

# **Parent Participation**

## **How To Get Involved At School**

By: Colorín Colorado (2008)

Parent involvement in a child's education is crucial. When parents get involved in their children's education, children are more likely to do better in school, be better behaved, have more positive attitudes toward school, and grow up to be more successful in life.

### **What's the best way for me to stay involved in my child's school activities?**

#### **At the beginning of the school year, attend back-to-school night or other orientation events**

Get to know the teachers and other school personnel. Listen to their plans, know what they hope to accomplish with their students, and understand why they chose these goals.

#### **Attend school events**

Go to sports events and concerts, student exhibitions, parent-teacher meetings, parents' night, and awards events, such as a "perfect attendance" breakfast.

#### **Learn what the school offers**

Read the information the school sends home, and ask to receive information in your native language if necessary. Talk to other parents to find out what programs the school offers. Maybe there's a music program, after-school activity, sports team, or tutoring program your child would enjoy. Remember to keep track of events throughout the school year.

#### **Attend parent organization meetings**

At most schools, a group of parents meets regularly to talk about the school. This group is usually called the PTA or PTO (Parent Teacher Association or Parent Teacher Organization). The meetings give you a good chance to talk with other parents and to work together to improve the school, as well as the chance to voice your hopes and concerns for your child and for the school. Help organize parent-teacher meetings around your interests and those of other parents. If you are unable to attend these meetings, ask that the minutes of the meetings be sent to you. Or, find out if the school makes these minutes available on its Web site.

## **Parent Involvement**

### **Volunteer in your child's school**

If your schedule permits, look for ways to help out at your child's school. Schools often send home lists of ways in which parents can get involved. Schools often need volunteers who can:

- Chaperone field trips or dances (and if your child thinks it's just too embarrassing to have you on the dance floor, sell soft drinks down the hall from the dance)
- Serve on the school committees or advisory councils as a parent representative
- Help on projects such as the school newsletter may need an editor
- Help in your child's class, in the school library, in the cafeteria, or in the school office
- Make food for a school event
- Tutor students in areas such as reading, math, English, Spanish, computer skills, or other subjects
- Work in a parent resource center or help start one. In these school centers, parents may gather informally, borrow materials on parenting and children's schoolwork, and get information about community services

### **If work or other commitments make it impossible for you to volunteer in the school, look for ways to help at home**

For example, you can make phone calls to other parents to tell them about school-related activities or maybe help translate a school newsletter from English into another language.

### **What if I don't have time to volunteer as much as I would like?**

Even if you can't volunteer to do work at the school building, you can help your child learn when you're at home. The key question is, "What can I do at home, easily and in a few minutes a day, to reinforce and extend what the school is doing?" This is the involvement that every family can and must provide to help support their children's school success.