

Getting an A+ in Parent Participation: Helping Your Child Succeed in the Classroom

By Dr. Pamela Roggeman

Parental involvement in a child's education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance.¹ But according to a University of Phoenix survey of K-12 teachers, many parents don't get a passing grade when it comes to class participation.² Nearly three-fourths of teachers say less than half of parents are involved in the classroom, and the majority of teachers (58%) say that less than a quarter of parents are involved.

Connecting with your gifted child's teacher is an important step in supporting your child's success. While collaborating with an educator may seem time consuming and overwhelming, a few tips can make it an easy, fruitful experience.

1

Reach out regularly, not just when there's a problem. Almost two-thirds of teachers would prefer that parents communicate with them regularly instead of waiting until there's a problem.³ Don't be afraid to be friendly and proactive in reaching out. The beginning of the school year is a perfect time to introduce yourself, your child, and provide a little background information on your child's passions and interests.

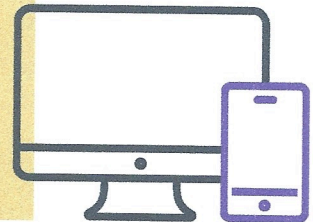


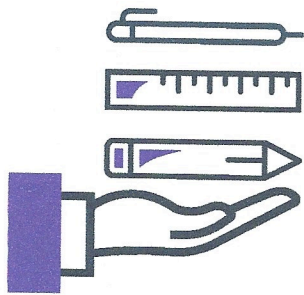
2

Ask for feedback on your child's performance. You may ask your children how school is every day, but you're only getting half of the story. Don't wait for the annual parent-teacher conference to learn about difficult subjects or areas of improvement you can help your child address. Three out of five teachers prefer that parents get involved by asking them about opportunities for improvement for their child.⁴

3

Identify the best way to reach out. One easy step to build better engagement is to ask your child's teacher his preferred method of communicating with parents. Every classroom is different, and establishing whether a teacher prefers emails, phone calls, handwritten notes, or another form of contact will help strengthen your lines of communication. Once you know the teacher's preference, it's important to adhere to that medium. Also, most teachers prefer that you schedule an appointment versus surprising them with an off-the-cuff hallway discussion.



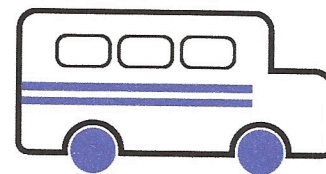


4

Donate back-to-school items to the class. Teachers spend more than 10% of their personal paychecks on classroom expenses.⁵ With that in mind, it's no surprise that over half of teachers prefer parents get involved by donating supplies to the classroom.⁶ Ask your child's teacher what tools she needs to help students succeed. If there are creative supplies, tools, manipulatives, or books you feel would benefit gifted and talented children, suggest those.

5

Ask about classroom activities. By knowing what students are working on, parents can help them avoid any last-minute requirements. Over a third of teachers prefer parents get involved by volunteering in the classroom. Participate in class field trips and activities, and don't just wait to be asked before you offer to help—let teachers know you're happy to lend a hand if you are available.



6

Don't forget to show your appreciation. Teachers spend many hours outside of school preparing lessons and supporting their students. Researching differentiated academic assignments or strategies for supporting your gifted child's psychosocial needs takes time. Teachers are not simply educators, but also role models and caretakers, and much of their work is done under the radar. Don't wait for Teacher Appreciation Week to say thank you.

Learning shouldn't be confined to the classroom, and we can't depend on one annual parent-teacher conference to check the box on parental participation in the classroom. High-ability students have varied and often-changing needs, so a strong line of communication is even more essential.

We need parent-teacher partnerships that are strong enough to identify, discuss, and resolve problems and opportunities for students throughout the year. This includes being both present for the student, addressing concerns immediately, and keeping up with regular communication with the teacher. By working together, parents and teachers can have a lasting impact on a gifted student's education.☺

Resources

Currie, B. M. (2015). *All hands on deck: Tools for connecting educators, parents, and communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Education World. (n.d.). *Parent involvement in schools*. Retrieved from http://www.educationworld.com/a_special/parent_involvement.shtml

Inclusive Schools Network. (2015, Jan 2). *Parent involvement in schools*. Retrieved from <https://inclusiveschools.org/parent-involvement-in-schools/>

Author's Note

Dr. Pamela Roggeman has extensive experience in designing curriculum and preparing teachers in a university setting. She currently serves as the academic dean for the College of Education at the University of Phoenix. She also served more than 17 years as a secondary education English teacher and was named an Arizona Educational Foundation Teacher of the Year Ambassador of Excellence.

Endnotes

¹ Torpor, D., Keane, S., Shelton, T., Calkins, S. (2010). Parent involvement and student academic performance: A multiple meditational analysis. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 38(3), 183–197.

² University of Phoenix. (2016). *College of Education survey*. Retrieved from <http://www.phoenix.edu/news/releases/2016/10/uopx-survey-many-us-k12-teachers-say-fewer-parents-involved-in-classroom.html>

University of Phoenix. (2017). *College of Education survey*. Retrieved from <https://www.phoenix.edu/news/releases/2017/08/uopx-finds-teachers-assign-less-homework-than-perceived.html>

³ University of Phoenix, 2016 and 2017.

⁴ University of Phoenix, 2016 and 2017.

⁵ SheerID. (2017, August 8). Survey results: how teachers are shopping this back-to-school [Blog post]. Retrieved from www.sheerid.com/survey-results-how-teachers-are-shopping-this-back-to-school/

⁶ University of Phoenix, 2016 and 2017.