’s nothing like a fresh cookie as a reward. Have math fridge magnets available so children can start making number patterns and doing simple math problems. Get older children involved in helping out at dinner time and let them help measure ingredients for dishes or estimate the number of potatoes that are needed to feed everyone.

7. Predict and compare. Start to measure and estimate things like how far it is from the driveway to the house or how long a trip will take and then measure and compare the actual time it takes.

8. Talk about time. The concept of time can be hard to grasp. Talk to your kids about minutes and hours. Then get them to try counting days and weeks – for example how many “sleeps” until the weekend or a visit or a friend arrives.

9. Identify geometric shapes and sizes. Play “I Spy”. Instead of looking for words beginning with a letter, look for different colours or shapes and count the number you find in the room.

10. Practise mental math using coins. For example, show that a certain item costs a certain amount and ask what coins are needed to pay for it.

11. Play games together. Show them math can be fun and exciting. Play family games to add excitement to math activities, like chess or checkers or games in the car such as math bingo or adding licence plate numbers. Lists of board games need math such as Junior Monopoly® or play card games such as Uno®.

12. Be a writing role model. Let your child see you writing when possible – let them write an email to a friend, write notes to your table, or send an email to a friend. Save old cards from birthdays and holidays to recycle for homemade cards. Whenever possible, let your child see you writing – grocery lists, instructions on the family whiteboard, emails, etc. – and get them to help.

TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH WRITING

1. Read from a variety of sources. Reading and writing are linked – success in one supports success in the other. Read stories, newspapers, advertisements, instructions, etc. to your child every day and then discuss what you have read.

2. Encourage your child to write. Children love to make their own birthday cards, write thank you notes, make place cards for the table, or send an email to a friend. Save old cards from birthdays and holidays to recycle for homemade cards. Whenever possible, let your child see you writing – grocery lists, instructions on the family whiteboard, emails, etc. – and get them to help.

3. Encourage your child to write down ideas. A journal or diary is a simple way for kids to keep track of their thoughts or feelings. They can write about things that happened at school, on TV, news stories, pictures, sports, and activities. Journals can be purchased at the dollar store in a variety of sizes with different covers. Or for a special occasion, get one with a lock for private thoughts. Capturing the day’s events on paper or creating a story or poem is a great way for children to develop their own writing style. Let them write about their interests – it doesn’t matter what the subject is.

4. Writing can be done anywhere. Have lots of magnetic letters or words on the fridge. Get a box of chalk and write your names on the driveway or sidewalk. Get a white board – it can be used again and again.

5. Play writing games and do puzzles with your child. Make a game of letter finding. Show them how to form a letter and then go letter hunting in your house or in a book – count the number of “Ds” on a page. Find a picture they like and have them write words or a sentence about it. Games such as Junior Scrabble®, word finders or crossword puzzles that involve creating and using words are a great way to develop word vocabulary. Keep a dictionary handy.

6. Help children build their vocabulary. Try rhyming games starting with one word such as “mat”. Say and write down all the words that rhyme, like “cat”, “hat”, “fat” and “splat”. You’ll be surprised how fast their word list grows.

7. Explore the meaning of words. Create a word book at home and have your child add words as they’re learned. Have them note the words they use the most and talk about why.

8. Write to each other. Write notes to your child and leave them in interesting places, like the lunch box. Ask them to write a reply or come up with something new. If they have their own email, email each other. Have kids email jokes to family and friends.

9. Don’t limit what you write with or without your child. The sky’s the limit – pudding, sticks or fingers in mud, earth, snow and sand, sparklers, steamed up windows and mirrors, and bubble soap markers for some sudsy learning.

10. Writing comes in all shapes and sizes. Point out different ways writing is used – letters, signs, advertisements, instructions – and explain why they are different. Also point out different ways letters are created – printed, cursive (written) and fancy variations. Let them be inspired to create their own letter art.

11. Start writing at an early age. Children often learn to write before they can read. Encourage this by showing them how to print their name or the names of friends and other family members. Buy them notebooks with lines so they can learn to make their letters correctly or a practice book with letters they can trace.

12. Be a writing role model. Let your child see you writing when possible – letters, work assignments, letters to the editor, email. Help your child to understand about writing for different purposes like short stories, poems, letters, etc. Make sure they see all different types of materials such as books, magazines, newspapers, comic books and illustrated novels.

13. Keep writing sessions short. When your child has a writing assignment, help to schedule short periods of writing rather than trying to write it in one go. Help create an outline before putting pen to paper.

14. Cyberspace writing. Encourage your children to write emails to or instant-message with family and friends. If they have their own email address, write emails to each other. Computers can be a writer’s best friend. Though we all feel that kids may spend too much time on the computer, there are some great games that help kids develop their writing skills by allowing them to create their own stories and books. Look for “parent approved” on the packaging in stores and in the library.

15. Encourage your child to talk it out. Writing mistakes can often be easily caught by reading stories out loud.

16. Listen and talk to your children. Help your child talk about what, where, when, how and why as they are preparing to write about something. If your child seems stuck, ask what the problem is and talk about it.
TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD BUILD VOCABULARY THROUGH NEW WORDS

Learning new words helps children read more complex books and stories. Children learn new words when someone reads to them and they read on their own. The more children read, the more words they are likely to know. Here are some things you can do with your children to help build their vocabulary.

1. Point out words that appear often. As you read together, point out words that you see often. These words include "I", "me", "a", "the", "but", "my", "he" and "she". Your children will begin to notice the same words in every story.

2. Play rhyming games. As your children begin to recognize certain words, you can try playing rhyming games. These games will build their vocabulary and increase their awareness of different word sounds. As they get older, have them write out rhyming words (cat, mat, sat, splat, flat, etc.)

3. Make sound effects. Use different voices and sounds to keep your children interested in the story's words. If a word sounds like its meaning, e.g., splash or splat, point out this out – it makes the word more interesting. Hearing different sounds also helps your children develop better listening skills.

4. Make connections. Help your children connect the words you read with the words they hear. Follow along with your finger as you read to show how print moves from left to right. Point out the pictures in the book and talk about what you see, matching the words to the pictures.

5. Talk about daily events. Talk with your children about past and future events, using the special words that go with these activities. For example, making breakfast could be associated with words like omelette, spatula, bowl, cereal or toaster. Taking a holiday would mean using words like ticket, schedule, suitcase and so on. Every once in a while, use a new or more difficult word and talk about its meaning.

6. List new words. Encourage your children to keep a list of the new words they have learned. Ask them to listen for new words as people talk. Have your children find new words in newspapers, books, flyers, and magazines. Talk about the meanings of these new words with your children as they add them to their list.

7. Look for "word families". Give your children a word that is found inside other words (for example, grow is found in growing and growth). Ask your children to name other words that are related. Explain that these words are part of the same "word family".

8. Build sentences. After talking about a new word and its meaning, ask your children to write their own sentences using the word.

9. Look up words. As your children start to understand written words, get a children's dictionary. Whenever they need to know the meaning of a new word, they can look it up in the dictionary and talk to you about it. You may not know the word either and you can learn together!

10. Listen to music. Songs introduce new words, especially ones that rhyme or repeat, which makes them easy to learn and remember. Music helps with learning languages and developing listening skills.

TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH HOMEWORK

Homework is an important part of learning. When you support your children's homework routine, you can help them do better at school. Here are some tips to help get the most out of their homework.

1. A routine is good. Homework can be habit forming and that's good news for you and your child. Work out a homework schedule and make sure children adhere to it. It won't be long before homework is complete without your getting involved.

2. Give space for homework. Distractions and homework don't mix. So do your best to create a bright and quiet space where your child can concentrate on schoolwork. Make sure it's away from distractions like TV, music and loud siblings.

3. Practice makes perfect. Repetition reinforces learning. That's why it's helpful to have kids practice reading, writing and math with you every day. Ten to fifteen minutes a day can work wonders, whether reading a favourite book together, or helping measure ingredients in the kitchen.

4. "How was your day?" Every school day is an adventure. Kids will do and learn so much they'll be bursting to tell someone all about it. So take a few moments every day to chat about the school day—and be a good listener.

5. Check in occasionally. When kids do their homework all alone, their concentration can often wander. Check in once in a while and see how it's going. Ask if there are any questions. Sometimes kids just need to talk about a homework problem to figure out the answer.

6. Turn everyday activities into homework. Teachers give homework and so can you. Include children in everyday tasks and assign activities such as searching newspapers, reading recipes, creating shopping lists, plotting out routes on a map, etc. Small activities can often teach big lessons.

7. Make kids proud of their effort. Getting the answers right is important, but it's only part of what homework is all about. Doing a thorough and neat job is important, too. Make it a habit to sit down and go over completed homework. Look at it together for thoroughness and overall quality of work. Always look for something positive.

8. Motivate with applause. "Hey, you did a great job!" Words like these have an amazing effect on children. Encouragement gives them confidence and makes them feel good about doing their best. At the end of every homework session, try letting your son or daughter know that you appreciate and admire the effort.

9. Encourage curiosity and questions. Learning really begins when kids start asking questions. Who, what, where, when and why are magical words of discovery that make learning more interesting and fun. Give your children the confidence to ask for help if the homework is difficult or confusing.

10. Know what's going on at school. Unfortunately, kids don't always tell parents everything. Make a point of staying in touch with teachers, especially if you have a question or concern. Let teachers know they can always call you.

TIPS TO HELP CHOOSE BOOKS FOR YOUR CHILD

Here are some tips to help you choose books that will keep your children enthusiastic about reading.

1. Select books that match your children's skill level. The Five Finger Rule can help you find out if a book is easy, just right or too hard. Ask your children to hold up a finger for every word they do not understand on a page. If there are more than 4 or 5 words on a page they do not know, the book is probably too hard and may prove frustrating. Try suggesting another book or reading the book together.

2. Rhymes, repetition, humour and pictures. Younger children enjoy books that use word repetition, rhymes and familiar words. Most children also like books that are funny. Look for books with colourful pictures and simple words.

3. Use books to learn about life events. Reading books about events affecting your children's lives (new brother or sister, moving, new school) can help them deal with fears and feelings. Choose books that relate to what's happening in your family.

4. Find favourite authors and popular books. If your child has a favourite book, try to find other books written by the same author. Ask friends, family, and teachers what books their children have enjoyed and try a book swap. The children's librarian at your local library can also be a great source for popular book suggestions.

5. Read languages other than English. Any kind of reading can help your children develop their skills, so encourage them to read books in languages besides English. If your children know how to read in their first language, they will find it easier to learn English.
TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH READING

1. Public libraries today are worlds to explore so try to go regularly. Your library has great resources – books, computer games, DVDs, CDs, magazines, newspapers and Internet access. There are also terrific in-house programs such as reading circles for little ones and homework clubs for older children. If you have access to a public library, talk to the librarian about what is available. Let them choose their own books.

2. Make your kitchen part of your “reading zone”. Have fridge magnets available so children can start making words and short sentences.

3. Words are everywhere – take everyday opportunities to read with your child. Your child’s world is filled with words – on cereal boxes, street signs, stores, posters, subway ads, etc. Wherever you go, you can always find new words and point them out.

4. Games can be great learning tools. Board games or card games such as word bingo or memory and rhyming cards can be a fun way to learn about words, letter sounds, and reading. They can help children realize how much fun learning can be. Check out the local second-hand stores for gently used games. You can even create your own by cutting out pictures, writing words on cards and getting your child to match them.

5. Computers are reader friendly too! Though many worry that kids may spend too much time on the computer, there are some great tools that help kids learn to read and allow them to create their own stories. Look for “parent approved” on the packaging in stores and in the library.

6. Books make great gifts. Ask family and friends to give a book instead of a toy as a gift. Make sure to tell them about your child’s reading level and interests. To build up a home library find almost-new books at garage sales and school fairs.

7. Subscribe to a magazine. There’s no substitute for the excitement of receiving mail. Let your kid subscribe to their favourite age-appropriate magazine and watch their eyes light up with the arrival of each new issue.

8. Be a reading role model. When your kids see you reading, they will want to imitate you. It won’t be long until they learn that reading is fun, interesting, and a "grown up" thing to do.

9. Keep books, magazines and newspapers handy. Keep a box in the kitchen or living room for easy access.

10. Keep reading with your child. Kids are never too old to be read to—or let your kids read to you. Read a variety of material – magazines, newspapers, books, poems and comic books. Try cutting out or printing interesting or funny articles to share with them.

11. Read some of the same books as your child. There are many books that are loved by people of all ages. Ask your librarian or child’s teacher for suggestions. You can share your thoughts and ideas, and have great conversations about the characters, stories or topics.

12. Ask your children what they’re reading. Ask what it’s about and what is most enjoyable about the book. Ask your child to describe it to you.

13. Tap into interests and hobbies. Kids are more likely to read about what they find really interesting, like sports or crafts. Don’t worry if it’s a comic book, magazine or an illustrated novel, just remember all reading is good and tastes will change as they get older. Find books that relate to TV shows. Let’s face it, TV and video games are part of life now and our kids benefit when we help them learn how to think about these messages too. We also know that some kids find TV and video games fascinating. You can use this to your advantage—introduce them to books or magazines that relate to their favourite shows, movies or games.

14. Encourage your older kids to read to younger kids. The older child will practice reading out loud and the younger child will enjoy being read to. Best of all, they get to enjoy spending time together.

15. Play games together. Trivia games and board games such as Junior Trivial Pursuit® or Junior Scrabble® can be a fun way to learn about words and reading. Children have such a good time playing they don’t realize they are learning.

16. Computers can be reading zones too! Though we all feel that kids may spend too much time on the computer, there are some great ways to help kids with reading and allow them to create their own stories and books. Look for "parent approved" on the box in stores and in the library.

17. Give praise. The best motivation comes from your positive feedback. Whenever your child finishes a reading or writing assignment, ask about what was read and praise your child’s effort.

TIPS TO HELP YOUR SON WITH READING

Research demonstrates that boys as a group are lagging in reading and writing skills. If your son is having difficulty, he may need different approaches to encourage interest in reading. Here are 10 simple tips you can use at home to improve your son’s literacy skills.

1. It takes time to build confidence and skill. It’s not how hard the book is that counts, it’s the amount of reading that matters. Let your son choose the books he wants to read, even if it’s below his reading level. This will help him feel better about his reading skills and give him confidence to try more challenging material.

2. Let him make his own choices. If it’s his choice, then he’ll want to read it. Don’t worry if he chooses the same types of books to read over and over or if they have edgy humour. Remind yourself that he’s actually reading and enjoying it.

3. Everybody enjoys a good story, so read to him. If your son finds a story interesting but the book too hard, share the reading. This will also make the book more fun to read.

4. Be a role model. Make sure your son sees you reading and writing. If he sees you doing it, he’ll respect you and the activity more.

5. Challenge his mind in other ways. Reading and writing are only a couple of ways to challenge your son’s mind. Spend time with him and share some brain teasing games like chess, crossword puzzles, board games – even video games. An active mind is better prepared for reading.

6. Give his teacher a call. Next to you, his teacher knows him best. Talk to his teacher for updates on his reading and writing. Discuss ways that you can help encourage your son’s literacy skills.

7. Have him read all sorts of material. There’s much more to read than just books. Try reading the instructions to a model airplane or new video game. It’s all reading and it’s all good practice.

8. Tap into your son’s hobbies and interests. Turn his interest in sports and music into a reason for reading. Give him books and magazines about things that he already finds fun and interesting and he’ll soon discover that reading can be interesting too.

9. Use the Net. Just because it’s on a computer screen doesn’t mean it’s not reading. The Internet is loaded with great sites and games that are perfect for your son. Let his interests be his guide to the sites he’ll want to read. Exchanging emails with friends and family is also a great way to practise writing. Just be sure he knows all about Internet safety and that the parental controls are on.

10. Make his day with a positive word. A pat on the back, school work on the fridge, a smile and the words “good going”... these are gestures that will motivate your son to love reading and writing. So whenever your son finishes a reading or writing assignment, has read a new book or written a story, show genuine interest in it and tell him you’re proud.