



Back to School Tips for Parents

ATLANTA (September 22, 2005) – School is now in full-swing across the state and parents are wondering how to help their children do their best. According to Georgia’s Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics (PRISM), parents are the most influential people in the academic success of a child. A forthcoming study commissioned by PRISM indicates that parents are more influential than teachers, coaches, spiritual leaders, and even celebrities.

This is good news, but many parents wonder how they can make a positive impact when they aren’t experts in the subjects their children are studying, especially in the areas of science and mathematics.

PRISM recommends these ways that every parent can help their child:

Be Resourceful - Many parents feel like they are not knowledgeable on subjects their child may be learning and are therefore unable to help their child with school work. Parents should seek out resources that can help them provide assistance to their children. Help may be as close as the local library, the Internet, school or community organization. By being resourceful and seeking out expert information and assistance, parents both help their child and reinforce the importance of schoolwork along with emphasizing the importance of how to gain assistance for future challenges.

Open a Dialogue – Don’t wait for a conference to talk with the teacher about a child’s progress. Students will be more successful if parents have an open dialogue with their children, teachers and school administrators. Asking questions about what is being taught at school, a child’s educational track, goals, struggles and more will give parents the knowledge they need to help their child. A good relationship with a child’s teacher will ensure that you both are supporting the child’s educational and developmental needs.

To best assist children at home, parents should ask teachers questions such as:

What science and mathematics skills is my child working on this year?

How does she compare to her peers?

How can I help reinforce at home the skills he is learning at school?

Communicate that Science and Mathematics are Important – Georgia’s student achievement scores fall seriously behind the rest of the country in science and mathematics. PRISM’s primary goal is to increase student achievement in these subject areas. Parents should show children how science and mathematics are used in their lives each day to increase interest and relevancy. From the kitchen to the family car, balancing a checkbook and figuring out the discount on the latest CD purchase – science and mathematics surround us and enrich our lives in many ways.

Encourage Challenging Science and Mathematics Courses – All students in Georgia need to be proficient in science and mathematics in order to be successful as adults. Even if a child doesn’t foresee college in his or her future, it is important that he or she take challenging coursework in these areas in order to meet the demands in today’s workplace as well as pass the high school exit exam. Parents should talk with their child and their teachers to help decide what courses are appropriate at their grade level.

Create Hands-on Experimental Learning Experiences – Children respond best to hands-on learning. By taking children on educational outings and talking with them about what they are seeing and doing, parents can have a positive impact on their overall learning experience. Field trips to museums, state parks, attractions, local businesses – even the grocery store – can be filled with fun learning activities. By simply talking with a child about the world around them, parents will reinforce what children learn in school.

About PRISM

Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics (PRISM), is a five-year initiative funded by the National Science Foundation and administered by the University System of Georgia with the primary purpose of improving student achievement in science and mathematics at all levels of education throughout Georgia. PRISM is working actively in four diverse regions of the state with partners at the university and P-12 level in each region. For more information about PRISM, visit www.gaprisim.org.

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This press release is based on work supported by the [National Science Foundation](http://www.nsf.gov) under Cooperative Agreement Number: EHR-0314953. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this release are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.