



Tips for Involved Parents from Gwinnett County Public Schools

Be There is a national movement that inspires parents to become more involved in their children's education. Teachable moments are everywhere. Be your child's favorite teacher. Connect in meaningful ways and your simple actions will reap immense rewards at home, play, and school!

Teacher-tested tips to support learning for young children

Many teachers are parents, too. What do they do at home to "be there" for their young children? Here are a few tips from a group of Cedar Hill Elementary teachers:

For a part of each day, remove the distractions and focus on your child.

Turn off the TV, power down the computer, and let the telephone ring. We all lead busy lives and there's always something to grab our attention, but let your child do the attention-grabbing for at least 15 or 20 minutes every day. Play a game. Read a book. Take a walk. Tell a story. That little break from the hustle and bustle will be good for you, too.



When the TV is on, know what's on.

While there's plenty of bad television out there, there's also some good stuff: educational programs, shows about history and animals, family-friendly comedies and dramas, kids' movies, and more. However, limit TV time. Kids need time for schoolwork, pleasure reading, and active play, too. Remember, some shows may cover more serious subject matter, but still may be an OK choice if you watch together. This offers you an opportunity to discuss the subject in light of your own family values and experiences.

Talk to your child. And listen. Take the time to ask about your child's day. Ask your child's opinion about something he or she has read or something you hear on the TV or radio. Share favorite memories from your childhood with your own child. On a walk or in the car, use some conversation starters to get the ball rolling and get to know your child better. *If you could be an animal, what would you be and why? If you were going to be on an island for a whole summer, what books would you bring? If you had a magic time machine, where would you go? Who would you hope to meet? If you could invite three people from history to your birthday party, who would you invite?*

Share a hobby. The family that learns and plays together... Whatever your interests, share them with your child. Maybe the shared hobby will grow into a real interest for your child. Maybe not. But the time together is the point. Plant a garden together and let your child have a patch with vegetables or flowers of his or her choosing. Let older children bike or skate along while you push a stroller at the park. Fishing, scrapbooking, cake decorating, hiking, painting or pottery... think about trying whatever suits your interests, time, and wallet. Enjoy!

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Share household chores. Cooking, cleaning, and other household chores... You have to do them anyway, so make them fun and let your child help. Play a favorite CD and dance while you wash dishes, vacuum, and pick up toys together. Let your child measure ingredients, stir batter, or some other age-appropriate task when you cook together. Teach your child to fold towels, match socks, and put on pillowcases

Take advantage of time in the car. We live in metro Atlanta so we all spend some time in the car. Safety first, of course, but make your time in the car count. Put up the phone and turn down the radio. Some car-time ideas? Play I-spy. (*I spy with my little eye something red...* or tall, wide, blue, shiny. You get the idea.) Ask the kids to count the blue cars or people on motorcycles. Look for signs displaying a particular letter or even a spelling word. Sing the alphabet song. Start a story and ask your child to finish it. Play “I’m thinking of an animal” with a 20 questions-format.

Reinforce learning at home in fun ways.

- **Take an interest in your child’s schoolwork** by looking at his or her papers. Save special papers and written work. Make copies of stories and drawings to share with family members who live in other places. Find a prominent place— the refrigerator or a bulletin board— to display artwork and positive notes from school. Talk about what your child’s learning during shared meals. Encourage your child to learn more about a subject that he or she finds interesting. Look for books at the library or opportunities at local museums or parks that tie in with your child’s interests.
- **If you have a computer and Internet access, help your student use technology.** When questions arise, suggest doing research together on the web. It’s a good idea to keep the web-connected computer in a common area of the house and not in your child’s bedroom. Talk to your child about being safe on the

Internet and using online resources wisely and critically. Not all Internet resources should be trusted equally. Help your child determine the difference between fact and opinion in what they find online. Ask your child’s school about trusted and age-appropriate online resources for children and tips for web safety. Look for “safe surfing tips” in the parent tipsheet section of GCPS’ web page.

- **Need to beef up on math facts or spelling words? It’s easy to do together and just about anywhere.** Call out spelling words in the car or at the store. Post spelling words on cards around the house and make a game of finding and practicing them. Run through multiplication tables while you’re cooking dinner or on a walk together. Practice addition and subtraction with math flash cards while you wait for an appointment. During a walk, practice the alphabet, counting, or skip counting (even, odd, by 2’s, by 5’s, by 10’s), and let your child decide if you’ll walk, skip, hop, or jump down the sidewalk as you practice.
- **Take your child on a nature walk.** Compare leaves. Talk about what you see and hear. What do you *not* see? Which animals come out only at night? Why? Find a book at the library to help answer any questions that come up or visit the local nature center.

Be silly and have fun together. Kids, especially younger ones, like to see the grown-ups act silly. If you can get your silly on, you and your child can enjoy some quality time together. Try Freeze Dance, Statues, Hide-n-Seek. You get the idea. Word to the wise: Tell your child in advance how long your silly play will last. “*We’ll sing three songs, then it will be time for homework*” (or brushing teeth, reading time, etc.). Three songs will mean more to your young child than 10 or 15 minutes, if telling time is a new concept. Another fun idea for family time... Plan a Games Night for friends and family, the bigger the better. Enjoy a potluck meal and have several games for various ages going at one time... board games, dominos, cards, etc.



Together, we will be there for our students—
Gwinnett County Public Schools and YOU!

Make the ordinary extraordinary!

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Tips submitted by teachers from
Cedar Hill Elementary