



Home-School Connections **A Stress-Free Guide for Co-Parents**

Research shows that home-school connections are integral to student success. They create a welcoming, enjoyable educational environment, help students and their families to feel more comfortable, support academic achievement, and set children on a path for a brighter future. As a co-parent, you're juggling many different responsibilities, but if you put in the effort early, you can form a strong partnership. There are many ways to do this, some of which require minimum time commitments. Here are our stress-free ideas!

General guidelines:

- Communicate honestly and openly, in a respectful manner.
- Be proactive: don't let issues escalate or slip through the cracks.
- Share essential information about your co-parenting such as custody arrangements, visitation schedules, contact details, etc.
- Respect your child's teacher as the expert on his/her classroom.
- Work together as a team: keep any conflicts between you and your parenting partner separate from any school-related matters or interactions.

Suggestions for parenting partners (custodial or non-custodial):

- Consider non-traditional ways of building a connection: visit the school playground on weekends (if possible), stay after school or go early to play (if possible!)
- Volunteer
- Become a PTO member
- Attend your district's Board of Education meetings (when permissible)
- Join school committees
- Attend school events
- Donate requested items
- Ask questions or ask your teacher for advice about something. For example, "Do you have any ideas on which books we should be buying for our child?" or, "How can we encourage our child to develop healthy homework habits?" This shows that you respect your teacher's knowledge, and can be a means to open the lines of communication and grow your relationship.
- Peruse the school website, emails, etc. Keep informed of what's going on.
- Bring school (and what your child is learning) into conversations at home. Mention connections between both places- for example, "Your school has bins like these to keep your supplies organized. Let's get the same ones for home!," or "Our family rule is to speak kindly to each other... that's on your classroom rule list, too!"

- Do parallel activities if/when possible- for example, read books about things they're studying in the classroom, visit museums, do art projects, etc.
- Download all the school apps- whatever platform your school uses to communicate, or apps that your child's teacher assigns to the students for them to do assignments in school at home. Check them frequently.
- Update your calendar to reflect school schedules and events.
- Incorporate school into your gratitude practice: make some of the activities school-related, like "write a letter to your teacher to say thank you for all your teacher does for you"

For non-custodial/long-distance parenting partners:

It may seem challenging at first, but with today's technology, you can modify almost all of the examples above to be doable in a remote format.

- Ensure that you are on your child's school email list, so that you get all communications and updates.
- Check with your child's teacher to ask about, or suggest, virtual "volunteer" opportunities. For example, you could read a book to the class via Zoom, conduct a "lesson" or talk to the group via videochat, etc.
- Find teacher wish lists on Amazon or just ask the teacher. Then, discuss with your child what he'd like to donate and send them what you can.
- Post important school dates on your calendar, so that you can ask about them even if you can't be there in person.
- Keep positive, open communication with your parenting partner. This will make it easier to share information on a regular basis.