

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

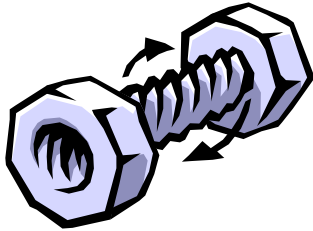
Provided by

AFROCENTRIC.INFO

“The Internet for the Conscious Mind” SM

Definitions

“The Nuts & Bolts”



Academic Standards

Academic Standards are set by the community and describe what all students should know and be able to do at each grade level. They provide a set of common learning goals to which all teachers are expected to teach and to which all students are expected to achieve. Good standards are not minimum standards. Rather, they should describe what constitutes a good education for all students. Therefore, a district must engage its community (including educators, students, parents, business and other interested citizens) in a broad-based conversation about what the district's students must know and be able to do – what a “good education” actually means.

Education

Education is the process that prepares the young for their future membership and active participation in the maintenance or development of a society.

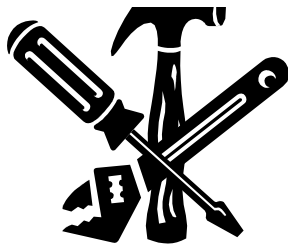
Source: Nyerere, J. K. (1967). Education for self-reliance. Tanzania: Dar es Salam

Benchmarks

Benchmarks (or learning objectives) describe the specific knowledge or skills a student must obtain by each grade level (or set of grades). Benchmarks are the learning expectations for all students in a particular class during a year. Therefore, benchmarks should be the focal point of all activities (homework, class discussions, assignments) to which a student engages.

Parental Engagement

Parental engagement is the proactive and deliberate commitment of a parent or primary care giver to a student's education. This means that you must accept responsibility of being your child's most important teacher. An engaged parent understands that education starts long before kindergarten and continues after the end of a school day. To be proactive and deliberate means that you call the school to talk with the principal, counselor or teacher to express your expectations for success and your support for learning. It also means to provide a home environment where learning can take place and is celebrated.



GETTING ENGAGED

“The Tools You’ll Need”

Mission, Goals and Benchmarks

Contact your districts central office and request copies of:

1. **Mission Statement** – A statement clearly stating the purpose and direction of the district’s activities.
2. **District Goals** – “What is to be accomplished” by the district?
3. **Academic Standards** – What are the learning expectations for your child at his or her grade level?
4. **Benchmarks** – What are the specific skills and knowledge needed for your child to meet the appropriate academic standards?

Principals, Counselors and Teachers

Find out the names of your child’s principal, counselor, and teachers.

Ask the principal:

1. For a copy of the school’s mission statement and goals.
2. Who is the PTA/PTO President and when is the first meeting?
3. What are the procedures for observing your child at school?
4. What are the procedures for setting conferences (parent-principle, parent-counselor, parent-teacher)?

Ask the counselor:

1. About the tests and methods by which your child will be evaluated.
2. For any materials or information that will help you to prepare your child.

Ask each of your child’s teachers:

1. For an outline or description of what will be taught in class and the best way to contact him or her if you have any questions about your child’s work or behavior.

Your child’s strengths, weaknesses, dislikes and likes

There are many tests and evaluations that can be given to assess your child. However, except in special circumstances, the best evaluation is done by observation by a caring parent.

Taking the time to:

1. Notice what activities your child enjoys doing.
2. Talk about hopes and dreams, careers or what he or she would like to accomplish.
3. Notice the situations that your child is at his or her best, relaxed and feeling proud and conversely in what situations are troublesome for your child.
4. Learn your child’s academic strengths and weaknesses; use your districts benchmarks as a yardstick. This will help you know where your child is academically on target, need help or doing better than expected.

By understanding your child’s likes, dislikes, weaknesses and strengths, you can better communicate with teachers and counselors about creating positive learning environments of your child.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

“Things You Can Do”



There are many things you can do to promote the academic success of your child. Though most are very simple, all can have profound impact. The greatest thing you can do is to make education important. Our children tend to value those things that we demonstrate are important through our actions and time. Here are some other things you can do.

Make sure your child gets a good night’s sleep. Have a regular scheduled time for meals, homework, play and sleep.

Stop in at school to volunteer, attend class events, participate in school and PTA activities, and to observe your child in class.

Talk to the teachers, counselor and principal about expectations (including benchmarks*) for your child. Discuss your commitment to your child’s education and ways you can help with lessons.

Make sure your child comes to school on time. This reinforces the importance of education and ensures that your child is not missing valuable information.

Go over your child’s schoolwork. This includes reviewing homework; expecting assignments to be completed on time and neat; reviewing in class assignments and test, and redoing things that were incorrect.

Talk with your child about what he or she sees on television or current events. With younger children discuss the difference between real and pretend. With older children, discuss current events and their impact on your local community, your family and how these events connect to lessons in school.

Reinforce good behaviors – reward good behavior; clearly distinguish between good and bad consequences; work before play; and point out examples of people who try hard to succeed.

Encourage your child to enjoy life and learning. Get your child involved in activities that are fun and point out how what is learned in school can help your child. So that he or she understands learning is an important part of what he or she cares about.

Read to and with your child. Reading to and with your child not only helps your child to develop literacy skills, it helps to develop brain cell growth and strengthen connections between parts of the brain.

Give your child LOVE, ATTENTION and SUPERVISION. Children learn what they live.

Source: The Parent Institute (2001). Parent Make The Difference