



WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL PARENTS!

Hopefully your family has had a smooth transition to the routines of school. Here are a few tips to **improve homework struggles** and to **get the most out of the up-coming October parent-teacher conferences**. Schedule yours today!



HOMEWORK TIPS.....

Allow your child time to decompress after school. A light, healthy snack a chat with you or about 20 minutes outside can do wonders when it is time to sit down and focus on homework.

Make homework time the same time each day.

Building homework into the regular routine will decrease homework battles. Assume your child will need about 10 minutes of time, per grade level. So expect a fifth grade student to need about 50 minutes a day for homework. Most importantly, try to get homework done before tiredness sets in. Homework will take twice as long and be at least twice as difficult the later it is done.

Help your child know when it's time to move on.

There comes a point of diminished returns when it comes to homework. If your child is struggling and getting more and more frustrated with their lack of understanding, or homework is lasting much longer than what is expected, it is probably time to end homework for the night and make a plan for what to do next. Getting some extra help from the teacher might be best.

Get into the routine of asking, "what are your assignments, when are they due?" Help your child to prioritize what to do first. In our house if the homework was all due the next day we used the "worst (hardest) first" prioritization method. Homework due soonest would be done first. Children need a lot of help learning to allocate time for bigger projects and not wait to the last minute. Break large assignments into smaller, manageable chunks. Continue teaching this skill.

Balance your involvement in homework. Younger children need guidance and some help staying on task and learning the information. As your child gets older it is time to begin transitioning out of the role of "homework police" and into the role of, "I'm present, if you need me, but I won't sit here with you for every math problem."

Designate a homework station. The station can be anywhere in your house that has a good size, clear work surface that is free of distractions, especially the TV, cell phones or other media. Stocking the work station with pencils, sharpeners, colored pencils, markers, crayons, paper, a stapler, ruler and a hole punch will help your child stay on track. You should be close by too!

Praise effort, not perfection, the grade or intelligence. Effort is something that is within your child's control. Encourage good work, not perfect work. Perfectionism is paralyzing for most kids.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE TIPS.....

Keep these "Be Heard" principles in mind.

Best intentions assumed: Remember that the teacher wants the same thing as you, for your child to be successful. Be prepared to hear positive things and areas for improvement. Think about your child's strengths and challenges prior to conference.

Emphasis on learning: The focus of the conference is how your child is doing in school. It will be helpful to review homework and assignments that have been graded and returned before the conference. Also consider any other correspondence or information you have at this point regarding your child's performance. Prepare a list of questions to bring to conferences.

Home-school collaboration: Ask what you can be doing at home to help your child learn. Ask the teacher whether he/she knows about other available services or resources within the school or community that may help your child. Find out how the teacher plans to challenge and support your child when necessary.

Examples and evidence: Find out about your child's progress. Is he/she performing at grade level? How do they compare with classmates? What does the teacher think your child's strengths and areas for improvement are? Ask to see examples of his/her work. How does the teacher grade? Give your thoughts.

Active listening: The conference is a two-way conversation. Expect to listen to what the teacher has to say regarding your child's progress. Plan to share information about your child, strengths and challenges. This information is confidential and can help the teacher understand and work with your child more effectively.

Respect for all: Conferences take a significant amount of time and effort for parents and teachers. Plan to arrive at the conference earlier than your scheduled time and to finish at the designated time to enable the teacher to meet with all the parents scheduled for that night. Remember to turn off and put away your cell phone before sitting down with the teacher.

Dedication to follow-up: Make a plan with the teacher. Set another time to get together. Then talk with your child.