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School is well under way. Classes have started, athletics are booming, and homework is coming home with some regularity. The beginning of the school year is something kids look forward to but so do parents.

As the school years go on some things get lost. What one thing is missing more and more as your child goes higher in school? It is one thing: the parents.

When a child enters kindergarten, her parents are almost always involved. It is an exciting time for them as well as for their child. Even the schools recognize the importance of parents.

As the months and years go by, a change begins to occur. The children are still important. The teachers are increasingly important. The importance of homework continues to increase. But the importance of parents' involvement in the schools begins to lessen. The parent's role is relegated to PTO or PTA's to help raise money. Don't misunderstand. That is an important role but it doesn't make up for the parent being involved in their child's schooling.

So how can this be corrected? This is a problem for the schools and parents. This isn't a problem the children can solve. Schools need to reach out to parents to keep them involved. Parents need to be ready to help their child to do well in school.

Parents were the child's first and most important teacher when they were born. They will remain a child's important teacher all the way through growing up and into the adult years.

As a parent you may not know all of the things your child's teacher is teaching her but you should try. Read the instructions. Understand what she is learning. Encourage her. Let her know you are proud of her.

When you don't understand and she doesn't either, encourage her to get the help she needs. Part of your role is being part cheerleader, part counselor and part motivator while you are being another part teacher and another part parent.

Think of the advantage you give a child when you stay involved. If you aren't there and another parent is there for the child next to yours, imagine the great advantage that gives the other child. It is like the difference that children have when they enter kindergarten if you have read a book or two to them everyday. If you read just one book a day, your child will have read more than 1,500 books when she enters kindergarten. Most parents will read a couple of books when they are reading because these books can be so short.

Then compare your child's readiness to read if she has read between 1500 and 3000 books before school begins compared to a child whose parents don't read to him.

The child who reads with their parent has a major advantage. The same is true with numbers, letters, facts, and most information. This role of helping your child in school shouldn't end. Keep it going. Even without the school encouraging it, keep it going.

And to the schools, involve your student's parents. They are not the enemy, they are your allies. They can help lessen your load by being a tutor at home. Too many teachers feel intimidated by parents. Give that some serious thought. Welcome the assistance of parents and see if there is a payoff in the child's learning.

One last note about this issue. I talk about parents but I don't just mean parents. I mean any significant other in your child's life — another parent, a grandparent, an older brother, a neighbor or anyone acting as this important person in your child's learning.

Make sure there is someone who is involved with the school in teaching your child to the best of her ability.

Giving Back

Give. Advocate. Volunteer.

Did you know research shows that people who give back to their communities are happier and more satisfied in their lives? Raising children to be engaged, caring members of their communities is not hard to do. United Way encourages everyone to Give, Advocate, and Volunteer.

Raise money through a family bake sale or create a family charity bank and save money throughout the year then decide together where to donate. Talk together as a family and then share with your local community leaders about the things that are important to you. Or, find some sort of activity to volunteer as a family. Discover your local [United Way](#).