



**“We have excellent parental cooperation.”**

That was one of the top three reasons highly successful schools gave for their success. (Report from survey of twenty-three successful schools, ERIC)

There is no doubt that family involvement makes a difference in student and school success. When family members show an interest in education and work with children on their school tasks, those actions send a strong message to the children: “Your education is important and you have to work to make it pay off.”

Besides, the evidence doesn’t allow families to weasel out of their responsibility. In a review of the research by the National Center of Education Statistics, the authors concluded that reading scores and other indicators of student success rise significantly among those students whose families are involved regularly in their education.

**What does involvement mean?**

It doesn’t mean that parents have to sit in the classroom or bake cookies for the school parties. Those are good and helpful activities, but there are more important things that the family needs to do.

Mostly, parents, grandparents, and siblings need to discuss school, to help with homework, to read and to write to the children.

- Picture a nine year old on the telephone with her divorced father discussing a math problem. The father does not live with the nine year old but makes it a point to work with her on homework at least two times a week, all by telephone.
- Picture a ten year old boy in the bed of a rusty pickup truck talking through the truck window with his father. They are discussing a novel they are reading together while they wait in line to turn in soda cans at a recycling center.

- Picture a seven year old reading a letter from her grandma. Grandma finishes by encouraging the seven year old to write back, not because the two don’t have telephone conversations, but because Grandma knows that writing these letters will help the seven year old improve her writing skills.
- Picture a fourteen year old discussing the wars of the Twentieth Century with his Grandpa. The boy’s class is studying World War II and the Vietnam War, and he knows that Grandpa has lived through some of that time. Grandpa can give the boy a perspective on the way things happened.



**Training and guidelines**

Some of those pictures mentioned just seem to happen; some are planned. The fourteen year old may call his Grandpa spontaneously to get information about the Vietnam War. And they both know that this conversation stems from school activity.

Some of those pictures have a plan behind them. The divorced father calls his daughter on a regular schedule so she knows that he thinks her education is important enough to assign time to it. His calls also show that he cares.

When the grandma writes and asks for a response in writing, the grandma becomes an influence on

*Continued on Page 2*

<b>inside this issue...</b>	Family Involvement .....	1
	Teaching Skills at Home .....	3
	Journal .....	4
	Family Checklist .....	5
	Grandparent Letter Contest .....	6

*Continued from Page 1*

the skills of the child. (Later in this bulletin, you can see letters from a Grandparent Letter Contest.)

## Training may be needed to tutor kids

Not every family member feels comfortable tutoring children in math or English. Yet every kid needs family members to show an interest and to help. If you need to know more about the school math program or the kinds of skills that are being developed in reading and writing, ask the teacher and the school for help. They may have a workshop or an online program that you can attend.

When you participate in the school-parent organization or in school conferences, ask directly for the kind of information and assistance that you need in order to tutor your children. Get that kind of dialog going.

## Communication promotes an essential bond

Parents and grandparents need to know what kind of assistance their children need. A general plea for involvement from the school doesn't quite hit the mark. You need to know what your children are studying and, in addition, how you can help them learn. Just as you need to be able to intelligently discuss the topics your children are studying, so too do you need to be able to lead them to an understanding of the issues. In this, your child's teacher may be able to give you valuable suggestions or guidelines.

Most often, your task is fairly simple. You can help your children comprehend and summarize their learning by asking leading questions and requesting specific examples. Here are the kinds of questions that can foster discussion even when you do not know about the subject.



## Types of questions to ask children

1. What are some of the major ideas in this article?
2. Are there some ideas here that seem particularly valuable to you?
3. How do you think you can use these ideas?
4. Can you give me a one or two sentence summary of what you have learned here?

## Hold conversations, not tests

Please remember that you are not giving them a test. You are helping children to understand. And you are showing that you care about their success.

Perhaps the most important attitude that family members can communicate to their children is the sense that each person must

be responsible for his or her own learning. Each of us must become a self-directed learner. So you are not there to give answers. You are working with your children to search for their own answers. If you give an answer, you may have saved the day for a child. If you teach him how to solve his question, you have given your child a life-long learning tool.

## Be a cheerleader

Encourage your children to study and to learn by your example as well as by your encouragement.

- Let them see you read and look up answers.
- Share a book or a magazine with your children.
- Praise them for finding and sharing information.
- Purchase books and other learning materials as gifts.
- Brag about their school successes to other members of the family.
- Compliment them on small accomplishments in learning, not just the big ones like getting an "A" on a report card.
- Encourage them to participate in school discussions as a way of keeping their minds sharp and as a way of learning more.

## Recruit grandparents

For many reasons grandparents are playing an increasingly valuable role in the education of their grandchildren. Personally, we know of several grandparents who take care of their grandchildren after school, while single parents or both parents are working and don't pick up their children until 5:30 or 6:00 p.m.

Homework and the review of the school day then may fall to the grandparents. Under these circumstances, grandparents can exercise a significant influence on the skills and attitudes of their grandchildren. Even if they are not the after-school sitters, they often have the time and the experience for giving guidance and for leading their grandchildren in positive directions.

One babysitting grandma that we know, asks her three grandchildren to comment on the school activities while they have a refreshing after-school snack. If any of the three has a particular homework problem, she asks them all to think through the problem together so they can get it out of the way while they are thinking of it.

A grandpa that we know writes a weekly note to his four grandchildren. He usually ends his note with a request for information about their school activity. He wants them to return answers in writing. Though he doesn't often get a response in writing (kids are not accustomed to writing letters), he keeps his weekly pattern because it sends his grandchildren a message about curiosity and communication, about attitudes that will serve them in their life-long learning.

*See Page 6 for the results of our Grandparent Letter-Writing Contest.*

## How to teach skills at home

When there are questions about how to follow-up classroom activity with practice at home, ask the teacher for guidance, as needed. Here are a few ideas that can guide your work with children at home.

Recent studies of learning and effective teaching give us strong indicators of how to teach skills:

1. Motivate and give a clear focus to instruction.
2. Apply the skills immediately.
3. Practice sufficiently to achieve fluency.
4. Test and reteach the skill as needed.

We need to teach systematically and therefore follow a consistent lesson plan in order to help children know that there is order to the knowledge that they are expected to learn.

### Related Parent Talk Bulletins

The following topics were treated in previous Parent Talk Bulletins. They are available from the Family Learning Association. 1-800-759-4723

- Time management for kids
  - Doing one's best
  - Responsibility
  - Perseverance
- Helping with homework

## Skills plan to follow

### Objective

Clearly stated at the beginning of each lesson.

### Developing

Explain and develop the instruction for each skill through modeling, demonstration, and discussion. Check for understanding through the use of activities and questions.

### Applying

Parent-directed activities and questions provide guided practice.

### Checking understanding

Provide questions for checking mastery.

### Reteaching

Reteach and use alternative learning activities for each skill.

### Independent practice

Independent worksheets or skills practice should be given.

### Enrichment

Encourage children to read from other books and ask them to be aware of their use of recently learned skills.



## Book review: *Learning from Heroes* by Vera Frye

Do you ever want to hold up examples of heroes so you can discuss character traits with your children? Most of us need specific examples to give us a lead into those discussions. *Learning from Heroes*, a two-volume work from the Family Learning Association gives you just the tool to do that.

More than quick biographies, *Learning from Heroes* points to books and websites that feature the 142 real-life personalities in the book. Do you want to encourage your child to persevere? There are ten heroes in that section, including Helen Keller and Wilma Rudolph. Need to show real people who cared for their fellow humans? There are ten heroes in that section, including Bill Cosby and Mother Teresa.

The featured personalities are both current figures, e.g, Gloria

Estefan and Todd Beamer, as well as historic persons, such as Johnny Appleseed and Eleanor Roosevelt. With at least eight heroes in each of fourteen character traits, this excellent set will guide you through every discussion that you have with your children. It will help them grow into the kind of person that you both desire.

In *Volume One* (now available) the following traits are included: Caring, Civic Virtue, Environmentalism, Honesty, Living Peaceably, Perseverance, Respect, and Responsibility. *Volume Two* (available Summer 2003) includes: Civility, Courage, Integrity, Loyalty, Patriotism, Resourcefulness, and Sharing.

Available from the Family Learning Association for \$24.95. 1-800-759-4723 or on the web at [kidscanlearn.com](http://kidscanlearn.com).

One-year subscription to **Parent Talk** \$18<sup>00</sup>

**Parent Talk** is also available for distribution to parents in packages of 25: \$15<sup>00</sup>

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-99-CO-0028. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.



## Parent Talk

A publication of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication

Editor: Carl B. Smith  
Production Editor: Neal Stepp

Published by ERIC/REC & The Family Learning Association  
2805 East 10th Street, Suite 140, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698

# COURAGE




---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---





---

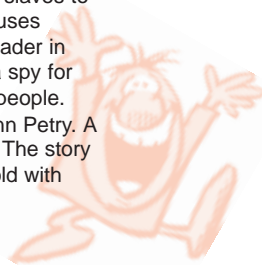


---

### extra! extra! read all about it...

 **Harriet Tubman** (1820-1913) A runaway slave who led hundreds of slaves to freedom along the Underground Railroad, a secret network of safe houses where slaves could stay on their journey to freedom. She became a leader in the abolitionist movement, and during the Civil War was a nurse and a spy for federal forces, serving as a symbol of strength and inspiration for her people.

 **Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad** by Ann Petry. A vivid and accessible portrait of one of America's most inspiring heroes. The story of the courageous woman who guided over 300 slaves to freedom is told with insight and style.



COURAGE

### Using a learning journal

One of the winners in the Grandparent Letter Contest encouraged her grandchild to keep a journal and to write goals. Often teachers are doing the same thing. Many teachers now ask their students to keep a learning journal, that is, a journal where they record their thoughts about what and how they learn.

These journals are usually unstructured pages, perhaps with inspirational notes and quotes, that are designed to give the student ideas to think about and ideas to discuss in class. You might use the same technique at home. If your child keeps a learning journal, you might ask him or her to use those thoughts as a way to inform you of what they find interesting.

**This sample page** shows a learning journal that incidentally reminds students of the character traits (fourteen in all) that make a strong person and a good citizen. If you are also having conversations about character with your children, you might recommend that they write about some of these traits so they bring their reflections to the discussion.

A learning journal that features character traits is available from the Family Learning Association, [www.kidscanlearn.com](http://www.kidscanlearn.com) or 1-800-759-4723.

### Calendars and Planners for character development

You can get a FREE sample calendar or planner (while supplies last) by faxing a request to the Family Learning Association, 1-812-331-2776.

## Family checklist

Make a copy of this family involvement to-do list for everyone in the family who can help keep the family involved in helping children succeed in school learning.

Directions: Put down the dates and times of the ways that you can help at school or in the home. Keep these notes to remind yourself of your commitment to stay involved in your children's education.

### Area

### Notes and Reminders

#### School Activities

Classroom

---

---

Whole school

---

---

#### Regular reviews at home

Days of week and time

---

---

Subjects

---

---

#### Informal ways to show interest

Conversations

---

---

Letters and notes

---

---

Compliments and encouragement

---

---

#### Clever ways to remind the family that learning is important

Notes around the house

---

---

Brag sessions

---

---

## Grandparent letter writing winners

Recently, letter writing grandparents submitted sample letters in a contest sponsored by the Family Learning Association. The top four letters won cash prizes, and the next fifty won copies of books of letters that grandparents write to their grandchildren. The winners and some winning letters can be found on the Association's website: [www.kidscanlearn.com](http://www.kidscanlearn.com).

We will print some of the winning letters in this and subsequent Parent Talk bulletins to remind our readers that you should solicit the help of grandparents in developing the skills and attitudes that you want your children to carry with them.

The winning grandparent letter won a \$250 cash prize. It was written by Sherri Goodall and is reprinted here for other grandparents to imitate. Second place went to Judy Strout with a prize of \$150.

## Grandparent contest: 1st place

Dear Grant,

I've always thought my father, Zadie – your great-grandfather – was the smartest man in the whole world. Why? Because from the time I was your age, 4 years old, my father knew the answer to every question that I asked. And, I asked a lot. I always wanted to know how and why things worked.

My father was a science teacher, so he knew a lot of the answers. Often he would demonstrate how something "worked."

I know now why your Zadie was so smart. Because he was very curious. You know "Curious George," he's always trying to find out about everything. "Curious" means wanting to know about something, wanting to get information.

Cats are very curious. If you watch them, they're always busy snooping around, playing with things that move or things that catch their attention.

Grant, you exhibit that same curiosity, like your Zadie and like me, your Nana. I'm sure that is why you are so smart. Whether it's taking things apart to see how they work, or making your own tools and devices out of whatever is handy – paperclips, tape, string, plastic gismos. I remember the last time you were at Nana's and Gigi's house, you enclosed the shelves in the attic with tape and string. It took me a week to undo it all. You are forever


making tow devices to drag and pull anything that will move. Bob the Builder is your hero. You are also very creative. Since the time you were just 2 years old, you were making up names; you love rhyme like Nana. Grant the Plant, Nana the Banana, Gigi from Fiji... we have such fun with words. You know Nana loves words, that's why I write.

It is this sense of wonder and creativity that has contributed to your Zadie's great accomplishments throughout his life. Nana has created some pretty interesting stuff too. I've written books and even acquired a patent on an invention, just like Zadie. I think you will pass us both with your curiosity and inventiveness.

Take this sense of wonder with you throughout your life. Never shy away from asking questions. If you find a better way to solve a problem, then go for it! Learning something new is a very exciting thing. People like you and Zadie make the world a much more interesting place to live in. If you can, learn something new every day.

Know what I learned today? I'm writing a book about wart-hogs. Do you know what a family of wart-hogs is called? A "sounder." See, today you've learned something new.

I love you very much.

*Nana the* 

## Grandparent contest: 2nd place

Dear Miss Kirsten,

Hi sweetheart. I hope this letter finds you well and happy. Congratulations on graduating from the seventh grade. Being 13 is truly a wonderful time of life, a time you should enjoy and a time you should look upon with happy memories for the rest of your life.

You have been most fortunate to have a wonderful childhood with loving parents and grandparents as well as teachers both at church and at school who care greatly about you and about your future. This time of your life is a time of learning about who you are, and who you want to be, and what you need to do to realize your goals.

I don't know very much about your experience with setting goals, but I want you to know that goal setting is a wonderful tool to help you realize whatever you may wish for in your life. I once heard someone say that dreams do not come true if we do not dare to dream. That is the way it is with goals. If we do not set goals for ourselves, it is likely that our dreams will not ever come true.

The best way to go about setting goals is to think about what you want in your life, from small things to great things, then write your goals down. A personal journal is a good place to list your

goals. After you list your goals, write down the steps that you need to take to achieve them. As an example, if one of your goals is to go to college, some of the steps towards that goal could be: visiting with your school counselor often, determining what types of courses you need to take, studying every school night, making good grades, visiting nearby college campuses, and participating in extracurricular activities that are geared towards education. It could also be fun if you would cut out pictures from magazines and newspapers and make a "goal scrapbook."

Many people do not go to the trouble of writing down their goals. Life just sort of happens to them, and they never know how they came to where they are in their lives.

Then there are others who plan and set goals and work towards their goals; and life rewards them with opportunities and successes and the realization of their dreams. May all of your dreams come true, Miss Kirsten, and may your life be happy and fulfilled.

Love,  
MiMi

# Resources

10% off

Order before May 1st, 2003  
and receive 10% off!



## Improving Your Child's Writing Skills

by Carl Smith  
Using actual children's compositions, this fun guidebook takes kids through the entire process of writing, from Pre-Writing and Drafting to Revising and Proofreading. Practical worksheets are included to hone the skills of young writers. Gives parents a basic strategy for helping their children become more effective writers at school and in the workplace. PJ-158-2021. \$14.95



## With Love, Grandma

by Carl Smith  
Consisting of the best selections from the Senior Partners Network newsletter, The Write Partner, this book contains: essays on topics relevant to seniors writing to a child, sample letters, and books recommended for sharing with the junior pen pal. You will find a wealth of information, resources and possibilities for networking. 137pp; \$12.95; PJ-158-2025



## Gotcha, Grandpa

by Carl Smith  
Open up a dialogue on many subjects and issues, including self-esteem, goals, persistence, heroes, lessons from history, and more. Each subject accompanied by actual letters from seniors, as well as age-specific book lists for sharing. Important essays discuss the benefits of cross-generational communication. A great gift for grandparents. 120pp; \$12.95; PJ-158-2026



## Smart Learning: A Study Skills Guide For Teens

by William Christen, Thomas Murphy  
Help your children learn to learn! This book by two innovative educators will improve your children's note-making techniques, test-taking strategies, and time management skills. Also included are valuable decision-making and goal-setting techniques, as well as guidelines for successful writing projects. Written specifically for young adults, the clear and concise ideas can be put to use with immediate results. 111pp; \$12.95; PJ-100-1020

## Books with Audio Tapes



The three book & audio tape sets below offer practical guidance for parents and fun stories for children, Kindergarten through 4th grade. These books contain two parts: Part I offers easy-to-read advice on helping children succeed in school, including family activities and books for further reading. Part II contains three read-along stories delightfully illustrated by Dave Coverly (author of the cartoon Speed Bump) so you can start sharing reading experiences right away. The audio cassettes make this book easy for parents and children at any literacy level to use and enjoy.

### Encouraging Good Homework Habits

*Parents and Children Together Series*

This book and tape looks at how you can help your children with their homework. 71pp; 5.5"x 8.5"; PJ-500-1123; \$12.00

### Parents as Models

*Parents and Children Together Series*

This book and tape focuses on "parents as models" and how parents can act as models for children. 86pp; 5.5"x 8.5"; PJ-500-1114; \$12.00

### Improving Your Child's Memory

*Parents and Children Together Series*

In this issue we talk about why a good memory is important, and discuss ways you can help your children improve their memories. 85pp; 5.5"x 8.5"; PJ-500-1162; \$12.00



QTY.	ORDER NO.	TITLE	PRICE	SUBTOTAL
	PJ-158-2021	Improving Your Child's Writing Skills	\$14.95	
	PJ-158-2025	With Love, Grandma	\$12.95	
	PJ-158-2026	Gotcha, Grandpa	\$12.95	
	PJ-100-1020	Smart Learning	\$12.95	
	PJ-500-1123	Encouraging Good Homework Habits (Book & Tape)	\$12.00	
	PJ-500-1114	Parents as Models (Book & Tape)	\$12.00	
	PJ-500-1162	Improving Your Child's Memory (Book & Tape)	\$12.00	

### 4 EASY WAYS TO ORDER!

- PHONE (800) 759-4723
- FAX (812) 331-2776
- MAIL Family Learning Association  
3925 Hagan St., Suite 101  
Bloomington, IN 47401
- WEB [www.kidscanlearn.com](http://www.kidscanlearn.com)

*Shipping	Subtotal
If your order is:	Shipping is:
\$0.00 - \$50.00	\$5.00
\$50.01 - \$250	10% of order
\$250.01 +	8% of order
	Shipping*
	TOTAL

**YOUR SATISFACTION IS GUARANTEED!**  
If for any reason you are not completely satisfied with a product or publication you purchase from us, simply return the item within 30 days, and we will refund your money.

### SHIP TO

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

### METHOD OF PAYMENT

CHECK ENCLOSED       P.O. #

                  AMEX

CARDHOLDER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CARD NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_      EXP. DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CARDHOLDER'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading,  
English, and Communication  
2805 East 10th St., Suite 140  
Bloomington, IN 47408-2698

Nonprofit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Bloomington, IN  
Permit No. 2

Your current issue of Parent Talk is enclosed. Make sure you renew your subscription.

YOUR CURRENT ISSUE FOCUSES ON

# Family Involvement

Parent Talk bulletins are for those who help their children with learning. For more information and a free catalog call 800-759-4723

Please duplicate and distribute this newsletter  
for parents to share with their children.

**In this issue you will find:**

- Hints and tips to get the family involved
- Recruiting grandparents
- Sample worksheet

These topics, plus book reviews and resource information are found within. Distribute this issue to the parents in your school. You may duplicate these eight pages or contact the Family Learning Association for a quantity purchase. Parent Talk bulletins are available in packs of 25.

Renew your subscription now. Call 1-800-759-4723 or mail in order form.

All these resources come from the research of ERIC and the Family Learning Association. Call for information or visit our website:

**1-800-759-4723**

**<http://www.kidscanlearn.com>**

**<http://eric.indiana.edu>**

