

# How to Get Involved in Your Kid's School



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In the modern age of communication, schools inundate parents with messages about schedules, coffee with the principal, upcoming events, and opportunities to participate in training. Like most parents I have spoken to, I often save those emails and texts for later, hoping that “future me” will be able to find a way to participate more meaningfully. In most schools, a small percentage of parents are highly involved, a few more come to monthly events and meetings, and the majority only come to major events like Back to School Night and Parent Conferences. I am one of the “Monthly Event” parents, and my wife and I are constantly trying to determine how we can get more engaged.

But some would ask, “Why bother?” If I go to the big events, I support my child by helping with homework. I provide meaningful learning opportunities at home. I also make sure my child attends school. Why do I have to take time to go to campus? This is an especially

pertinent question given that many schools only offer engagement opportunities between 8 AM and 5 PM. This means parents have to leave work early or take time off to come to the school to support.

## What Our Kids Observe

The answer is in the perception of the child. Our involvement at our child's school reinforces the value and importance of education. It solidifies the child's understanding that the adults in their life are working together to make sure the child gets the best education possible. It also helps to build relationships and understanding between teachers, staff, and parents making it easier for that team to collaborate and more difficult for the child to play adults against each other. When school adults and home adults are working in partnership to provide a great educational experience, the student will take his or her education more seriously and the adults will be able to better meet the needs of the student.

## Strategies to Get Involved

So how can you get involved? Here are some tips for getting engaged in a way that is meaningful to you:

If you are the parent of a child with special needs or the parent of an English Learner (EL), inquire about the opportunities your school has for you. Schools are required to have a School Advisory Council that includes parents as members, and they have to have an EL Parent Advisory Council. These

meetings are led by the school principal and attended by a variety of stakeholders, including parents! Also, if your child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), you should attend and engage in your child's IEP meeting! Often parents think the educators know best, and they do have a lot of strategies that are great for your child. But so do you! You know your child best and you can offer a lot that would help them succeed.

Most schools are looking for volunteers to help with field trips or fundraisers, and many schools would love to have some more adults around to help with supervision. Ask your school's administration how you can sign up to be a parent volunteer.

Bring fruit or water to your school's sporting events. Of course, make sure you check in with the coach or athletic director first. The kids will love to have some orange slices or snacks after the game. This could make you the football hero mom/dad!

When you see a need, offer your help! Instead of just bringing concerns forward, jump in like a partner. If you see traffic is crazy during drop-off, ask if you can be trained to help direct traffic a couple of days per week. If you see that the kids look bored during recess, offer to bring in arts and crafts the kids could do in the lunch area. If your kid's teachers seem tired, bring them some coffee and donuts!

No matter how you get involved, think of a way that fits for you and just jump in. When you do, talk to your child about what you are doing and how you are engaging at the school. This should lead to more conversations

with your child and a lasting impression of the importance of their education.