

PASS 3: Strategies that Enrich and Expand Student Learning

Strategies for Parents: Connecting School to Real Life

The PASS model refers to the term "parent" as any adult who plays an important role in a child's family life.

A primary goal of learning is the transfer of knowledge, which allows a student to apply what is learned in one situation, the classroom, to another situation, the real world. Parents can expand student learning outside of school and play a critical role linking school life to real life.

Today's students live and learn in what is called the "information age." Regardless of the career they choose, they will work and live in a global society. Learning opportunities and information are everywhere; in school, out of school, and everywhere technology can reach. Living in the information age means that sometimes, children can access information to answer a question even before parents have finished asking it! No longer do we say or hear, "Look it up in the dictionary or encyclopedia." The term that today's children understand- is "Google it". There are frequent moments when children "Google it" with just a few words....not even using an entire sentence. Spelling, grammar, book reports, research projects, cursive writing, (and certainly dissecting that frog in science class) that were part of the children's parents' (and their parents') school experience seem to be lost to past generations of learners.

In the information age, opportunities to learn are constantly available to children. Parents and families can play an important role in monitoring and expanding the learning that takes place in school. Parents are in a key position to help their children make the connection from school life to real life.

Parents can help their children succeed in school by applying learning to "real life." Effective strategies can be simple and become habits at home. Here some sample strategies:

- Point out situations where academic skills are used in daily life.
 - Use the grocery store cash register slip and ask him or her to find ten items on the list and line them up in two equal rows.
 - Ask upper elementary school children to figure out how much the family is spending on a specific category of items - such as junk food, soda, or fruit.
 - Ask middle school students to find the percentage of money spent on that category in relation to the entire bill.
 - Ask older children to find out the size of the gas tank in any vehicle they use - family car, public bus, taxi, subway - then ask how much they would spend for a half-gallon of gasoline.)
- Engage children at home on fun and interesting activities.
 - Use basic mathematics and ask younger children to count while they scrub their hair with shampoo.
 - Ask a middle-school student to figure out how much shampoo they use with each wash, how many times they can shampoo their hair with one bottle of shampoo, and have them tell you how soon you should expect to purchase another bottle.
 - Ask younger children to help sort laundry by categories.
 - Ask pre-teens to cut a pizza into five or seven equal pieces.
 - Ask middle school-aged children to find the percent of their time spent online, watching TV, texting, or talking on the phone - if you want to help them learn to manage that time differently ask them to create a table or chart - something that they can visualize.
 - Ask older children to identify units of energy and their use by calculating calories-to-activities by using a written list, online app, "Fit-Bit," or other tool, and calculate the number of calories they burn on their way to school.)

- Encourage questions, solve problems, and prompt students to explain their answers. These are key teaching and learning strategies that students use in school and in every day of their life. In school asking questions, solving problems and explaining answers are usually based in subject area content such as math or science. However, in order to help children become strong learners students can always benefit from practicing and building these skills so that deeper thinking becomes second nature throughout their lives.
 - Ask an older child his or her opinions about the details of current events; their prediction of how a television show will end; the plot development in a movie; a review of a books that you or they may be reading. Even the lyrics to one of their favorite songs can provide an opportunity for your child to practice communication and the skills behind thinking more deeply.

Some simple habits to link school life to real life

- Help your child identify similarities, patterns, and past results so that they can use their knowledge as a basis for projections.
- Make your child aware of when you use math (such as figuring out how much money to give a clerk and how much change you get back).
- When your child asks how to do something and you aren't sure about it, don't be reluctant to say "I don't know but let's figure it out together." Model determination and work together on the challenge. If you and your child do not find a solution, ask teachers or others who are familiar with the issue for assistance.
- Challenge your child in their areas of strength and support f them in their weaker areas.
- Stay aware of progress in school and be sure they are on a path to strengthen their knowledge and skills.
- Be your child's BIGGEST advocate.

A New Role for Parents

When a parent's engagement in student learning provides opportunities for new and additional learning, they:

- Become aware of what their child needs to know, and share with educators, some ways that their child can practice new skills;
- Work with teachers on specific ways that their child can benefit from learning and practicing academic skills outside-of-school;
- Select purposeful interactions and opportunities for their child that focus on learning, communicating, collaborating, problem-solving, and demonstrating new abilities;
- Encourage their child's ability and motivation to participate, expand, or increase learning that applies to college or career;
- Monitor their child's learning and motivation to learn; and
- Share ideas with teachers about how the skills and knowledge gained outside of school can be applied to their child's classroom and beyond.

When parents support student learning in school and through extended learning opportunities, students can find relevance in their current education and a greater understanding of how, why, and when to apply their new knowledge and skills; a vital skill to successful employment. When a child asks his or her parent for help addressing a challenge or solving a problem parents can best help him or her by reinforcing the knowledge, skills, abilities, and tools that they need to know to be able to solve problems on their own; that is the best way to connect school life to real life.