FAMILY TOOLS
Module 3
Enhancing Student Learning
Enhancing Student Learning

“El buen trigo hace buen pan.”

“Involved parents make good students.”

-Spanish Dicho

Overview

School-Home-Community partnerships tied to student learning can and do increase student achievement. Student learning increases when educators and families work together as a team to provide a support system for each student.

This module addresses what happens when families and schools invest time and effort to influence learning. The resources in this section assist families in:

• supporting their child’s learning at home;
• helping with homework;
• mentoring their child into college; and
• thinking about how they can improve student learning at home.

Research Link

Parents play an important role in assisting student learning. In today’s world, all children need help from their families and other caregivers to succeed in school and in life. Families can share positive attitudes about education such as learning can be fun and interactive, education is valuable and important and setting high expectations for oneself can help shape one’s future.

Research supports the idea that family involvement in learning often provides the following benefits (Epstein et al., 2002):

Results for Students:

• Gains in skills, abilities and test scores
• Productive homework completion
• Positive attitudes towards school and self as a learner

Results for Families:

• Support to children through all stages of schooling
• Communication with children about school, homework and other activities
• Clear understanding of expectations based on the New Mexico Content Standards

Results for Teachers:

• Homework assignments that engage families and community
• Recognition of diverse family needs
• Student ownership of learning
Practices to Enhance Student Learning at Home

- Show that you value reading. Let your child see you reading for pleasure as well as for performing your routine activities as an adult such as reading letters and recipes, directions and instructions, newspapers, computer screens and so forth. When your child sees that reading is important to you, she or he is likely to see it as an important skill to learn.

- Engage your child in thought-provoking discussions about classes, homework assignments, school projects, grades and activities, focusing on the positive aspects of school. Your perspective can help your child apply what’s being taught in school to the “outside” world.

- Have your child organize and set out what is needed for the school day the night before (i.e., homework and books should be put in backpacks and clothes should be laid out).

- When your child talks to you, stop what you’re doing and pay attention. Look at him or her and ask questions or restate what he/she said to let your child know that you’ve heard what he/she said: (i.e., So when are you going to help your granddad work on his car?).

- Set a regular time for homework. Having a regular time to do homework helps children to finish assignments. Of course, a good schedule depends in part on your child’s age, as well as her specific needs. You’ll need to work with a young child to develop a schedule. You should give your older child the responsibility for making up a schedule independently—although you’ll want to make sure that it’s a workable one.

New Mexico Teacher Competencies

Getting better at what schools do requires a lot of extra effort and help. For teachers, this means participating in professional development that helps them reach to a whole new level of teaching. Improving teacher quality through professional development improves learning for all children.

New Mexico teachers are required to meet nine teacher competencies. The New Mexico 3-Tiered Licensure System provides a structure for documenting teacher qualifications. The No Child Left Behind Federal Act requires that teachers who teach the core academic subjects and special education must be “highly qualified” as defined by the New Mexico Public Education Department.

The competency areas for Level III (Master Teacher) relevant to student learning for families are listed below.

- Teachers follow the New Mexico Content Standards that describe what students should know and be able to do at all grade levels and in all subject areas.

- Teachers use a variety of resources and teaching methods appropriate for the language and culture of the students and families.

- Teachers understand how students grow and learn in grades K-12.
## Parent/Family Reflection for Enhancing Student Learning

Use this checklist to rate the school in the area of school/home/community student learning and think about specific questions and actions you can take to enhance student learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Specific questions to ask at school</th>
<th>Actions to take to improve learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I provide a quiet place and time to do homework with lighting, writing tools, paper, computer, dictionary and other reference materials.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have received or requested clear information about what is expected of my child based on the New Mexico Content Standards for student achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I make sure that the school provides me with information in a format and language that I can understand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I make an extra effort to help my child manage and complete homework assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have visited the school web site and/or made an effort to find out about the school’s programs and activities.</td>
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<td>I participate in parent nights, or other events that invite parents to the school.</td>
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### Resource 1

**Worth a Click**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connect for Kids</td>
<td>The site includes a Parent Involvement in Education topic page for ideas on how to be an active participant in your child’s education, as well as tips and tools for becoming a more effective advocate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.connectforkids.org">www.connectforkids.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRESST Parent Page</td>
<td>A click here takes families to a site with everything from subject-area printables, to both expert and peer advice on such topics as whether to retain your student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/resources/justforparents_set.htm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Education Network</td>
<td>Broken down by age and grade level, this site has a treasure trove of learning activities to do with children. It has special sections on issues such as retention and school safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.familyeducation.com">www.familyeducation.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Moms and Dads Only (and other loving caregivers)</td>
<td>This site includes an extensive list of links to many resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://surfaquarium.com/FAMILY/parent.htm">http://surfaquarium.com/FAMILY/parent.htm</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Wise</td>
<td>For families concerned about media, this site offers many facts, tips, research, reviews of video games and movies, as well as a quick quiz to find out about media use.</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.mediatamily.org">www.mediatamily.org</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Education Association</td>
<td>This web site offers information on parent-teacher conferences, understanding testing, getting involved in your child’s school and other resources to help make your child’s school experience successful.</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.nea.org/parents/index.html">www.nea.org/parents/index.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Lore</td>
<td>This site includes an index of Native American Stories from across the nation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.ilhawaii.net/~stony/loreindx.html">http://www.ilhawaii.net/~stony/loreindx.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Rockets New Mexico</td>
<td>Reading is a critical skill for everyone. From the moment a child is born, there are simple things the parent can do to help him or her become a good reader. This site also includes signs to watch for that may indicate that a child may have trouble learning to read, so you can get him or her help early. It offers a step-by-step guide to what parents can do to raise a reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.readingrockets.org/resources/c290">http://www.readingrockets.org/resources/c290</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A page titled For Families includes the following topics:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.readingrockets.org/families">http://www.readingrockets.org/families</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
  - Build your child’s early reading skills at home  
  - Recognize early signs of trouble  
  - Tap into the power of a high-quality preschool  
  - Find good schools and good teachers  
  - Know when your child is struggling in school  
  - Get extra help through tutoring  
  - Stand up for your child  
  - Get extra help through special education |
Resource 2

Things You Can Do at Home to Help Your Child Succeed

Try these ideas of how you can include learning in your home routine.

Learning doesn’t just happen at school, it can happen anywhere. There are a number of skills that you can easily incorporate into your home routine. This list is just a start. Ask your child’s teachers for other things you can do at home to support your child’s learning.

Talk with your child
Talk about the things that are important to your child and your family. Talk about books you read or what you see on TV or in the world around you. Always try to make connections between what your child already knows and what they hear and read. For kids of all ages, talking, listening and discussing issues together not only helps language development, but shows you’re genuinely interested in what she has to say.

Reading
When reading a book or watching a television show or a movie, ask young children to repeat the plot, the story’s characters (including the main character) and the setting. Ask him to retell what happens in the beginning, middle and end. After you read a book together, ask him questions about what happened. For older students, be aware of what your child is reading. Ask your child to tell you about his reading and his feelings about it.

Language Arts
Work on increasing your child’s vocabulary by using and defining more difficult words in everyday speech. Use a dictionary to check meaning. Practice using antonyms and synonyms. Have your child become proficient at alphabetical order by organizing materials that way -- books, kitchen supplies, videos, etc. For older students, make sure to ask open ended questions, rather than just yes or no questions. This encourages your child to use language and vocabulary for self-expression.

Math
Help your child see that math is everywhere and that we use mathematical skills everyday. Encourage young children to learn to count by twos, threes and fives. Play number games, make up word problems and use manipulatives or objects that they can count and move. Create graphs based on family activities and practice reading graphs together. Practice time and money concepts. For older students, take an interest in the area of mathematics your child is currently studying and have her explain the concept to you.

Science
Observe and discuss the world around you such as plants and animals and the weather or night sky. Encourage questions and look for answers together. Classify and organize information, set up simple experiments and discuss and predict what they think might happen. For older students, discuss the concepts your older child is studying in science, whether it be physical science, life science or earth and space science.
Social Studies/History
Share your family history with your child by telling stories about yourself or older family members. Read with young children about historical people and events. Help your child understand that people who make history are real. For older students, help them explore family and community history as well as government structures.

Arts
Encourage your child’s participation in local music, drama, art and museum programs. Allow your child to bring a friend along and give it a try. Ask your child to read a review of a play or musical performance. Then ask him to write a review of a favorite or new CD, movie or TV program. Listen to the CD or watch the movie or program together and discuss the review.

Writing
You may have heard the term “writing prompt” used at school. A writing prompt is simply a suggestion for an idea, a form or a story to structure a writing activity. It can be lots of fun to develop writing prompts into home writing activities, and you’ll be helping children develop skills that they can use in the classroom. Consider these possibilities:

- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper about an issue of concern to your community.
- Write a letter of complaint about a toy or game that didn’t live up to your expectations.
- Write an e-mail message requesting information about a certain product.
- Write a movie review and send it to your local newspaper or entertainment weekly.
- Think about a time that you were really scared, really sad or really happy. As a parent, write a paragraph about that time. Ask your child to do the same. Then compare and contrast the events and the emotions surrounding them.

Adapted from school.familyeducation.com (2006)
Resource 3

Tips for Parents and Families

Use these suggested activities to help you support your child with school.

- Make sure your child goes to school every day. Support community efforts to keep children safe and off the street late at night.

- Commit yourself to high standards and set high expectations for your child. Challenge your child in every way possible to reach his/her full potential.

- Familiarize yourself and your child with the New Mexico Content Standards that describe by grade level, what students should know and be able to do.

- Stay in touch with your child’s teacher. Ask about homework expectations, what they are studying and how you can support your child’s learning at home.

- Praise your child for doing well. Make praise a habit.

- Limit television viewing on school nights, even if that means that the remote control may have to disappear.

- Read together. It is the foundation of all learning.

- Make sure your child takes challenging courses at school and schedule daily time to check homework.

- Take the extra time to model learning with the family. Commit yourself to learning something with your child. You will be rewarded by the shared effort.

- Set a good example and talk to your child, especially your teenagers, about the dangers of tobacco, drugs and alcohol and the values you want your child to have. Such personal talks, however uncomfortable you may feel, may save relationships and lives.

Resource 4

Secrets of Student Success: What Parents Need to Know

Here are some ways you can support your child with school.

1. Establish daily family routines for:
   - homework (time/space/supplies)
   - reading (together and independently)
   - hobbies
   - bedtime
   - household chores

2. Monitor out-of-school activities by:
   - checking in by phone
   - limiting television watching to less than 12 hours a week
   - checking on the whereabouts of your children

3. Set age-appropriate and specific expectations about:
   - school achievement
   - behavior and manners
   - work activities and ethics

4. Promote life-long learning by:
   - showing an active interest in school, education and related activities
   - recognizing and supporting child’s talents and interests
   - helping to explore career possibilities
   - reading, writing and talking together
   - expressing confidence in your child’s ability to be successful in life

These secrets require little or no money. The bottom line is this: what children need to be successful in the classroom turns out to be the very same thing that they need to be successful outside of the classroom - caring and involved adults paying close attention. There is no substitute for adult supervision and guidance.
Resource 5

All About Homework

Use this guide to help you support your child with homework.

Why do teachers give homework?
Teachers use homework:
- to inform parents what is being taught at school so it can be reinforced at home;
- to help students understand and review the work that has been covered in class;
- to see whether students understand the lesson; and
- to help students learn how to find and use more information on a subject.

Research shows that when homework is turned in to the teacher, graded and discussed with students, it can improve students’ grades and understanding of their schoolwork.

How much time should my child spend each night on homework?
Most educators agree that:
- for students in grades K-2, homework is more effective when it does not exceed 10-20 minutes each school day;
- older students, in grades 3-6, can handle 30-60 minutes a day; and
- in junior and senior high school, the amount of homework will vary by subject. Most older students will also have homework projects, such as research papers and oral reports that may have deadlines weeks away. They may need help organizing assignments and planning work times to make sure homework is ready to turn in on time.

Your children’s teachers can tell you how much time they expect students to spend on homework. Teachers try to assign homework that is meaningful and relevant to the day’s lesson. Teachers also try to take into account how much homework has been assigned in the student’s other subjects and the time that it may take when all the other classes are added up.

Ask your principal if your school or school district has a homework policy. If it does, make sure you and your children know and understand that policy.

How can I help with homework?
There are several ways you can help:
- Send your children to school each day, well-rested, fed and with a positive outlook.
- Take an active interest in your child’s schooling. Ask questions about what happened at school each day and how your child feels about it.
- Try not to let your own negative experiences keep you from supporting and encouraging your child’s learning. Let them know how much you care about education by continuing your own learning and impress its importance upon them.
- If possible, set up a quiet, comfortable study area with good lighting and the school supplies your child needs. This can be almost anyplace in your home; you don’t need a special room.
- Set a family “quiet time” where you and your child can work together on homework, reading, letter writing and playing games.
- Allow your child to study in the way that helps him/her learn best. For example, some children work best when they’re lying on the floor with background music playing.
- Make homework a daily activity and help your child develop good homework habits.
Can my child do homework while listening to music or watching television?

Some students can work with a radio or CD on, while others must work in silence. Television can be a big problem. Many teachers ask that the television be turned off while the student is doing homework.

Research shows that American children, on average, spend far more time watching television than doing homework. It’s best to leave the television off during homework time.

How much help should I give?

This depends on the child’s grade level and study habits. Younger students often need extra homework help. First, make sure the child understands the directions. Do a few problems together, then watch your child do a few. When your child is finished, check the work. Praise right answers, and show how to correct mistakes.

Avoid doing your child’s homework for him/her. Teachers need to see where your child is having trouble.

One of the most helpful things you can do is to show your child that you think homework is important. Many children today do their homework while their parents are at work. When you are at home, ask to see your child’s homework and discuss it with him or her. Ask questions and be supportive.

What if I don’t understand my child’s assignment?

Today’s students may have subjects that you never had or that you didn’t like when you were in school. You can still help your child by praising progress, getting help from a public library or homework hot line and talking with the teachers. You don’t have to be an expert in a subject to help with homework. There are many places to go for help.

Do teachers really want me to ask them questions about homework?

Teachers want children to learn and want parents and families to be involved in their children’s education. When you stay in touch with your child’s teachers, they can ease your worries and offer homework tips and ideas on how you can help your child learn. Meet each of your child’s teachers and ask what kind of homework will be given. This is very important, even if you have children in middle or high school.

Early in the school year and regularly, ask teachers about your child’s subjects and homework policies. For example, ask what books your child will be using, what kinds of assignments will be given and when the teacher is available to answer questions.

My child tries hard but still has problems with homework. What can I do to help?

There could be a number of reasons for your child’s trouble. Suggest that the child ask the teacher for extra help before or after school. Tell your child to ask the teacher about homework or anything else he or she doesn’t understand. Set a time to meet with the teacher to discuss the problem. You may need to meet again during the year to check on how your child is doing.

If your child understands the work but is still having trouble, ask for a meeting with the teacher. The two of you should work out a plan to meet your child’s needs.
My child seems bored by homework. Is this normal?

It’s normal for students not to want to do their homework. But if your child always seems bored or unhappy, you need to try to find out the reason by talking with your child. Then talk with the teacher to come up with a solution.

Teachers want students to learn from homework. Tell the teacher if your child thinks the homework is too easy or too hard. This will help the teacher match the homework with your child’s ability and skill level.

When I ask my child if he/she has homework, they say that it’s finished or that there is none. How do I make sure my child is really doing his/her work?

Make studying, as well as homework, a daily habit. Students can always review lessons, read a book or work on practice exercises during quiet time, even if they don’t have homework. Ask younger children to show you their homework so that you can check it, sign it and date it. Teachers like to see that adults have checked children’s homework. If your child’s school has a homework hot line, call it to check for the day’s assignments. If your child often has no homework to do, you should let the teacher know.

Don’t ask your child if he or she has homework each night — assume that there is homework or studying to do.

What if my child still isn’t turning homework in?

State clearly and strongly to your child that you expect homework to be done and turned in to the teacher. Let your child know you will not tolerate homework that is incomplete.

Don’t wait until grades come out to find out if the problem has been solved. You may need weekly contact with the teacher until your child develops good homework habits.

Should I reward my child for doing homework or for getting good grades?

Children like to know when they’ve done a good job. Your approval means a lot. Praise your child’s work often. Show pride when your child does their best, regardless of the grade.

Be careful about giving money or gifts as rewards. Most teachers want parents to reward students’ work in other ways. The next time your child does a good job on a school project, plan a special family activity as a reward.

Adapted from the National Education Association (2005)
Resource 6

Ways to Help Your Child with Reading at Home

Consider these ideas on how you can support reading at home.

Setting the Atmosphere

- Help your child find a comfortable, quiet place to read.
- Orient your child to the book by looking at the cover first and talking about what you think it may be about or any way it reminds you of your life. Ask your child what s/he thinks.
- Have your child see you as a reading model.
- Read aloud to your child. Re-read favorite stories.
- Read with your child.
- Discuss the stories you read together.
- Recognize the value of silent reading.
- Keep reading time enjoyable and relaxed.
- Let your child see you reading for enjoyment and for information.

Responding to Errors in Reading

Based on the way most of us were taught to read, we tell children to “sound it out” when they come to an unknown word. To help children become independent readers who monitor and correct themselves as they read, try the following ideas before saying “sound it out”. When your child has trouble reading a word, give him or her wait time of 5 to 10 seconds. See what he attempts to do to help himself and then apply one or more of the following questions or comments.

- “What would make sense there?”
- “What do you think that word could be?”
- “Use the picture to help you figure out what it could be.”
- “Go back to the beginning and try that again.”
- “Skip over it and read to the end of the sentence (or paragraph). Now what do you think it is?”
- “Put in a word that would make sense there.”
- “You read that word before on another page. See if you can find it.”
- Help your child sound it out or tell what the word is.

Most importantly, focus on what your child is doing well and attempting to do. Remain loving and supportive. When your child is having difficulty and trying to work out the trouble spots, try these comments.

- “Good for you. I like the way you tried to work that out.”
- “That was a good try. Yes, that word would make sense there.”
- “I like the way you looked at the picture to help yourself.”
- “I like the way you went back to the beginning of the sentence and tried it again. That’s what good readers do.”
- “You are becoming a good reader. I’m proud of you.”

Source: Routman, R. (1994)
Resource 7

Children and the Internet

Use this guide to learn more about how the Internet can support student learning.

Parents should learn about the Internet because it is a big part of many children’s lives, but parents should offer guidance and set limits.

The Internet is a worldwide network of computers that connect people from homes, schools, businesses and organizations to provide information about any topic from health to history, and entertainment to sports, travel, government and many more topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Internet offers:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Search engines—programs we can use to search the Internet for topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Web sites—places on the Internet dedicated to certain ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. E-mail—a way to send and receive written messages by phone line on the computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chat rooms—areas visited by people with common interests. One types a message and can receive an answer instantly from another. This can be private or public.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Safe, sensible use of the Internet can help your child:

- Receive tutoring services
- Get help with homework
- Gain information for projects and reports
- “Tour” places studied in school
- Explore interests
- Meet others and share information across hundreds of miles without being face to face

The Internet is an amazing tool but, as parents, we must:

- Learn more about the Internet—its potentials and pitfalls
- Supervise our children on the Internet by being there with them, sharing our values and having discussions about the Internet, and building “critical” thinking skills about the information on the Internet
- Support community and school efforts to keep the Internet safe for our children
## Dangers of the Internet

Anyone can create web pages and post information, making it easy for children to mistakenly stumble across sites devoted to:

- Sexual material—pornography and sexually-oriented sites (even by mistake)
- Alcohol and other drugs—advertising alcoholic beverages and glorifying drug use
- Violence—bomb making or other violent activities
- Hate and intolerance—promoting hatred of different races, religions and sexual orientations
- Gambling on-line—using their computers
- Information offered on legitimate topics is not always reliable or accurate

The best protection is to:

- Personally supervise children
- Block access to certain web sites or use software programs that block or filter offensive material
- Set up “bookmarks” that guide children to safe sites
- Review “use histories” or logs that show Internet activity
- Use public computers at libraries, shopping malls and community centers together with children, because access to the Internet may be unrestricted
- Spell carefully; a misspelled word or other typing errors can lead to an inappropriate site

Establish family rules:

- Keep computers in high traffic areas (family rooms, not in bedrooms or unsupervised areas)
- Put time limits on the computer—allowing time for physical activity, homework, friends and rest
- Decide what services are useful and affordable - Internet use costs money

### Personal security is a must!

Teach children “netiquette” (etiquette on the Internet) so they will know how to behave on the Internet and will be able to recognize inappropriate behavior of others. Let them know they can come to us if they feel uncomfortable.

Never give out personal information over the Internet i.e. names, telephone, addresses, school functions etc., and never reveal if he or she is home alone.

Never respond to offensive messages—it only makes matters worse (assure children that they are not to blame for these messages and that they should report such messages).

Never arrange face-to-face meetings alone—people often aren’t who they claim to be.

Contact local law enforcement and your Internet Service Provider (ISP) if you or your child gets a message that is harassing, threatening or of a sexual nature. Do not delete the message until the ISP tells you it’s OK to delete it.

Adapted from: Parents Reaching Out, www.parentsreachingout.org
Helping Your Child Plan for the Future

Parents can help their children prepare for the future beginning in kindergarten. Use the checklist below as you help your child prepare for life after high school.

In grades K-5 the focus is on career awareness. You can help your child by doing the following:

- Discuss the many employment opportunities available in and outside of your community.
- Display positive attitudes toward work and cooperating with others.
- Show attitudes of respect and appreciation towards workers in all fields.
- Familiarize yourself with the New Mexico Content Standards and ask teachers about how your child is doing in meeting the standards.
- Borrow books from libraries about various careers to share with your child and ask him/her what they think they would like to do for a career.

In Grades 6-8 the focus is on career exploration. You can help your child by doing the following:

- Meet with your child’s counselor to review course selection and ask for tools to help your child assess their own interests and abilities.
- Assist your child with challenging course selection such as honors courses, pre-advanced placement classes, Pre-Algebra or Algebra 1, a language other than English and academic preparation programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).
- Attend parent nights, parent-teacher conferences and school activities that focus on career exploration and college preparation.
- Inquire about tutoring and mentoring programs at the school.
- Use the internet at home, school and/or the library to explore careers and job requirements.
- Review all homework assignments and maintain communication with teachers and counselors.
- Assist your child in developing good study habits.
- Work with your children to set goals each year.
- Familiarize yourself with both high school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements.
In **grades 9-12** the focus is on **career preparation**. You can help your child by doing the following:

- Ask teachers and counselors about the state mandated exam for high schools.
- Encourage your child to continue with languages other than English with bilingualism as the goal.
- Talk with teachers and counselors to ensure that your child takes the pre-ACT/SAT (plan test) as a sophomore and the SAT or ACT first as a junior and then again as a senior.
- Encourage your child to take good notes during classes.
- Encourage your child to take the right sequence of mathematics: Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, and Trigonometry.
- Encourage your child to develop and enhance computer skills.
- Model time management and organizational skills.
- Assist your child in developing money management and independent living skills.
- Encourage your child to participate in extracurricular activities such as student council, MESA (Math Engineering and Science Achievement), sports and community service projects.
- Request college and career planning guides from the school counselor and/or the US Department of Education.
- Request information about financing vocational training and/or college costs.


[www.science.doe.gov](http://www.science.doe.gov)
New Mexico holds high expectations for its students. Listed below is information that you need to know and understand regarding student expectations in New Mexico.

What are the New Mexico Content Standards, Benchmarks and Performance Standards?

The Content Standards are broad descriptions of knowledge and skills students should learn in a particular aspect or strand of a subject area. They are few in number, general in scope, and often categorized by strand.

A Sample Mathematics Standard:

Students will understand geometric concepts and applications.

The Benchmarks are a more specific statements of what all students should know and be able to do in a content area across grade levels. Currently, the New Mexico Benchmarks are grouped K-4, 5-8 and 9-12. They are greater in number and more specific in scope.

Sample Mathematics Benchmark

Strand: Geometry (In grades K-4: Use visualization, spatial reasoning and geometric modeling to solve problems.)

The Performance Standards are more specific about what students should know and be able to do in order to demonstrate proficiency in the skills and knowledge framed by the content standards. They are many in number, specific in scope and often grade level specific. Concepts and skills introduced and learned at a grade level continue to be strengthened and developed in later grades.

Sample Mathematics Performance Standards for Grade 2:

1. Demonstrate relationships of different attributes with concrete materials.

2. Select and use visualization skills to create mental images of geometric shapes.

3. Describe geometric shapes and structures from different perspectives.

4. Relate geometric ideas to numbers.

5. Recognize geometric shapes and structures in the environment and specify their location.
How are the state content standards developed?

Many people are involved in creating the standards. Teams of K-12 teachers, parents, business and community leaders and representatives of the higher education community all have taken part in the development of the standards.

How is student progress toward meeting the standards measured?

No single type of assessment is enough to meet all the needs for information or to demonstrate how your child is meeting the New Mexico Content Standards. The combined use of a variety of ongoing classroom, school, district and state assessments provide a comprehensive assessment system of student achievement. Talk with your child’s teacher or school principal about assessments being used in your school/district and how they are using test results to improve teaching and learning.

The statewide tests are Criterion Referenced Tests (CRTs) which are directly tied to the New Mexico Content Standards and designed to determine whether a student’s performance meets specific levels. These tests will produce reports on each child that will be given to parents. For more information, talk to your child’s teacher and visit the State’s Assessment and Evaluation web site at http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/ais/assess/index.html.

What questions should I ask?

- How do I get a copy of the standards?
- What is my child expected to learn?
- What can I do if my child needs more challenge or support?
- How often will my child be tested?
- How will testing results be reported to parents?

Throughout the school year, ask about student expectations.

- What do you expect my child to learn this year in reading and math?
- What are the most important things for the children in your classroom to learn this year?
- What can I do at home to help my child learn these skills?
- How can I help with homework?
- How often is the reporting of progress made to parents?

A complete set of the New Mexico Content Standards are available in a reference guide booklet and on line.

www.cesdp.nmhu.edu

They are also available on the Public Education Department web site.

www.nmlites.org/standards/index.html
Resource 10

Why Standards Are So Important

New Mexico Content Standards and Benchmarks outline what students should know and be able to do. All states have content standards and state mandated tests are developed around the state standards.

1. **Demands on students have changed.** The demands on students are higher than ever before. The changing character of society and today’s information and technology-based economy are driving new questions about what students should know and be able to do when they leave school.

2. **Schools have changed.** Effective schools produce a different kind of student than they did even 15 years ago. To be successful today, students need to be able to problem-solve, work collaboratively, communicate clearly and think critically.

3. **The bottom line is student achievement.** Everything done in the school should be focused on reaching high levels of achievement for ALL students.

4. **Standards are the road map.** Standards help us identify what it is that students should know and be able to do in each academic subject area and how we know that they have learned it.

5. This requires **new roles and relationships** for all of us. We can no longer afford to practice business as in the past. Principals, parents and particularly teachers, must be accountable for whether students are learning.

6. **Together we can do this.** Schools have improvement plans in place and are making progress every day. Each school has an *Educational Plan for Student Success* (EPSS) which includes goals and strategies for improving student achievement. The EPSS must also include information on how parents and community members are involved in meeting the goals and strategies of the plan. We know that parent involvement is key to student success.

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