

NEW REPORT SHOWS PARENTS NOT DOING WHAT MATTERS MOST FOR THEIR KID'S SUCCESS AT SCHOOL

*Data reveals wide gap between what experts say parents **should do**, and what parents are **actually doing***

For immediate release

Toronto (September 6, 2011) – A new report from People for Education says that chatting with kids about school or even asking questions about a TV show – helping to connect something kids learned in school to a real world experience – does more for students' chances for success than “drill and skill” homework sessions, endless nagging, or racing off to a school meeting.

Unfortunately, the report also found that many, if not most, Ontario students report their parents aren't doing the things that really make a difference.

HOMEWORK LOW ON THE LIST

For the report, People for Education researchers reviewed thirty years of research from Canada, the United States and England.

The evidence is unequivocal: parents make a difference.

But the kind of involvement that makes the biggest difference to students' chances for success in school isn't what most parents might expect. More important than limiting TV time, volunteering on the school council, or even monitoring homework, there are four things that lead the pack:

- Letting your child know you have high (but reasonable) expectations for him or her
- Talking with your child about school
- Focusing on kids' attitudes, more than their marks
- Reading to and/or with your child

For the most part, experts agreed that the effect of parents' involvement with their children's homework is “negligible to nonexistent, except among the youngest students.”

EQAO SURVEYS REVEAL A LARGE GAP BETWEEN WHAT RESEARCHERS KNOW AND WHAT PARENTS DO

Every year, the province's Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) surveys all the students in grade 3 and 6 (252,218 students in 2009-10), all their teachers (15,804), and all their principals (3466) to provide background information on the education system and individual students.

According to the children, many parents don't talk to their kids about school or read with them regularly.

Talking

- Less than half of students in grade 3 (46%) report they talk to a parent or guardian “every day or almost every day” about their school activities.
- 26% of grade 3 students say they talk about school activities with a parent or guardian either once or twice a month, or never.

- In grade 6, only 38% of students say they talk about school activities with their parent or guardian “every day or almost every day.”
- 29% of grade 6 students report they talk about school activities either once or twice a month, or never.

Reading

- Only 21% of children in grade 3 report that they read together with a parent or guardian “every day or almost every day.”
- 55% of grade 3 students report either that they never read with a parent or guardian, or that they do so only once or twice a month.
- By grade 6, only 4% of students report that they read together nearly every day (but 74% say they read by themselves at least once a week).

TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS STRUGGLING TO PROMOTE PARENTS’ ENGAGEMENT WHERE IT MATTERS MOST

The report says that “collaborative relationships with teachers and others at the school are linked to improved attendance, better student engagement, more positive relationships... [And] it is easier for kids to move between home and school with a positive attitude about both.”

The report also says that “invitations from teachers,” two-way communication between the home and the school, and outreach from the school all have a positive impact on parents’ decisions to participate in their children’s education at home.

But results from the EQAO principal and teacher surveys suggest that schools continue to be more effective at communicating with parents about school-based activities, even though research shows that it’s what parents do at home that matters most.

- 86% of principals say they keep all parents informed about school activities, but only 32% say they feel successful at helping all parents understand student learning goals and outcomes.
- 72% of principals reported that their school has collaborative relationships with parents to help meet learning goals, but only 55% of grade 3 teachers and 37% of grade 6 teachers say they regularly (once a month or more) communicate with parents about the learning goals for the class.
- 60% of grade 3 teachers and only 38% of grade 6 teachers say they regularly (once a month or more) share information with parents about what they can do at home to support their children’s learning.

TOOL KITS COMING

To accompany the new report, People for Education, will release a series of tip sheets – for parents, school councils, teachers and principals – providing concrete actions each can take to support parents participation in their children’s education.

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For the full report go to: www.peopleforeducation.com