



Participate in the school listserv®—Ask if your school has an e-mail listserv® that parents can join. A listserv® allows subscribers an opportunity to share information and discuss issues via e-mail on an ongoing basis. The school may have a listserv® just for parents, or it may have one for the entire school community: parents, educators, and students. You can choose simply to read the e-mail messages about school issues and what others in the school community are saying, or you can participate actively by sending messages.

Take advantage of school functions—Get a schedule of school and PTA programs, projects, and ceremonies (from the school office, school website, PTA newsletter, etc.). Discuss with your child which ones he feels are the most important for you to attend, and tell him which ones are of greatest interest to you, too. Volunteer to help with school functions when and where you can. Often there are specific, short-term tasks that can be done at home or on a lunch break. Ask if your child's school holds an informal breakfast, lunch, or potluck dinner where families can meet with other parents, share experiences, ask questions about school policies, get help on homework or preparing for tests, and be more involved.

Put your talents to work—Your talents and skills often can be used from work or home to benefit the school and its students. Do you have computer skills? Offer to work on the PTA or school newsletter, help design a flier, or update a Web page for the school. Are your talents in art, music, or literature? You might be able to provide curriculum

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enrichment activities in the classroom, or in before- or after-school programs. Do you speak/read a language other than English? Volunteer to be an interpreter for parents at school events or help translate materials for use by other parents. You could also be a “buddy” to a new parent for whom English isn't a first language. Hobbies such as cooking, carpentry, or gardening can sometimes be vital to supporting a special school program.

Get your employer involved—Successful schools have the support of local businesses and community members. Ask your employer about allowing employee flextime to volunteer at school or to attend school activities. Encourage your company to “adopt” a school by donating supplies or equipment, or providing mentors, speakers, or internship opportunities for students. Suggest that your employer donate door prizes for parent-teacher meetings, help print needed materials or fliers, or provide incentives for students in special programs.

For additional ideas on getting involved in your child's education and school, visit the National PTA website at www.pta.org

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**(800) 307-4PTA (4782)
E-mail: info@pta.org
www.pta.org**



Making Time for Parent Involvement

Tips for Busy Parents

Parents can balance work and their involvement in their child's education and school. Stop and take a look at what you're already doing. You're likely doing more than you realize.

Then, try some of these suggestions to determine which ones fit your lifestyle and are most satisfying.

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Long hours on the job, long commute times, long family to-do lists, and a short amount of time to accomplish it all—sound familiar? The fact is today's parents are working more than ever before. Take a look at the statistics:

- There are 30 percent more dual-income households today than in the 1970s.
- Twenty-seven percent of children are from single-parent households.
- Women who work full-time account for an estimated 80 percent of single-parent households.

In addition, work schedules—shifts other than the traditional 9-to-5 (or 8-to-5 these days), overtime, business trips, parents working opposite schedules, etc.—are making it harder to create a balance between work and family responsibilities. Making time for children and being involved in their education is an increasing challenge for parents, whatever the family structure. You're not alone.

Keep in mind, though, that schools are appreciative and supportive of many types and levels of parent involvement. Whether you can find a few minutes a week, an hour a month, or can volunteer only once a year, your child and school will benefit. Any amount of time you spend being involved is valuable and can help increase student achievement.

When parents are involved in students' education, those students generally have higher grades and test scores, more consistently completed homework, better attendance records, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in postsecondary education. Those are pretty good reasons to get involved!

Try some of these suggestions to increase involvement in your child's education at home and at school. Many can be adapted for preschool or early-learning environments, after-school programs and extracurricular activities, or during summer camp/school breaks.

Take time at home—Before making that first call to volunteer, consider the opportunities you have at home to help reinforce what your child is learning at school. Supporting learning at home is one of the best ways to stay involved with your child's education. Set aside some time every day to talk with your child about school activities. Ask what subject was the best that day, or which topic was the hardest; this will give your child an opportunity to tell you what she sees happening



in the classroom. Monitoring homework and class projects can help you better understand what is expected of her in school. Plan together for family activities that support or supplement what is being learned in the classroom. Discuss with older children what classes they need to develop special interests or skills, and what courses they need for graduation, college, or careers.

Set expectations and establish routines—

Show your son that you value learning and education by setting high, yet realistic, expectations. Help him develop a routine for studying and homework. Choose a specific time and place each day to complete homework and class assignments. Minimize distractions and set house rules about listening to music or watching TV while studying. For older students, you may want to limit part-time job hours and restrict nighttime employment. Provide educational resources at home and help your son access additional resources through community libraries, museums, or via technology.

Make time to volunteer, and make a few contacts—

Determine how much time your schedule allows you to participate in school events/activities and what you are willing to do. If you decide just how much you can be involved, you'll feel good about the time you can give.

Not sure of whom to call to get involved at school? The PTA president, the classroom teacher, the school secretary, and school volunteer coordinator often will be your first contacts. Many can be reached through the school's website, school/PTA newsletter, or by calling the administration office. Let them know your schedule, the best times and

ways to contact you, and when you are available to volunteer. If you don't have a regular work schedule, call the school to ask what volunteer jobs are available on your next day off.

Join your PTA—Whether your schedule permits you to volunteer on a regular basis, you can show your support through a membership in your local PTA. Your PTA works to address many important issues affecting the school in your neighborhood as well as your community at large. By becoming a PTA member, you add your support and voice to others making a difference for the children in your school and all children.



Keep in touch with the school—Take five minutes on your lunch hour or break to keep in touch with your daughter's school. Make a phone call to her teacher, write a note, or send an e-mail. Establish a method of regular communication that best suits both of you. Ask what you can do to reinforce at home

what is being learned at school. If your daughter often says she has no homework to do, check with the teacher. Be sure to share any news about things going on in your family life that might affect your daughter at school. Establishing regular, open communication with your child's teacher early and throughout the school year is important, especially if a problem arises.

Stay informed—One way to feel connected to your son's school is by reading school newsletters, calendars, or fliers sent home. You'll get a heads-up on important school dates, events, and deadlines. An increasing number of schools now have websites that let parents know about specific classes, schedules, and important activities. Some teachers have their own classroom websites with homework assignments, tips, and project requirements. If you don't have a computer and Internet access at home, visit your public library. You can also check to see if your son's school has a parent center with computers.

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