

Summary

Home involvement provides a wonderful opportunity for you to nurture the spirit of your child through their natural curiosity and learning interests. Remember that parents have a voice at their children's schools. You can participate in the development of family involvement offerings through school by working with your child's teacher, the PCNC representative or the Student Services Coordinator. Make your ideas, interests and needs known. Chances are, your needs and interests could also make things better for other families at your school. Keep in mind that home involvement includes a wonderful variety of things you can do at home to build your child's self-esteem, sense of ability and mastery, and can develop your child's and your family's interests into a life long learning experience that may enrich all members of your family, including yourself.

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The Hawai'i State Improvement Grant (SIG) is charged with improving systems providing early intervention, educational, and transitional services, through an innovative personnel development program supported by coordinated policy, procedure and practice interventions. Ultimately, the Department of Education (DOE) believes that this strategy will lead to significant gains in in-school and post-school outcomes for children with disabilities. The State Improvement Plan is an integral part of the overall DOE system improvement efforts and the vision of the State Board of Education for meeting the needs of all children so that they attain high performance standards. The Hawai'i State Improvement Grant is a collaborative effort of the Hawai'i State Department of Education and the University Center on Excellence/Center on Disability Studies, College of Education at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, along with numerous other partners concerned with the education of children with disabilities in the State of Hawai'i.

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Effective Practices Brief



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Supporting All Students to Achieve High Standards

Getting Involved in Your Child's Education

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Overview

Special people who help learning have been described by John Steinbeck, a famous author, as people who...*did not tell – they catalyzed a burning desire to know. Under their influence, the horizons sprang wide and fear went away and the unknown became knowable.* While this inspirational thought is exciting, it can also feel like a lot to live up to. As we get ready to help our children in their learning it is important to reflect on our own ideas and attitudes about children and learning, to discover what interests us, what we are curious about individually and as a family, and to evaluate the variety of ways we might be involved as partners in our children's education.

As you embark on this journey, no matter what your children's age, keep in mind that being involved in their learning is a process. What is most important is how you play your role, not that you have immediate successes each time, but that you have a sincere interest in your children and their learning.

Benefits of Your Involvement in Your Child's Education

As a parent or caring family member, your involvement in the education of your child is considered the single most important factor in the school success and achievement of your child.

Research shows that both parents and children benefit from home involvement. Statistics show these benefits include:

- Increases in children's academic achievement and cognitive development
- Enhancement of children's self-esteem, positive attitudes, and behaviors
- Improvement in parent-child relationships
- Development of a more positive attitude towards the school by parents
- Gains in parents' understanding of the school process
- Increases in parents' attitudes about themselves
- Enhancement in parents' self-confidence
- Encouragement of parents to enhance their personal development
- Improvement of parents' relationship with school personnel
- Enhancement of parents' willingness to gather community support for educational programs
- Encouragement of parents to become actively involved in community activities

Getting Ready

There are attitudes and behaviors that can build positive feelings for both you and your child or others that can lead to frustrating, and in some cases harmful experiences as you get involved with your child's learning. For the most positive

impact decide: if you really want to help, if you think children are learners by nature and you enjoy being with them while they are pursuing what interests them, if you are open and don't have too many preconceived notions about *what* they should be learning or *how* they should be learning it; then you are on the right track!

Proceed very cautiously: if you're feeling like you *should* be helping your child, but you don't really *want* to be involved, if you aren't really interested in what children think, or feel children must be forced to learn things even when they are not "getting it" or not interested; then you probably won't be helping and could even hurt your child and begin to set up behavior problems. If this is the case, take some time to reflect on what you would really enjoy being involved in with your child relative to their learning and begin there. Do not choose home involvement activities that your heart is not in, this will not help either you or your child.

Different Families Need and Want Different Things

Home involvement can include a variety of approaches, and address different underlying intentions. For example, parents with children with special education needs, disabilities, or challenging emotional and behavioral issues have different challenges and needs when supporting their child to succeed than say parents whose child is primarily dealing with more general developmental issues, like beginning kindergarten or dealing with the hormones of adolescents.

Families whose child requires an IEP are oftentimes working to become partners in their child's education. With the special education movement leading the way in research-based practices, pushing for a more inclusive model of parents as partners in education can teach all parents how to work towards a more co-creative role in the formation of their child's education at school.

In order for parents and families to interact effectively with schools as partners in education, parents need both training and access to current research-based best practices. Many parents find this training and support through DOE supported training programs and through local community based agencies like Hawaii Families as Allies (HFAA), Special Parent Information Network (SPIN), and the Learning Disability Association of Hawaii (LDAH). See resources below for contact information.

A Variety of Ways to Get Involved

Your support and participation in your child's education may take a variety of forms that might include activities or involvements at their school or more home and family focused educational involvement.

School-based opportunities to get involved with your child's education might include:

- Parenting classes offered through your school
- Parent Support Nights
- Open House Nights
- Project Graduation, a statewide parent organized and sponsored safe celebration for graduating seniors
- Back-to-School Days
- Coffee Hours

Check with your school to see what they are planning for this year. Sometimes schools give parents and families an opportunity to give input on your interests early in the year. If your school sends home a survey asking what you might be interested in, fill it out! This is your opportunity to get your needs met, to get some of the support and information you need, and to get involved with your child's school and other families.

Home based involvement and support for ongoing learning might include:

- Providing a specific time and place for homework
- Setting a good example by reading
- Reading to your kids, even after they can read independently; set aside a family reading time and take turns reading to each other
- Building math and reasoning skills together; have young children help sort laundry, measure ingredients for a recipe, and involve teens in researching and planning for a family vacation or household project
- Regulating the amount and content of the TV your family watches, selecting weekly shows to watch together, monitoring videos and interactive game system use
- Encouraging discussions, playing family games, practicing good sportsmanship

- Asking specific questions about school, show your children school is important to you
- Helping your children, especially teens, manage their time; making a chart to show when assignments and chores are due

As you know, your family has unique needs, interests, challenges and restrictions on time and ability to be involved. Having a variety of strategies will ensure your enjoyment and success as a family in supporting your child to succeed and achieve in their education. Together you might discuss which types of home involvement suit your family's life-style, interests, needs, challenges, and schedules. This conversation may lead to a better understanding of your interests and curiosities...what are you each interested in exploring, experiencing or knowing more about? How might your interests and curiosities lead to creating your own personal brand of home involvement that you find fun, meaningful and supportive of your child's education and your own curiosities...use your imagination, this can be fun!

Teenagers Need Your Involvement Too!

Keep in mind that your children need your involvement throughout their educational career, not just in the elementary years. Oftentimes, families think their teens don't want them involved, because they tell you they don't want you involved! It is just not true! They need parental involvement as much as when they were little, it just needs to be in different ways. Remember adolescence is about your teen establishing their independence. Allow them to make their own decisions within limits, and know that they will probably make some bad decisions. Your involvement in their life and education might include spending time together, both as a family and individually with your teen, talking about your teen's interests and concerns, sharing your feelings and concerns, discussing ideas, dreams and plans for the future. This is a very exciting time and can be filled with your trust for your teen. Remember to treat your teen with respect, to be supportive, and to keep the lines of communication open. If you are having great difficulties with your teenager, reach out to some of the organizations listed below for support.

Resources for parent information:

The sources listed below are both National and local organizations that have wonderful resources including support groups, training opportunities, and very good publications for your continued learning about issues of parenting.

Local sources:

- Hawaii Families As Allies (HFAA) a statewide network of local supports made up of parents whose children have serious emotional behavioral disorders <http://www.HFAllies@aol.com>, (808) 487-8785
- Special Parent Information Network (SPIN) a parent-to-parent organization in Hawaii that provides information, support and referral to parents of children and young adults with disabilities and the professionals who serve them. <http://www.spinhawaii.org> (808)586-8126
- Learning Disability Association of Hawaii (LDAH) enhancing the quality of life for all individuals with learning disabilities and their families through awareness, advocacy, empowerment, education, service and collaborative efforts <http://www.lदानt1.org>, (808) 536-9684, 1-800-533-9684
- Hawaii Department of Education <http://doe.k12.hi.us>

National sources:

- National Parent Information Network (NPIN) provides research-based information about the process of parenting and family involvement in education. <http://npin.org>
- Human Development and Family Life Education Resource Center provides support and resources for family life educators and others who conduct education and prevention programs for children, youth and families, multiple articles for parents <http://www.hec.ohio-state.edu/famlife/index.htm>
- Family Involvement in Children's Education Features strategies that 20 local Title I programs use to overcome barriers to parent involvement including family resource centers <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve>
- Children, Youth and Family Consortium Electronic Clearinghouse this web site provides a pathway to information related to the health, education and welfare of children, youth and families. It is a forum for sharing information and exchanging ideas. <http://www.cyfc.umn.edu>
- National Families in Action helps parents prevent drug abuse in their families and communities, up-to-date news, cultural/ethnic connections, drug information, resource links <http://www.nationalfamilies.org>
- Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights Center (PACER) provides supports for families to participate in all phases of their child's education <http://www.pacer.org>
- National Information Center for children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) providing families with information to make informed decisions about their child's education <http://www.nichcy.org>