

Parents as Their Child's First Teacher

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Note: Guest bloggers, Janis Baron, Founder and Board President, and Ali Barekat, Executive Director of Sunday Friends

(www.SundayFriends.org) in San Jose, California, contributed to the first

of this two-part series.

Many parents feel overwhelmed and unqualified in how they can adequately support their children in their personal and academic growth as their first teachers. The Sunday Friends agency supports families who have not been actively involved in their children's schools in a Sunday morning curricular program. Parents and their children attend life skills classes that are taught by community experts. Classes are offered in effective parenting skills, health, nutrition, literacy, academic support activities, community involvement, financial literacy, and employment services. The classroom learning is reinforced through six hours of family-centered, hands-on learning activities, including reading, writing, science projects, educational games

and computer exercises as well as healthy cooking and craft gift making for disadvantaged community members.

When disenfranchised families learn the life skills to support their children's learning, the parents become leaders in their schools and the children increase their study skills and academic success. The following program outcomes are achieved through ongoing family participation and mentorship support:

Parents learn the value of parent involvement in their child's development and education.

Parents become confident that they can help their children in education through support, monitoring, advocacy, skill development and modeling.

Mothers become confident about their contributions and gifts when encouraged by other moms.

The values of resilience, perseverance, maturity, a dedicated work ethic, and the importance of family closeness are reinforced in the program.

The parents realize that their strengths include bilingualism and a rich cultural background to share.

Parents demonstrate that it can be more powerful to learn together than bring previously acquired academic knowledge.

Children want to model themselves after their parents.

Children are recognized for their innate ability for language and technology.

Children absorb the culture of learning together and they experience the satisfaction of this outcome.

Children see their parents as role models in learning, growing, and developing the self-efficacy that they can succeed.

By joining a community of learners, parents and their children receive the support from their peers.

When considering the impact that the Sunday Friends agency has on parents and their children, share the personal skills or traits that you and your family have gained by partnering with your school in the comments section. We will incorporate your ideas in a future blog on partnering with your children's schools.

Happy academic support of your children!

Mary Ann, Janis, and Ali

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