



**NPC**

SUPPORTING PARENTS  
SUPPORTING CHILDREN



**Supporting Your Child's  
Learning at Home**

# Supporting your child's learning at home



## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Children spend only 15% of their time in school. From a very young age, long before they start school, your child is already learning from you. From birth they are learning from you, when you smile at your child they learn to smile. When you talk to them they learn to make sounds. They learn the feel and shape of things by playing with toys, boxes, teddy bears etc.

## THINGS THAT CAN HELP

In supporting your child's learning it is really important that you set high but realistic goals for your child. To do this effectively, you, your child's teacher and your child need to work and communicate well together. You collectively need to discuss and share your expectations and beliefs about achievable goals and then all work together in achieving these goals. Ongoing communication is also important in evaluating progress and making changes that might be needed in your home or in school to support your child's achievements.

You can help build your child's self esteem through encouragement, praise and by listening to your child's opinions and feelings.

It is natural that your child will seek attention from you as their parent. By showing an interest in their school life, asking questions and commenting on their work, you are giving attention in a very positive way.

By regularly talking to your child about the work they are doing in school, encouraging them to do their best, praising and/or displaying the work they bring home, you are showing how important school work and learning is.

It is important that you attend information sessions and parent teacher meetings in your child's school whenever possible. There are a number of reasons for this, firstly it is an obvious opportunity for you to discuss your child's progress and find out how you can further support your child's learning at home. Information sessions can also give you valuable information at a school level rather than your individual child's level which can help you have a better understanding of how the school is operating. Your attendance at school meetings and events also shows your child a concrete connectedness between their home life and their school life. It is important your child sees that home and school are connected as this can help them have a sense of belonging and security in their school environment.

Homework can give you an opportunity to get involved in your child's learning in a very practical way. Therefore you should show how you value homework by setting aside a particular time and place for homework. You should show an interest in what is being done and be available to discuss any problems (see also the NPC leaflet on homework).

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The contribution you make to your child's learning cannot be over emphasised. Parenting involves taking this responsibility seriously and taking advantage of every opportunity to enhance your child's learning. Children absorb life experiences indiscriminately. To a large extent, these life experiences form a child's character, feelings and values, and they provide the window through which they will view the world (Scott, 1992; Villarreal, 1993). In other words, through interaction with your child and the experiences that you provide them with, you can influence and guide your child's growth and development.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO AT HOME?

**Play:** Play is critical for your child's growth and development. Through play your child learns to solve problems, to get along with other children and to develop motor skills such as reaching, grasping, running and climbing. Your child will learn how to solve problems through play, answering questions such as – What does this do? Does this piece of puzzle fit here? Your child will develop their language skills as they interact with others. They learn to cooperate, take turns and play by the rules of the game as well as negotiate. These are all very important life skills.

**Read:** Reading aloud to your child is an easy and effective way to encourage your child to read and to instil a love of books in your child. Reading stimulates your child's imagination. It builds their language, vocabulary and literacy skills as well as building their curiosity and memory. Have you ever left out a paragraph or piece of a story? If you do you will see your child will catch you out every time!! Reading to your child builds family relationships as most children will remember this time when they are

older. If you don't feel reading is one of your strengths you can still very importantly and effectively support your child's reading. Having books in the house is really important. Sitting with your child and looking at a book, discussing the pictures and what might be happening can all develop your relationship with your child and develop your child's love of books.

“Create time with your child... by playing with them, reading with them or involving them in activities around the house”

**Experience:** You can support your children's learning by sharing experiences with them. Encourage your child to participate in out-door activities and experiences by taking them to the park, playground, beach, library, musical events and places of interest whenever you can. Create time with your child, share experiences either by playing with them, reading with them or involving them in activities around the house. This helps build your bond with your child. This can also be an avenue to communicate with your child; learning new things about them through asking open questions such as: What? When? Where? and How? It also gives you an opportunity to chat and catch up with each other and shows you have an interest in their life which can be important for the development of their self esteem. Each shared experience is an opportunity for your child to learn socially or academically.

**Being a good role model:** Modelling appropriate behaviour is essential as your child learns their behaviour from you. If children see their parents expressing gratitude, sharing their feelings or being helpful to others they develop a good understanding of how to communicate with people inside and outside of the home. If children see their parents reading, communicating well with each other and enjoying outside activities they will experience this as the norm.

**Encouragement:** Your child learns by doing. Encourage your child to try doing new things. It doesn't have to be perfect but the experience of trying will help improve their abilities and motivate them to do better. It helps them feel more positive about themselves and improves their self esteem.



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