It’s Back to School Time!

My girls officially started school on Monday! Lynette (age 7, 2nd grade) and Lucy Sue (age 5, Kindergarten) are slowly adjusting to the back to school routine! Both girls fell asleep on our commute home Monday! Mom and Dad are also adjusting to the routine—our whole household was asleep by 8:00 p.m!

I’ve learned a few things as a mom that have helped my girls open up more about school. My usual questions used to be, “How was school today?” Their response—“okay, good, fine.” “What did you do at school today?” Their response—“I don’t know. Nothing. I don’t remember.” What?! I know their teachers are engaging their minds and I sure want to know all about it!

What I learned is that I needed to ask very specific questions and keep asking until they respond, such as:

- What book did your teacher read to you today? Tell me about the dinosaurs in the book (or whatever the book was about).
- Tell me about your friends—who did you eat lunch with today?
- What made you laugh at school today?
- How were you a good friend today?
- Did anything make you sad at school today?

In this week’s Parent Perusals, I’ve shared some good quality questions that can get your child to open up and share what they are learning and experiencing at school! Have them handy for the commute in the car or as you eat dinner together.

I also share some tips for you as a parent to provide some guidance on what questions to ask your child's teachers to help you know what is expected during the school year and how you can help support your child at home! Very important!

When parents and children talk regularly about school, children:
- Perform better academically;
- Tend to have fewer behavioral problems;
- Have better attendance; and
- Are more likely to complete school.
The Statewide Parent and Family Engagement Connection Newsletter

The August newsletter (Volume 15, 4th Quarter), The Parental & Family Engagement CONNECTION, is available in English, Spanish, German, Korean, and Vietnamese.

This edition of the newsletter includes articles about Study Habits, School-Parent Compact, School Safety, Back-to-School Checklist, Parents as Decision-Makers, Tips for Parent-Teacher Conferences.

Click the image above or the individual link for each language to read the newsletter.

Is Your Child Ready for the New School Year?

It only takes a few minutes to find out with the Readiness Check from Learning Heroes! Have your child answer the short questions and get fun (free) activities to support learning at home.
50 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR KIDS AFTER SCHOOL INSTEAD OF “HOW WAS YOUR DAY?”

— What made you smile today?
— Can you tell me an example of kindness you saw/showed?
— What did you do that was creative?
— Who did you sit with at lunch?
— Was anyone in your class gone today?
— Tell me something you know today that you didn’t know yesterday.
— Did you like your lunch?
— What was the hardest rule to follow today?
— If you could change one thing about your day, what would it be?
— What made your teacher smile?
— What made her frown?
— If you could switch seats with anyone in class, who would it be? And why?
— What kind of person were you today?

Click HERE to access the FULL list of After School Questions!
Struggling to Get in a Back to School Routine? Read Below!

Getting Back In A School Routine At Every Age

As seasoned parents know, preparing our kids to go back to school goes beyond bringing out the backpacks and checking off a list of school supplies. The real challenge comes when we have to replace lazy afternoons in the sun with homework help and late-night bonfires with an earlier bedtime. But the new schedule doesn’t have to be a battle. Whether you have toddler starting school for the first time or a teen who’s entering their final year of high school, here’s how to restore routines (and hopefully, some peace).

Check out the suggestions for:

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Back-To-School Questions

It’s officially back-to-school time, and families are running down the checklists: School supplies? Check! New shoes? Check! First day photos? Check! Great dinner conversation….?

While parents definitely want details, it can be hard to get past the usual “How did it go?” types of questions. So we’ve compiled this Top 10 List of great conversation starters you can use to get everybody talking about back-to-school:

- What’s one thing you learned today that you think I might not know?
- Who are you most excited to see at school? Least excited? Why?
- If you could change one thing about school, what would it be?
- Think of a project or assignment you really enjoyed. Why did you enjoy it?
- If you could make the rules at school, what would your top 3 rules be?
- Tell me about what lunch (or recess) was like today.
- What motivates you to work hard at school? What doesn’t motivate you, and how can we change it?
- If you could take a class in anything, what would it be?
- Who is the best teacher you have this year (or have ever had)? What makes them a great teacher?
- What makes you feel good about yourself when you’re at school?

Thank you FamilyDinnerProject.ORG!
12th grade is the time to apply for admission to college and to apply for federal student aid!

12th Grade Checklists: Preparing for College

Here’s what students and parents should be doing throughout the year to stay on track at this busy time—including learning how to manage federal student aid.

Back to School: 5 Questions Parents Should Ask

Elementary School
1. How often will my child receive individualized attention and/or small group instruction?
2. How often will he/she get homework?
3. How long should homework take to complete?
4. What should I be doing at home to encourage learning?
5. How often should my child read at home?
   Bonus: Can you provide me with a list of book recommendations?

Middle School
1. Is after school tutoring available, and if so, how often?
2. How will you prepare my child to transition to high school? (more for 8th graders)
3. How long should it take for my child to complete homework each night?
4. What are some educational apps that you recommend?
5. How are you preparing my child for the STAAR assessment?

High School
1. Are you available for assistance after school? If yes, when?
2. How can I find out what my child has for homework if they do not bring home an agenda book/planner?
3. Do you offer extra credit opportunities?
4. How are you preparing my child for the End of Course Exams?
5. Are there opportunities for differentiated instruction? (This means teaching to the unique needs of each child to maximize learning.)

As a bonus for high school, here are 5 questions to also ask your child’s guidance counselor:
1. When should we begin looking at colleges?
2. How often will you be meeting with my child?
3. What programs are offered to help my child improve?
4. How do we go about contacting you and/or making an appointment to discuss my child’s progress and/or future?
5. What resources are available in the school?

One question to ask teachers for ALL grades is: **What is the best way to get in touch with you?** If contact information is not already provided, it is so important to find out the best way to reach out to your child’s teacher. Additionally, if you feel your child is struggling at any point during the school year, make sure you contact your teacher and guidance counselor!

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**20 Questions Every Parent Should Ask Teachers**

1. What academic standards do you use, and what do I need to know about them?
2. How will you respond if or when my child struggles in class?
3. What are the most important and complex (content-related) ideas my child needs to understand by the end of the year?
4. Do you focus on strengths or weaknesses?
5. How are creativity and innovative thinking used on a daily basis in your classroom?
6. How is critical thinking used on a daily basis in your classroom?
7. How are assessments designed to promote learning rather than simple measurement?
8. What can I do to meaningfully support literacy in my home?
9. What kinds of questions do you suggest that I ask my children on a daily basis about your class?
10. How exactly is learning personalized in your classroom? In the school?
11. How do you measure academic progress, and what are the strengths and weaknesses of that approach?
12. What are the most common instructional or literacy strategies you will use this year, and why?
13. What learning models do you use (e.g., project-based learning, mobile learning, game-based learning, etc.), and what do you see as the primary benefits of that approach?
19 Questions Your Child’s Teacher Would (Probably) Love to Answer

1. What academic standards do you use, and what do I need to know about them?
2. How will you respond if or when my child struggles in class?
3. What are the most important and complex (content-related) ideas my child needs to understand by the end of the year?
4. Do you focus on strengths or weaknesses?
5. How are creativity and innovative thinking used on a daily basis in your classroom?
6. How is critical thinking used on a daily basis in your classroom?
7. How are assessments designed to promote learning rather than simple measurement?
8. What can I do to support literacy in my home?
9. What kinds of questions do you suggest that I ask my children on a daily basis about your class?
10. How exactly is learning personalized in your classroom? In the school?
11. How do you measure academic progress?
12. What are the most common instructional or literacy strategies you will use this year?
13. What learning models do you use (e.g., project-based learning, mobile learning, game-based learning, etc.), and what do you see as the primary benefits of that approach?
14. What are the best school or district resources that we should consider using as a family to support our child in the classroom?
15. Is there technology you’d recommend that can help support my child in self-directed learning at home?
16. What are the most common barriers you see to academic progress in your classroom?
17. How is education changing?
18. How do you see the role of the teacher in the learning process?
19. What would the ideal learning environment, free of any constraints, look like?
20. What am I not asking but should be?
19. What am I not asking but should be?

Taken from Edutopia

Listen and Look at Back to School Night

Most schools offer a Back-to-School Night for families a few weeks after school begins. The evening provides a chance for families to learn more about their child's school and classroom. Take this opportunity to listen and look for signs that your child is in a place where good reading instruction can take place.

Read it HERE.

16 Ways to Encourage Your Grade-Schooler to Read

Developing a love of reading can help grade-schoolers build and reinforce their reading skills. Enthusiasm can help kids with learning and attention issues overcome reading challenges. Use these tips to encourage your child to read.
10 Ways to Encourage Your Middle-Schooler to Read

Reading can become an even bigger battle in middle school, especially for kids with learning and attention issues. Your child may need more encouragement than ever. Use these strategies to motivate her to read more.

10 Ways to Encourage Your High-Schooler to Read

If your teen struggles with reading, getting her to sit down and actually do it can be challenging. But it doesn't have to be a battle. Use these strategies to encourage her to read more.

Community Code Jam is coming to ESC-20!

Join us for Texas' largest family coding FREE event!

Date: Saturday, September 28, 2019
Location: ESC Region 20, 1314 Hines
Time: 1 to 4 pm

Watch the video to learn what the Community Code Jam is all about!
Do You Want Your Child's School to Have a School Garden?

If YES, share this FREE Gardening EXPO class happening at ESC-20 with your campus and/or PTA organization!

OR attend as a parent so you can learn this skill to take back to your child's campus!

The Gardening Expo will include:

- tips for vegetable and herb gardens
- curriculums that support gardens
- bugs every gardener should know
- best practices from those that have dug in and
- nutrition education--cooking demo

Date: Thursday, September 19th
Time: 9:00 AM--4:00 PM
Location: ESC-20 (1314 Hines Avenue)

Download the Flyer Below for more details on how to register!
Register to Attend Now!

Upcoming September FREE Parent Trainings & Webinars

Wednesday, September 11, 2019, 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.
Building Blocks: Supporting Social Learning in the Preschool Years
This workshop will explore strategies that encourage children's social and emotional growth including empathy, building relationships, and conflict resolution. Participants will learn how children's thinking and reasoning affect how they relate to others and will identify and practice strategies to help children learn to interact with others. A mini make & take of at home strategy cards will be included.

Session ID# 58819

Thursday, September 12, 2019, 9:00 a.m.--12:00 p.m.
Special Education Basics
Participants will learn basic information about special education including the history of special education laws, types of disabilities, the Admission Review and Dismissal process, and types of classroom supports.

Session ID# 59632
Webinar ID# 59709

Wednesday, September 18, 2019, 9:00 a.m.--12:00 p.m.
The Independent Child: Using Classroom Strategies at Home to Support Independence
This training is to support parents who are cultivating independence in their children. Research based methods that are used in the classroom will be broken down and explained to parents so that they help to promote independence in their own children. The ultimate goal is to provide as many opportunities for our children as we can. These opportunities could include independent or semi-independent living, having a job, social activities (movies, dinner, with disabled and nondisabled peers, adult day care and many more. Together let’s create limitless possibilities.

Session ID# 58820

Thursday, September 19, 2019, 9:00 a.m.--12:00 p.m.
Dyslexia: What is it, and How Can I Help My Child?
In this training you will learn from ESC-20’s dyslexia specialist what dyslexia is and how to support your child if he/she has dyslexia. We will explore the common risk factors for dyslexia as well as common misperceptions or myths about dyslexia. Participants will learn strategies to help support their student if he/she is at-risk for or identified with dyslexia. While some of the strategies will target beginning literacy skills, this is appropriate for parents with students of all ages.

**Session ID# 58821**  
**Webinar ID# 60031**

**Wednesday, September 25, 2019, 9:00 a.m.--12:00 p.m.**  
**Strategies for Helping Your Child Remember What is Learned at School**

During this hands on workshop, parents will learn strategies to help their child remember and recall information they learn at school. We will practice the strategies, so come ready to be engaged and have fun!

**Session ID# 58822**

**Thursday, September 26, 2019, 9:00 a.m.--12:00 p.m.**  
**The Three E's of Healthy Living: Eating Right, Exercise, and Education**

Discover how planning and serving nutritious meals and snacks, engaging in physical activity, and encouraging a healthy learning environment at home can assist you and your family in achieving your wellness goals. This hands on class will give you the tools and resources you need to make better choices and teach your children healthy habits for life.

**Session ID# 58823**  
**Webinar ID# 59710**

**Friday, September 27, 2019, 9:00 a.m.--10:30 a.m.**  
**Drugs, Dares & Dangerous Teen Trends**

This training will inform parents about the dangers associated with various online activities such gaming and apps, as well as vaping, alcohol, prescription drug abuse, and other over the counter substances that are being abused by our youth.

**10:30 a.m.--12:00 p.m.**  
**Understanding & Communicating with Your Adolescent**

This training is targeted to parents and will provide an understanding of the different aspects of adolescent development that are typical versus potential red flags for issues that can arise, including substance abuse issues or mental health issues. Communication tips will also be provided.

**Session ID# 60028**  
**Webinar ID# 60032**
September’s FREE Parent Trainings & Webinars!

Click HERE to access registration information and MORE details about September's Parent Trainings & Webinars. Start making plans to attend!

GETTING UP FOR SCHOOL
A hassle for every family.

Questions? Comments? Feedback?

Click HERE if you can't access the form above and you'd like to leave Kimberly a comment, question or other feedback. Thanks!
Kimberly Baumgardner, Consultant, Education Service Center, Region 20

Kimberly has worked in the field of special education for 19 years. She has been on staff at ESC-20 for 10 years. She spent 7 years as a special education curriculum specialist and is currently the Family Engagement Consultant.

Kimberly has become quite passionate about empowering families to be more involved in their child’s education and future as well as challenging and supporting schools to increase their efforts to involve families in their child’s educational journey and focus on Family Engagement as an instructional tool that improves student’s academic outcomes.

Kimberly enjoys living out in the country with her husband, Tyson and two daughters, Lynette & Lucy Sue.