



Family Messages

Be Involved in Your Child's Education:

Dear Families, it is important and OK to call, write, or stop by if you want to know how your child is doing. Please contact me if you think he/she is having a problem, or if there is something you want me to know. You don't need to wait for me to call you or for conferences. My number is _____. We will work together to help your child have a good school year! Thanks!

Dear Families, Please call or stop by if there is anything I can do to help you help your child do well in school. You don't have to wait for conferences! My number is _____. We will work together to help your child have a good school year! Thanks!

What Families Can Do at Home to Help Their Children Do Well in School:

Early Years:

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Teaching your child the names of colors will help him/her do better in school. Talk about colors when you are driving in the car, playing, or looking at pictures—anytime, any place! Our world is full of colors.

When you are first teaching your child colors, name the color for him/her, "That car is red." "The plate is red." After you have done that several times, and for many days, ask your child to tell you what color the car is. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Teaching your child to count will help him/her do better in school. Count things all the time. Say to your child, "Let's count all the shoes. Say it with me: One, Two..." (Put your finger on each shoe as you count it.) Some of the children's programs on Iowa Public Television, like *Sesame Street*, talk about a number each day. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Teach your child the names of letters. Teach only one letter at a time and teach it many times for several days. Start with the first letter in your child's first name. After he/she has learned it, teach the first letter of your child's last name or any other letter he/she is interested in. When you are teaching letters, say: "This letter is P. Say it with me: P." Do that several times each day. Each day the *Sesame Street* program on Iowa Public Television teaches a letter. Thanks!



Talking with Your Child/Teaching New Words:

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

Talk with your child about what he/she did during the day. Ask questions: “What did you do today?” If you don’t get an answer, ask “yes” or “no” questions: “Did you play outside?” “Did you read a book?” Or, say “Tell me one thing you did today.”

Talk with your child about what will happen the next day in school. “What fun things are you going to do tomorrow in school?” Help your child think of school and learning as fun and exciting. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

Talk, talk, talk with your child. Tell him/her about things you did when you were a child. Ask your child to tell you what happened at school or to tell you a story. Point to something and say its name: “Table. This is a table.” Talking with your child will help him/her learn new words. Children who start school knowing more words will be good readers. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

Find time to talk with your child every day because it helps him/her learn about the world as well as new words. You can talk at meal time, when you are driving in the car, at the grocery store and when you are helping your child get ready for bed—any time and anywhere! Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

When grown-ups share family stories that have a beginning, middle, and end, children learn about their own history and gain experience with how stories can be told, read, or written. Tell your child about one of your favorite days in school, a time when you were sick and got better, or something about when your child was a baby. These are great stories to share with children. Talk with your child by telling family stories. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

Teach your child new words. When you are reading books together, playing, driving in the car, watching TV—anytime you have a chance to tell your child what something is or how it works, do it! Children who start school knowing lots of words do better in school. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

Children can learn new words at any time, in any place. Talk with children a lot. For example, when buying milk, “There are many kinds of milk. There is white milk (point to it), chocolate (point), and strawberry (point).”



Describe what you are doing. When cooking say, “I am going to stir flour into the melted butter. Then we will add sugar and chocolate chips.” Children who know and understand lots of words will be great readers!” Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! You can help your child learn words by talking about pictures or actions in a book. For example, “Do you see that black thing around Clifford’s neck? That is called a collar. A collar is like a necklace for dogs. People put tags on a dog’s collar so other people know who owns the dog and the dog’s name. Can you point to Clifford’s collar?” Children who know and understand lots of words will be great readers! Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Every day, look through your child’s backpack with him/her. This is a good time to talk with your child about what happened in school. You might say, “Show me what you did in school today.” Look at the pictures your child made or the work he/she brought home. Tell your child you like what he/she made or that you think he/she did good work. Thanks!

Reading Strategies:

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Ask your child to look at a picture in a book and guess what they think the words in the story say. This helps children learn to read, retell, and, later on, write stories. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Read to your child every day. Read at bedtime or any time you have a few minutes! Turn off the TV and phone so you can have a quiet time together. Sit close to each other. It is OK if you don’t have time to read the whole book—read a few pages each day. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Before reading a book, look at the cover and ask, “What do you think this book might be about?” Let your child guess. Then say, “Let’s read and see.” During the reading of a book, ask, “What do you think will happen next?” or “Would you want that to happen to you?” After reading the book, say, “Tell me what you liked about this book,” or “Can you think of a time when you felt like the person in the book? Tell me about that time.”

Asking questions and talking about a book helps your child understand it. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! When you read a book to your child, let him/her talk. Read slowly so your child can ask a question when he/she needs to and say something when he/she wants to. After you have answered questions, you might need to re-read a page before reading a new



page. If your child asks a lot of questions, say: "Let's talk about that at the end." Talking about a book helps your child understand it. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! It is OK to read a book over and over if your child asks you to. By reading a favorite book often, a child becomes familiar with the words and how stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Sooner or later, he/she will be able to "pretend" to read the book to others. This step is part of a child's becoming a reader. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Some books have great pictures! Instead of reading the words, sometimes it is fun to just look at the pictures and talk about them. "What is going on in this picture?" "What do you think will happen next?" Please read to your child each day. Thanks!

Positive Expectations:

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Keep a positive attitude when talking with your child about school. Let him/her know that you believe he/she can do well in school. Tell your child that teachers are there to help and to talk with the teacher or counselor if he/she is having problems or doesn't understand the school work. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Be positive about school when you are talking to your child or when you are talking to other adults and your child is listening. Talk to your child about the fun and interesting things he/she can do at school. Tell your child how important it is to go to school and learn! Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Tell your children often that school and learning is important. "Do your best in school! It is important to learn all that you can so you can get a good job when you grow up." Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! "You can do it" are important words for your child to hear from you. If he/she is afraid to try something new (like riding a bike) or is having problems learning something new (like the alphabet), encouraging words will help: "We will work on this together!" "We will get this done." "You can learn to do this." "Let me help." "We are a team—we can do it." Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!



Always tell your child to do the best he/she can in school. Tell him/her that this is what you want and expect. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

Tell your children that you know they can do well in school. Expect your child to do his/her best. The sky's the limit with children. Children have their whole lives ahead of them and nothing is impossible! Please tell them so. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

Tell your child often that you expect him/her to graduate from high school and go on to college or another program to learn more. Thanks!

Media Literacy

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

Turn off the television and phone when reading with your child. Get comfortable, cozy and close. Enjoy your time together. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

After you have watched a television program about something such as animals, see if you can find a book about animals. After you read the book, cut out pictures of animals from magazines or take a walk and count how many of your neighbors have pets. Doing activities after reading books or watching a television program gives you and your child more time together and helps your child to become a strong reader. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

Parenting is hard enough. Don't let TV, videos, video games, and computers make it harder. Help your child choose good TV programs, DVDs, and videos to watch. Make sure they are non-violent and not showing things you don't want them to know about at their age. IPTV shows more than six hours a day of programs especially for children. These programs have no violence or sexual content. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!

If your child is watching TV or a video, watch it with him/her. When it is over, talk with him/her about what happened during the program. If a word was used that your child might not know, explain it to him/her. Iowa Public Television shows more than six hours a day of programs especially for children. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school.

Help your child do things other than watch TV or play video or computer games. Children need to spend time reading, playing, exercising, and talking with you. Doctors say that children under two years old shouldn't watch any TV. They say that children



older than two should spend no more than two hours a day in front of TV and computer “screens.” Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school. You are in charge of the TV! Choose good programs for your child to watch. Good programs are those that are written so your child can understand them, aren’t violent, teach values you want your child to learn, and make your child feel OK—not sad or scared. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school. There are good and bad things about TV, videos, and computers. The good thing is that children can learn new words, and facts about people and places far, far away. Sometimes they see good ways to solve problems. They can also learn that the only way to solve problems is to fight or kill, that it is fun and funny to be mean to others and not to listen to grown-ups. You are in charge of the TV, videos, and computer in your home. Help your children make good choices about what to watch. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school. American children between the ages of 2 and 5 spend more time watching TV than any other age group! Heavy TV viewing can also mean watching lots of violence. Children’s television programs have higher levels of violence than any other kind of programming. Young children also watch violent programs intended for adults. Iowa Public Television’s children’s programs are non-violent. If you are gone during the day, tape some of them and have your children watch them instead of programs that are violent. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school. Young children learn by imitating what they see so television and videos can be powerful teachers. They can teach your child about violence and aggressive behavior. For example, because most 3 to 6 year olds want to feel that they are strong and in control of their world, they often identify with TV characters that are powerful and effective. But what they see are superheroes and other characters that solve problems with violence and then are rewarded for doing so. When young children watch TV or videos that present violence as exciting, funny, and what you always do, it can be easy for them to accept the “TV way” as real and desirable. Please select non-violent programs or videos for your child to watch. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school. Your child needs a mix of physical activity, lots of “hands-on” experience with the word, a chance to be with other children and caring adults, quiet time, and lots of time to play! Imaginative play is the most important way 3 to 6 year olds learn, grow, and work out their feelings, fears, and fantasies. The more your child watches TV and videos, the



less he/she develops an ability to entertain himself/herself, and the less time he/she spends on all the other important experiences he/she needs to grow and learn. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school. Watching television shows or videos with children provides a perfect opportunity to talk about respect. Discuss characters that do and do not treat others kindly. When a character is unkind, you might say, “I wonder what the girl could have done differently?” or “How do you think that boy felt when his friend did that?” Iowa Public Television’s children’s programs show characters treating each other with respect and working out problems without fighting or other kinds of violence. Encourage your children to watch them. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school. All television programs send messages to children. Reality-based shows like *Survivor* focus on competition, winning, and excluding people. Other programs can send messages about sharing, helping, and friendship. For example, shows on Iowa Public Television such as *Clifford the Big Red Dog*, *Bob the Builder*, and *Barney and Friends* offer healthy and positive messages about respect for others. Thanks!

General Messages:

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! If your child did not do well on an assignment, talk with him/her about it. Ask if he/she talked with the teacher. Ask if he/she knows now how to do the work. Tell him/her that you know he/she can do the work and to get help from his/her teacher. Praise him/her for the parts of the assignment that he/she did do correctly.

Keep checking the papers in the backpack. If you see more examples that your child is having problems with a certain subject, call or write the teacher. You don’t have to wait for conferences or for the teacher to call you. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Jobs in our world are changing. It is very important that children graduate from high school and then go on for more education. It is never too early to tell your child that you expect him/her to do well in school, graduate from high school, and go on for more education. Tell him/her that more education will help him/her get a good job and do the fun things he/she wants to do. “Working hard in school and learning a lot will help you when you are a grown-up.” Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Keep your child focused on learning and doing well at school. There are lots of things that can pull kids away from doing so—TV, computers, video games, friends, and jobs.



Keep track of how your child spends his/her time. Help him/her make good choices about how to spend time. Keep telling your child that school is important! Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Help your child plan for life after high school. Talk with him/her about what jobs he/she would like to do and what he/she needs to do to prepare for those jobs. Start now—don't wait until senior year! Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Help your child make decisions about what classes to take in school. Talk with teachers and counselors about what classes students need to go to college or other kinds of educational programs. Your child needs your help making these decisions. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! If your child has a problem at school, talk to him/her about it. Try to help your child find a solution. Call the teacher, principal, or counselor for help. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Help your child get to school on time! You don't want him/her to miss a minute of school! If your child has trouble getting up in the morning, set an earlier bedtime. Children need 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night. If your child has a problem deciding what to wear to school, have him/her choose clothes the night before. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Change can worry some children. Moving from preschool to kindergarten, from elementary to middle school, and from middle school to high school are times that upset some children. They will need extra help from you at these times. Talk with them about the change that is going to happen. Tell them you and the teachers will be there to help. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! Ask each night if your child has homework. You don't need to help him/her do it, but please do check to make sure it is done. If your child does not have homework, ask him/her to spend a few minutes reading a book, looking at a magazine, or talking with you. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school! You will help your child improve his/her homework skills when you:
1) Create a personal homework space for your child. 2) Have your child take care of physical and emotional needs before sitting down to do homework. 3) Make sure everything he/she needs to do the homework is within reach. 4) Stay in touch with your child's teacher. 5) Know whom your child can call if he/she doesn't understand his/her homework. Thanks!



Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!
Create a personal homework space that includes a dictionary, pencil sharpener, or whatever you think he/she will need to do homework. Make sure the area has enough clear space to spread out books, papers, and work materials. A desk, a table, or bean bags in a corner can make good work areas. Remove toys, the TV, video games, and phones. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!
Help your child take care of physical and emotional needs before sitting down to do homework. Talk with your child about the day's events. Have him/her use the restroom. Offer a healthy snack. Have him/her take 5 minutes to stretch muscles and get rid of any extra energy. With all of these needs taken care of, your child should be able to better concentrate on his/her homework. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!
Make sure all the things he/she needs to do homework are within reach—pencils, pens, the homework directions and worksheets, books, etc. Less getting up and down results in more work getting done. If you don't know what your child needs, call me at _____ . Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!
Many teachers have a system they follow for assigning homework. Some use assignment notebooks, folders, or sign-off sheets. Find out what the teachers want. Support the system by making sure you and your child do your part. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!
Have a "homework help" backup plan. Find out if your school has a homework hot line you or your child can call. Ask the teachers for ideas on internet sites your child could use to help him/her complete homework. You could also ask an older child to help your child. Thanks!

Dear Families, this is what you can do at home to help your child do well in school!
Know **where** your children are, **what** they are doing, and **who** they are with. Meet their friends and their friends' parents. Know the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the parents before you let your children spend time at their homes. Thanks!



Resources

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