

Principally Speaking- Fall 2006

When Parents Participate, Children Succeed

During my brief presentation during our September Back-to-School Nights I focused on the importance of family involvement. Those in attendance may remember I shared this in the context of “**a sure thing**.” How often do we ignore the advice of others or when faced with a sure thing, procrastinate and fail to act. I know I have in the past. Maybe it’s one of the flaws of our human condition. Regardless, it is a poor excuse for not taking advantage of something that can benefit us. Years of educational research has proven that parent or family involvement is a best bet if a child is going to find success in school. Many studies have shown when parent are involved, children get better grades, and also have fewer behavioral problems. The importance of parent involvement is especially true in the area of family literacy. I strongly believe good schools have good teachers that know their craft and find ways to engage students in learning. Likewise, good schools have supportive parents that attend to their children’s needs, help them come to school prepared to learn, and help reinforce and support the skills they are learning. One the most important area of family involvement is family literacy. We know from research the top three factors that discriminate highly effective and less effective school in literacy achievement. The third highest factor is the amount of reading done in school. The second is the amount of reading done at home. The number one factor in literacy achievement is **parent involvement**.¹

Consider these amazing facts from the National Center for Family Literacy Research Department:

- *Parent-child literacy activities in the home, such as helping children to recognize letter, reading to children, or assisting with reading and writing assignments, have been found to improve children’s language skills and heighten their interest in books*²
- *Children who were read to frequently are nearly twice as likely as other children to show three or more skill associated with emerging literacy. Likewise, children who were read to three or more times in a week by a family member were more likely to*

¹ Poslethwaite, T.N. & Ross, K.N. (1992). *Effective Schools in Reading: Implications for the Classroom*. Hague: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement .

² Primavera, J. (2000). Enhancing family literacy competence through literacy activities. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, 20, 85-101

*recognize all letters of the alphabet, count to 20 or higher, write their own name, and read or pretend to read.*³

- *The substantial relationship between parent involvement for the school and the reading comprehension levels of fourth grade classroom is obvious. Where involvement is low, classroom means average 46 points below the national average, and where involvement is high, classrooms score 28 points above the national average, a gap of 74 points. Even after controlling for the other attributes of communities, schools, principals, classes, and students that might confound this relationship, the gap is 44 points.*⁴

With these types of statistics, it easy to see why family involvement, especially in the area of literacy is a “sure thing.” This year we encourage parents, through our Parents As Reading Partners (PARP) program to support our school-wide theme “Camp Heritage: A Reading and Thinking Adventure,” by reading to their child or encouraging their child to read at home daily. Parents can also encourage their children to also be more thoughtful in their thinking by learning about the “habits of mind.” Information about both PARP and the habits of mind can be found in our *Weekly Informer* newsletter or by visiting Heritage Heights on the web at <http://heritage.shs.k12.ny.us/>.

We know that current, and future economic conditions demands that our students learn to read, write, and think at high levels. Obviously, the more time students spend reading, and talking about reading, the more success they will have in this area. It is certainly the focus of our teachers this year and I hope each parent will support us in this area by keeping informed with what is happening in their child’s classroom, reading and writing at home, and getting involved in PTA or other family involvement activities.

We are off to a positive start to the new school. I enjoyed seeing parents at our chicken BBQ and campfire, as well at recent nature walk at the Audubon Library. At the end of October we will be having our annual Standards and Assessment Parent Meeting. Though targeted for parents of 3rd grade students and new families to our school, anyone interested in this information is welcome to attend.

Let’s take advantage of a “sure thing.” Stay involved and remember, when parents participate, students truly succeed. Have a great school year!

Mr. Wolf

³ Nord, C.W., Lennon, J., Lui, B., and Chandler, k. (1999). Home literacy activities and signs of children’s emerging literacy 1993 and 1999 (NCES No. 2000-026). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education

⁴ (U.S. Department of Education. (1996). Reading literacy in the United States: Findings from the IEA reading literacy study (NCES No. 96-258). Washington, DC: Author.)