

Parents Are Teachers, Too!



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BellSouth's commitment to life-long learning seeks to improve not only the community where customers and employees live and work, but also the business operations of BellSouth. The Living and Learning Series has been compiled and produced by BellSouth in cooperation with recognized authorities to help family members address important issues in an on-the-go era. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

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Parents are Teachers, Too!

Introduction

“How can I help my child in school? I’m not a teacher. I don’t know how to help. I have very little time. I work full-time in addition to having family responsibilities.”

If any of these statements describes your feelings, then BellSouth’s, “Parents Are Teachers, Too!” is for you. It is not meant to be an all-inclusive manual, but rather a guide to help identify simple ways you can enhance your child’s education. A resource section is included to provide you with additional information.

BellSouth has a strong commitment to support education, and we hope this booklet will help strengthen parents’ abilities as teachers.



The Importance of Parental Involvement

Children learn first and foremost from their parents. You are a teacher whether you view yourself in that role or not. Your child learned how to eat, talk, sit up and walk long before entering school. In fact, many children learn more from their parents in the first five years of life than they do from their schools in the next 10.

As a parent, you can reinforce and monitor your child’s progress in school. Educational psychologists have found that children who receive parental help are significantly better at reading than children who did not receive assistance from their parents. Researchers have also found that the successful mastery of all school subjects requires a high level of parental involvement.

Demonstrating your commitment to education by owning books, reading to your children, and requiring a specific number of homework hours will give your child a distinct advantage. It’s inevitable that children socialized in this type of learning environment will feel more at home in school.

Through example, conversation and shared activities, children will not only learn, but have fun in the process.



The Importance of Communicating With the School

Some schools and individual teachers send home information at the beginning of the school year concerning the school's expectations and classroom curriculum. This is an excellent source of information that will help you communicate with the school.

Teachers send home progress reports, hold parent conferences, and occasionally telephone or visit the home. These actions will keep you updated about your child's progress. You may help the teacher by providing the following additional information about your child. Always, however, use discretion in providing personal family information to others, especially in written form.

- Health problems/names of medication currently taken. Interests of child.
- Child's before-school morning routine.
- Amount of television viewing and favorite shows. Availability of reference materials in the home. Child's home responsibilities.
- Availability of parent(s) after school and work telephone numbers. Family structure (single-parent, step-parent, etc.). Number of siblings.
- Parents' goals for the child.
- Family concerns, such as a traveling parent.
- Difficulties with homework, textbook or school. Suggestions for the teacher.
- Preschool experience.
- Allergies.

It's important for a child to know from the very beginning that the teacher is in direct communication with the parent. Then, the child will realize that what happens in the classroom will be made known to the parent.

Another excellent way to improve communication with the school is to volunteer. Some schools have organized volunteer programs. You can help in the library, assist with clerical duties in the office, tutor on a one-on-one basis, or talk to children about careers, hobbies and interests. In some schools, volunteers act as staff developers or are members of school advisory boards.



The Importance of Good Health Habits

It is difficult for children to learn when they are falling asleep in class or are hungry. A young child needs about 10 hours of sleep a night. It's good to set a regular bedtime for your child and stick to it.

For school-age children, food means more than just energy. It provides a solid foundation for growth and development. Be sure to consult your family physician about appropriate foods for your child to avoid complications from food allergies. For most children, however, foods from the four basic food groups should be included each day: milk and milk products; meat, poultry, eggs, and fish; fruits and vegetables; and bread and cereals.

- Avoid feeding your child foods high in salt, fat and preservatives.
- Limit sugar and sweets in the diet so they do not replace the basic food groups.
- Limit fat in the diet of children over age two to 30 percent of the diet, with no more than 10 percent from saturated fats.
- Encourage the use of skim and one-percent milk.
- Increase the fiber in children's diets by serving whole grain bread, cereals and grain products, legumes, beans, fruits and vegetables.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day for your child. Studies indicate that, in the classroom, students are less able to perform well without the significant nutrients and calories that a healthy breakfast provides.

A nutritious breakfast can be fun and need not be time-consuming to prepare or to eat. Planning ahead is the key. A "sit-down" balanced breakfast including the four basic food groups is ideal. But, if that is not feasible, some nutritious options are available. Be sure, however, to consult your family physician to determine what's best for your on-the-go child.

- Dry cereal (not sugar-coated)
- Peanut butter sandwich with a banana. Cheese sandwich with a package of raisins. (Be aware that some children have food allergies, such as peanut and milk product allergies.) Low-fat bran or fruit muffins.
- Individual cartons of low-fat milk and/or juice

Nutritious afternoon snacks that can be easily prepared include: air-popped popcorn, yogurt, fresh or dried fruit, low-fat milk, low-salt pretzels, all-juice frozen fruit bars and peanut butter and crackers.

Children need exercise just like adults. Encourage your child to go outside to play regularly in a safe or supervised area. With your doctor's approval, your child should be doing an aerobic activity (running, bicycling, swimming, playing physically active games) for a minimum of half an hour at least four times a week. Check with your child's teacher to determine how much time is allotted for exercise in school.



How to Help Your Child Form Good Study Habits

Good study habits are a foundation for your child's education and future achievement. Skills such as listening carefully to what the teacher has said, interpreting it accurately, taking good notes, reading effectively and managing time properly are important for youngsters to learn.

With your child's help, set up a study area at home. It can be in your child's room or a designated place in another room. It should be quiet, comfortable, well-lit, and free of distractions, such as a window, television or music. Provide a small table or desk and chair. Avoid having your child study on the bed since that can encourage sleeping.

In the study area, provide materials such as paper, pencils, markers, ruler, crayons, etc., that your child may need for homework. These can be stored in a plastic bin or box for easy accessibility. A dictionary is almost a necessity to have at home. Other reference books such as a world atlas and encyclopedias are helpful aids, but your child will have access to these at school if you don't have them.

Set a specific time each day for your child to study, and make it clear that studying is a top priority. At times, you will need to be flexible with the study time. If your child has an extracurricular activity, such as a soccer practice or a music lesson, then reschedule the studying time with your child. For some children, immediately following school is not a good study time. They need an hour or so to relax after working hard during the day. Your child is likely to enjoy homework more if it is completed before the evening meal.

Homework is given for the child's benefit. Answer your child's questions, but try not to directly give the answer, and never do the work yourself. Consult, don't teach. Instead, ask questions that will stimulate thinking. If your child is a procrastinator, set a time limit for completing a task. A young child needs to break about every 10 to 15 minutes. An older elementary-aged child can work up to 30 minutes before breaking. A reward system can be helpful for the procrastinating child. Choose a reward that has meaning to your child, such as watching a certain television show, being able to go out to play, or collecting stars that can be accumulated to earn a special treat on the weekend.



How to Encourage Language Development: Reading, Writing, Speaking

You can encourage your child's language development while "on the run" in the car, waiting in the doctor's office, shopping, etc. You can modify or adapt the following activities in many ways, but the key is to listen to your child and encourage communication.

- Plan a daily reading time together. Take turns reading out loud to each other. This could be done by reading a newspaper article, poem, nursery rhyme, or panel on a food mix box at the dinner table. Discuss what was read.
- Choose several stories to read at bedtime. Talk about the characters in each story, and discuss any similarities in the characters at the end of each week.
- Have easy reading material, such as children's books, magazines, and newspapers readily available. Educators recommend children's magazines such as *National Geographic World*, *Highlights*, or *Sports Illustrated for Kids*. A subscription to one of these magazines would be an excellent gift for your child.
- Let your child see you reading. It could be a book, television guide, sales brochure or newspaper.
- Take your child to the library regularly. Check for special programs at the library such as puppet shows, readings and exhibits. Librarians can offer suggestions for high-interest books at appropriate grade levels.
- Have your child close his eyes and describe a particular room, or have your child describe a room for you to guess what room it is.
- Name a color and have your child articulate words she associates with that color.
- Have your child tell about five things he can do that his grandparents could not do at his age.
- Point out colors, shapes, sizes and details wherever you go. Encourage your child to do the same. This is a good car activity.
- Help your child name foods, animals, plants, and other items in the environment.
- Encourage your child to plan and prepare simple foods, under your supervision. Recipe reading is fun and provides excellent practice in following written directions.
- Encourage your child to use sentences instead of pointing or using one or two words.
- Talk to your child about things he's seen, read and experienced.
- Keep a calendar posted at home. Ask your child on a regular basis what day it is, date, month, year and her birthday.
- List all family members and put names in alphabetical order.
- When planning a trip, have your child help make travel plans by reading travel information, atlases and maps with you.
- When your child draws a picture, ask him to tell you about the drawing and write down his responses on the picture. This will show your child how stories told are connected to the words written in books.

Other tips to keep in mind while listening to your child read include:

- Praise your child
- Never get cross
- Let him guess or predict new words
- If she doesn't recognize a word quickly, identify it for her and move on immediately
- If he fails to understand a number of words, either stop or read the rest of the book to him
- Remember that the objective is to have your child enjoy reading.

RECOMMENDED READING

Bug in a Rug: Reading Fun for Just Beginners, Joanna Cole

Scholastic Children's Dictionary

The Read-Aloud Handbook, Jim Trelease

The Tree Bears, Anne McGill

Help is on the Way for Reading Skills, Marilyn Berry



How to Encourage Math Development

Some children fear mathematics, but become less afraid when they see the application in their environment. Counting, sorting, and directional activities aid in the development of mathematics. Many of these activities can be done during your normal daily routine while shopping, cooking, traveling or doing laundry. You may think of other activities as you begin to work with your child.

- Directional activities aid in developing spatial relationships. Ask your child to put his shoes under the bed, draw a star above his name, put the plate in the sink, etc.
- Point out road signs and have your child tell you the shapes.
- While traveling, have your child count the number of churches, traffic lights, stop signs, etc. Make a game out of counting the number of cars in different colors. One child could count the white cars while another counts the blue cars to see which are more numerous.
- Let your child use road maps when traveling to plot the number of miles between points.
- Have your child count the number of people for dinner and set the table with the correct number of napkins, forks, glasses, etc.
- Have your child count the number of spoons in your house and then categorize by type (teaspoons, tablespoons, measuring spoons, serving spoons, etc.). Count the number of each type.

- Let your child arrange the spoons by size (largest to smallest) and by weight.
- Let your child help fold socks in the laundry. How many are matched sets? Sort the socks by color and count the number in each color.
- Play store with your child and let her be the storekeeper. Have a number of small items you can buy from her to give her practice in making change.

There are many activities associated with grocery shopping and cooking to aid math skills:

- Have your child help plan a week's worth of meals, and estimate quantities of food needed to calculate cost.
- Supervise his cooking of some simple items to give him practice in measuring quantities.
- If you collect coupons, let your child help find the items on the coupons and calculate the savings.
- Have your child estimate the total cost of groceries by rounding each item off to either the nearest \$.10 or \$1.00. Let him see how close his estimate is to the final amount.

Help your child be a comparative shopper. Figure the unit price and compare accuracy to the unit price sticker. For example: Which is the better buy: a 16 oz. loaf of bread at \$.96 or a 25 oz. loaf at \$1.20?

- You can help your child understand fractions by dividing a candy bar or an apple into halves, thirds, fourths or fifths. If you divide the candy bar into fifths and let your child take two pieces, then ask how many fifths she has and how many are left.
- Buy or make flash cards to teach addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Also, there are some hand-held electronic "toys" that teach mathematic skills that children enjoy.

RECOMMENDED READING

Math for Every Kid, Janice VanCleave

Math Through Children's Literature: Making the NCTM Standards Come Alive, Kathryn L. Braddon

Everything You Need to Know About Math Homework, Anne Zeman and Kate Kelly

Math for Smarty Pants, Marilyn Burns

I Hate Mathematics! Book, Marilyn Burns

Eating Fractions, Bruce McMillan

Bunches and Bunches for Bunnies, Louise Mathews



How to Help Your Child Improve Test-Taking Skills

It's good to be concerned about taking a test. It's not good to suffer "test anxiety." This is excessive worry about doing well on a test, and it can mean disaster for a student. But, there are ways to reduce test anxiety. Encourage your child to optimize his test-taking skills by following these suggestions.

- Space studying over days or weeks. Real learning occurs through studying that takes place over a period of time.
- Don't "cram" the night before. Cramming increases anxiety which interferes with clear thinking. Get a good night's sleep.
- Read the directions carefully when the teacher hands out the test. If they are not clear, ask the teacher to explain.
- Look quickly at the entire examination to see what types of questions are included (multiple choice, matching, true/false, essay) and, if possible, the number of points for each. This will help you pace yourself.
- When taking an essay exam, read all the questions first and use the margin for noting phrases that relate to the answers. These phrases will help in writing the essay answers.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, skip it and go on. Don't waste time worrying about it. Mark it so you can identify it as unanswered. If you have time at the end of the exam, return to the unanswered question(s).

DO'S AND DON'T'S

You can be a great help to your children if you observe the following do's and don't's about tests and testing.

- Don't be too anxious about a child's test scores. Putting too much emphasis on test scores can upset a child.
- Do encourage children. Praise them for the things they do well. If they feel good about themselves, they will do their best.
- Don't judge a child on the basis of a single test score. Test scores are not perfect measures of what a child can do. There are many other things that might influence a test score.
- Do meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss her progress. Ask the teacher to suggest activities for you and your child to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's understanding of schoolwork.
- Do make sure your child attends school regularly. Remember, tests do reflect children's overall achievement.
- Do provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home.
- Do make sure your child is well rested on school days, and especially the day of a test. Children who are tired are less able to pay attention in class or handle the demands of a test.



How to Handle Television Viewing

Many experts believe that no other extra-parental influence has penetrated the lives of children the way television has. Therefore, it is important to monitor your child's viewing habits.

Educators are becoming more concerned about the effects of television on children. And when you consider that children tend to accept the ideas and behavior presented on television as models for their own behavior, there is good reason to be concerned about the content of what they view.

The new V-chip, a device mandated in the 1996 Telecommunications Act, promises to give unprecedented parental control over what children view. The device is based on encoding programs with an electronic signal and carries ratings information based on violence, rough language and sexual content. In the home, the V-chip decodes the signal and, with a remote control and on-screen display, allows parents to customize their viewing. The new device is scheduled to be installed in new television sets in 1998.

In addition, the following activities and ground rules should help make television a positive influence in your child's life.

- Limit television viewing to one or two hours a day.
- Turn the set off at meal and homework time.
- Monitor the quality of the programs your child watches. Educators recommend planning with your child each week the television programs to be viewed. If you're unable to plan in advance, make a point to watch the programs your child watches. Programs on educational television are considered generally good by educators.
- Watch the show with your child whenever possible. Encourage your child to listen carefully.
- Reinforce listening by speaking some of the words your child heard and try to incorporate some of these words in your child's vocabulary.
- Ask questions after the show. Who did what and why? What happened first, second, last? Was the commercial accurate?
- Ask your child how he would change the ending or extend the show to another segment. Have him write his ideas.
- Expand on subjects that interest your child on television. This may be in the form of books, trips to the zoo or museum, or articles on your child's favorite television stars and programs.
- If you were unable to watch the program with your child, have her describe the program and what she found interesting in it.



Resources on the Internet

Educational technology is taking schools by storm. Many teachers have incorporated use of the Internet into their curriculum, providing a staggering number of resources to parents, teachers and children ranging from games to international organizations doing cutting-edge research in educational technology. Following is a list of organizations and Web sites you may want to explore:

BELLSOUTH.net EDUCATION GATEWAY
<http://www.bellsouth.net/K-12>

The BellSouth.netSM Education Gateway contains education-specific, teacher-selected information complete with customized guides to a rich variety of K-12 Internet sites for teachers, students and parents. The Education Gateway focuses on providing easy access to research information, interfaces for worldwide communications and Internet training.

Located in the Gateway's "Center Section," teachers can find links to lesson plans and support for day-to-day class instruction in core subject areas. Students and parents can find links to newspapers, museums, NASA, government agencies and other interesting sites. Additional information sites include library services, quotations, encyclopedias, ERIC Research Service and search engines.

GLOBAL SCHOOLNET FOUNDATION
<http://www.gsn.org/>

This site contains information on The Global School House (GSH), a program that links schools from around the world by videoconference. GSH maintains mailing lists including GlobalWatch, a bulletin board for new projects and events, and SchoolNet, a subscription service of moderated news groups that are free of sexism, racism, violence, and other material inappropriate to elementary school children.

NASA INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS
<http://quest.arc.nasa.gov/> (For NASA's Quest Project)
<http://www.aem.umn.edu/other/msgc/k-12.html> (For K-12 Educational Resources)

These sites are exceptionally useful science resources. Hot topics include items such as Shuttle Team Online and Live From Mars.

ICONNECT
<http://www.ala.org/ICONN>

ICONNECT is a technology initiative designed to help students and educators learn through Internet use. The initiative has five components: Online Courses; Curriculum Connections; Mini Grants; Kids Connect; and ICONNECT Web site and Gopher.

CHILDREN ACCESSING CONTROVERSIAL INFORMATION (CACI)
To subscribe, send e-mail request to: caci-request@cygnus.com with a blank subject line and the message *subscribe* in the body of the letter. CACI was created as a discussion group among adults regarding the safety of children on the Internet.



Safety on the Internet: Caution and Advice

While the Internet can provide a wealth of knowledge, it has its drawbacks as well. Some material is considered offensive and inappropriate for children. The challenge parents and teachers are facing is using the technology in a safe and productive setting. To make Internet use a positive experience for your children, have them follow these general rules:

- Don't give out personal information such as your name, address or phone number
- Do tell a parent or teacher about new friends found on the Net
- Don't arrange face-to-face meetings alone
- Don't believe everything you read online
- Don't give out your password
- Do tell an adult if something or someone makes you feel bad or uncomfortable

Although government is trying to help guide decisions about what is and is not acceptable material, parents must choose for themselves what they want their children to see, read or hear. The best protection is for parents to actively use the Internet with their children. If this is not possible, the use of protective software may provide a safety net for your child during a visit into Cyberspace. Software packages can be purchased from local software stores.

Most online services also offer features such as "Parental Control," "Kids Zone" and "Teen Turf" options to provide extra safety.



Assistance With Learning Disabilities

If you suspect your child has a learning disability, consult his teacher, school administrator or counselor. By sharing your observations with educators who are in close contact with your child, you may be able to better identify the problem. Some schools provide evaluation and diagnosis. If your child's school does not offer these services, staff members should be able to refer you elsewhere. Don't be hesitant to address the issue. By discussing your concerns and taking action, you can ensure your child a better education.



Your Child's Learning: A Daily Checklist

Post this handy inventory of questions for daily review on the door of your refrigerator or another place where you will be sure to see it every day.

1. Is a "quiet time" for learning scheduled for my child today?
2. How can I praise the initiative or thinking of my child?
3. Have I clearly expressed my expectations and avoided making excuses for low effort by my child?
4. Have I motivated my child to learn today by rewarding or praising good effort?
5. What will I read or write today to set a good example?
6. How will I relax before working on homework with my child so that I will not become frustrated and impatient?
7. Have I made it clear that my child (not me) is responsible for homework?
8. Can I involve my child in a household activity today that will show the practical importance of learning?
9. Have I encouraged my child to pursue a hobby, reading the newspaper or another independent activity?
10. Did I remember to "sign off" on homework and attach a note if there is a problem?



Resources for Parents

There are many groups dedicated to helping parents with various concerns about children's learning. Many school districts have homework helplines that are available for students and parents. Check with your child's school for that number. If you need assistance in dealing with a problem and do not know of a local group, the following organizations may provide assistance:

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN

This organization provides information about different types of childcare programs, such as day-care centers and family day care, as well as referral to child-care resources in your area. To order resources for children, call 800-424-2460 or write to N.A.E.Y.C. Information, 1509 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

PARENTING AND CHILD SERVICES

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the demands of parenting, call the number listed for your state. Trained counselors will listen to your concerns and refer you to local support groups.

AL	800-239-2004	KY	800-752-6200	NC	919-733-2586
FL	904-487-4332	LA	504-342-0286	SC	803-734-5670
GA	404-657-3416	MS	800-222-8000	TN	615-356-6767

LEARNING DISABILITY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Trained personnel can discuss learning disabilities such as dyslexia, hyperactivity and attention-span disorders, and help you locate tutors and support groups. Call 412-341-8077 from 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. EST.

BETTER HEARING INSTITUTE

This organization sponsors a Hearing Helpline. You can learn where to have your child's hearing tested, how to help your youngster with a hearing loss, and where to find financial resources. The helpline can give you information on audiologists, clinics and special schools in your area. To access, call 800-327-9355 between 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. EST.

PREVENT BLINDNESS AMERICA

This organization provides an information and referral service. Trained volunteers can answer questions and provide information on eye diseases, vision problems guide dog programs, financial assistance programs and various other topics relating to the eye. The number is 800-331-2020 and is available from 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. CST.

NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE

The hotline is staffed by experienced crises counselors who provide immediate assistance to callers with problems related to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of children. The counselor can suggest sources of legal help and make referrals to child-protection services in your area. This service is available 24 hours a day. The number is 800-422-4453.

ALCOHOL HELPLINE

The national helpline has trained counselors on staff who provide referrals for chemical dependency treatment options in the caller's community. The service is available 24 hours. The number is 800-252-6465.

NATIONAL HOTLINE FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Contact this organization to report a child who is missing or report one who has been sighted. Written materials are also available on request. Available 24 hours, the number is 800-843-5678.

THE NATIONAL PTA

The National PTA hosts a Web site containing links to state and local PTAs and child advocacy programs. It also contains information on education and health programs, as well as legislative information. The Web site address is: www.pta.org. For more information, call the national office at 312-670-6782.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Department of Education offers the following booklets which may be obtained for \$.50 each by writing to R. Woods, Consumer Information Center, P.O. Box 100, Pueblo, Colorado 81002. Be sure to include the item number which follows the title. These publications can also be downloaded via the Internet.

The Web site address is: www.pueblo.gsa.gov. For more information, call the consumer information order line at 719-948-3334.

Helping Your Child Learn History	307D
Helping Your Child Learn Math	308D
Helping Your Child Learn to Read	309D
Help Your Child Learn Responsible Behavior	310D
Helping Your Child Succeed in School	311D
Helping Your Child Do Homework	312D
Helping Your Child Learn Geography	372D

The Home and School Institute, Inc., and its MegaSkills® Education Center, located in Washington, D.C., focus on helping families and educators build children's achievement in school and beyond. MegaSkills books are available in local bookstores. For more information on these programs, call 202-466-3633 or visit their Web site at www.MegaSkillsHSI.org.

Programs offered include:
MegaSkills Leader Training Seminars
MegaSkills Essentials for the Classroom
The New MegaSkills Bond
MegaSkills Schools



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