

The School to Home Connection

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How you connect what happens in your child's classroom to your home will have a positive effect on his/her growth at school. Your visit to Open House, Curriculum Night, and Parent-Teacher Conference allowed you the opportunity to receive information about national/town standards and how you can help your child at home. The following paragraphs will include suggestions to help your child at home for those enrolled in kindergarten, grade one and grade two.

If you're a kindergarten parent, you have realized that kindergarten isn't what it used to be! The National Standards have been raised and it seems like kindergarten is the 'new grade one'. While at home with your child, play games that involve rhyming, sequencing and/or color shape recognition. While reading with your child, discuss the characters and events in the story. Ask questions such as: What do you think will happen next? How do you think the boy feels in the story? What is the problem in the story? How do you think the problem will be solved? Activities that involve letter/sound recognition, such as magnetic letters and finding items in the grocery store, are very helpful at this pre-reading stage. You may include a writing center at home that includes fat pencils and letter stamps. Allow your child to draw a picture with details, and provide them the opportunity to dictate a sentence about their drawing. They should be writing their names and learning to write the names of their family members. You and your child can develop number recognition by creating a calendar at home to count down to a special event. The skill of creating patterns can be practiced with gummy bears, fruit loops, and/or colored buttons. You may also use these materials to create and identify shapes.

Is your child recalling the 'good old days' of kindergarten? Getting off the bus a little tired? Welcome to grade one! This grade is probably one of the hardest to adjust to. Your child is sitting at a desk more often, asked to work more independently, and the curriculum becomes much more intense. In December, students are expected to be reading at a level 8 and they are placed in guided reading groups. A level 8 text has a main character, a few lines of print on each page, the stories are about eight pages and illustrations provide a high level of support for unknown words. You and your child can visit your local library to select books according to his/her reading level. Each reading level has different text expectations and your school will have a written definition for each reading level. Contact your child's teacher, reading consultant and/or visit the school website to obtain the information. Allow your child time to read familiar books independently, as well as with or to a parent and/or sibling. Many schools have reading incentive programs and after school enrichment programs for a variety of academic areas. If your school has limited enrichment programs, it is that much more important to stay involved and aware of your child's growth and development. Plan day trips (Rocky Hill Dinosaur Park, Science Center in West Hartford) which may allow your child to send a post card to a friend; this will show them how to write for meaning. While grocery

shopping, have your child add the number of items purchased or try counting the change. These daily activities, while connecting it to your child's school curriculum, will provide you with the knowledge of his/her strengths and weaknesses.

Have a child who seems to be so independent one minute, and then just wants to cuddle the next.....this is grade two. At this grade level, it is important to show confidence in your child's ability to complete a task independently. However, a parent must still be very active in providing 'positive support' for their child. This 'positive support' includes providing a special area for the child to complete a project, offer words of encouragement and act as a role model to show the value of their education. During the beginning of grade two, students are expected to read at a level 18 and are placed in guided reading groups. As mentioned in the above paragraph, it is important to know and understand your child's reading level to help you select books at the local library and/or bookstore. A level 18 text has one main plot with several episodes that take place at different points in time, the events are highly elaborated, some books may be over 50 pages in length (and many of these are chapter books) and the genre of books include realistic fiction, fantasy and informational text. The skills of telling time, addition with re-grouping, counting money and measuring can be practiced at home. Activities such as grocery shopping, visiting the mall and cooking all serve as opportunities for reviewing and/or learning these skills.

As a parent, you can also visit your school website to learn about their mission statement and profile of the school. The school profile will include the enrollment, types of programs offered (ex. Gifted Programs, ELL, Special Education, Pre-School), plans for improvements, subjects offered and/or a description of the curriculum. Your child's teacher follows the curriculum to implement the objectives at his/her grade level, which may also be referred to as the scope and sequence. This means the teacher has an objective to be met, a sequence to follow and materials and resources to achieve the objective. After these objectives are taught, assessments are used to establish if your child achieved the objective/goal to be met. Depending on the results of the assessments, the teacher may seek additional resources and/or services. Information regarding this procedure may be found on the school website, by contacting an administrator and/or discussing it with your child's teacher at a parent-teacher conference. A few school websites to visit which provide excellent examples of what a school website should include are <http://www.greenwich.k12.ct.us> and <http://www.wallingford.k12.ct.us>

Enjoy learning and growing with your child through interesting day trips at nearby towns and/or volunteering at your child's school. Be aware of the expectations placed on your child and resources your town offers to help them grow and learn with confidence. If you have any topics/questions you would like addressed in future articles, please send e-mail to LINDAMASSUCCI@aol.com