

Welcome!

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Getting involved in your child's life makes all the difference in how they grow up and view their world. Have you ever left a 2 year old, 13 year old, or even an 18 year old unsupervised for too long? The toddler isn't the only one who makes a mess. Being out of touch with your child, even for a little while, can lead to unwanted challenges. The same thing happens when it comes to your child's learning. If you are out of touch for a little while, things tend to get a little messed up.

This newsletter is full of ideas and reasons why you should get involved with your child's life, including diving into their education. We hope you find this information useful!

Great Resources for Parents

The National PTA has prepared a wonderful brochure called "100 Ways to Help Your Child & School Succeed." You can get these from:

100 Ways to Help Your Child & School Succeed (National PTA)

http://www.pta.org/documents/100Ways_brochure-en.pdf (English version)

http://www.pta.org/documents/100Ways_brochure-sp.pdf (Spanish version)

6 ways to be involved in education

There are lots of ways to participate in your child's education. Here are 6 easy actions you can take to get involved and stay involved throughout their educational career!

- 1** Parenting: Connecting with your child, whatever their age, is important to building your relationship and helping them succeed. Having trouble connecting? Make everyday moments a time to connect by turning off our cell phones, iPods and car stereos and just talk. Talk with your children about their day, your day, how things are going. Take advantage of those "captive audience" moments to ask open-ended questions like, "What was one thing you liked learning about today?" If your child struggles with making friends ask, "Who did you talk to in the lunch room today?" These moments show your child that you care. Check out www.bethere.org for more ideas on how to connect with your child.
- 2** Communicating: To achieve the best results for your child's education, effective and timely communication is the key. You are the expert on your child and your child's school is the expert on learning. Start by keeping current with school newsletters and websites. Attend information nights or other school functions. Remember to have two-way communication with educators. Parent-Teacher and Student-Led Parent Teacher Conferences are great ways to exchange information. Occasional classroom visits, phone calls, and e-mails are other ways to share information back and forth about how your child is learning. By sharing information, you can partner together to figure out how your child will learn best. Behavior can be an issue. Rather than listening to only your child's side of the story, try talking with the teacher and getting different perspectives. Share your child's frustrations with the teacher—what leads up to him or her making a bad choice? By working together, parents and teachers can help every student succeed.
- 3** Volunteering: Volunteer for anything, from shelving books in the school library to running the school carnival. When your child sees you spending time at his or her school, it shows that you care. It doesn't matter whether "James" is five, ten, or fifteen years old. It has an impact on "James" when he sees Mom or Dad or Uncle spending time with his teachers and school administrators.

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4 Learning at Home: Parents are their child's first and most permanent teacher. This role doesn't stop at preschool or kindergarten, but continues throughout a lifetime. Create a home environment that builds a desire to learn and fulfills that desire. Ask each other questions and look for answers. Spend some time on weekends going to new places together (zoo, museum, or walk where Lewis and Clark traveled). Play board games (try Candy Land or Mega Monopoly for example). Check and discuss homework. Learning includes recreational activities, faith activities, wellness, and many others such as grocery shopping, balancing a checking account, comparing real costs if you finance a car for 6 or 7 years.

5 Decision Making: Participate in a school leadership council, strategic planning group, PTA or PTO, community council, or other groups which connects parents with school staff. Parents know best what they need from schools and what their children need in order to succeed. Discussions surrounding school improvement plans are enhanced by the views the parents offer.

6 Collaborating with Others: Work with others in your community to help your child learn even more about the world. Visit the museum. Do community service activities with your child. Spend time at the library. Connecting with others helps build social networks that everyone will benefit from. Learning from other parents can be your greatest resource!

State Accountability Systems*How is your school doing?*

Each year, schools are given goals for their students and report to NDE their results. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) provides a yearly "State of the Schools Report" on their website that reports these results. It can be found at:

<http://reportcard.nde.state.ne.us/Main/Home.aspx>.

This report lets parents and community members know the change in performance of Nebraska students on state reading and math assessments. You can even compare and analyze the student performance results at your school to other schools.

Schools that do not achieve their student performance goals for two years in a row provide information to parents about extra services for students that will support them in their learning, such as supplemental services.

For more information, talk with your building principal or visit www.NebraskaPIRC.org for information on No Child Left Behind.

School-Based Parental Information & Resource Centers

Belvedere Elementary in Omaha has recently added a Parental Information & Resource Center Room.

To help keep children and caregivers informed and involved, this is a great place to pick up materials about education and their school.

Resources such as computers with internet-access, daily newspapers, family magazines, various handouts



and pamphlets that are available before, during, and after school hours.

Families may checkout educational materials including manipulatives, books, and other parent resources. To continue building positive relationships within the community, Belvedere is partnering with local early childhood centers, child care providers, and after school programs. This partnership shares with families the variety of resources available through Belvedere's Parental Information and Resource Center.