

FAMILY TOOLS

Module 2

Promoting Positive Parenting

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*“La memoria de la niñez
dura hasta la vejez.”*

“A child’s memory lasts a lifetime.”

- Spanish Dicho



Overview

This module focuses on helping families develop positive parenting skills and establish home environments to support children as learners. It also emphasizes the need for families to share information with the school staff about their concerns and goals for children.



Research Link

According to research conducted by Epstein (2002), parents who work to improve their parenting skills with the support of schools, community organizations and other resources, can positively impact students, families and educators in a variety of ways including those listed below.

Results for Students:

- Balance between time spent doing chores, other activities and homework
- Respect for self, parents and family
- Awareness of importance of school
- Responsible behavior and ownership of learning
- Positive attitudes, higher grades and high attendance in school

Results for Families:

- Understanding of child growth and development: birth - adolescence - young adult
- Support for children as learners at each grade level
- Understanding of teacher roles and responsibilities
- Exchange of information between educators and parents about concerns and goals for children
- Support for health, safety and nutrition of children

Results for Teachers:

- Understanding of families’ goals and concerns for children
- Respect for families’ strengths, needs and efforts
- Awareness of own skills to share information on growth and development
- Completed homework assignments
- Increased parental involvement
- Improved student attendance



Practices to Promote Positive Parenting

Epstein (2002) shares sample practices parents can use to establish home environments that support their children as learners:

- Never do your child's homework or projects yourself. Instead, make it clear that you're always available to help or answer any questions.
- Review your child's homework nightly, not necessarily to check up on him or her, but to make sure your child understands everything.
- Make sure your child knows what to do and who to contact in the case of an emergency.
- Inform your child's teacher about any conditions that may affect how your child learns.
- Set firm but kind expectations that your child should start tackling on his or her own. This reinforces independence and encourages him or her to accept a certain level of responsibility. Your child will learn that others will set expectations and that he or she can meet them.



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 of our 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 teacher competency areas for Level III (Master Teacher) related to positive parenting are listed below.

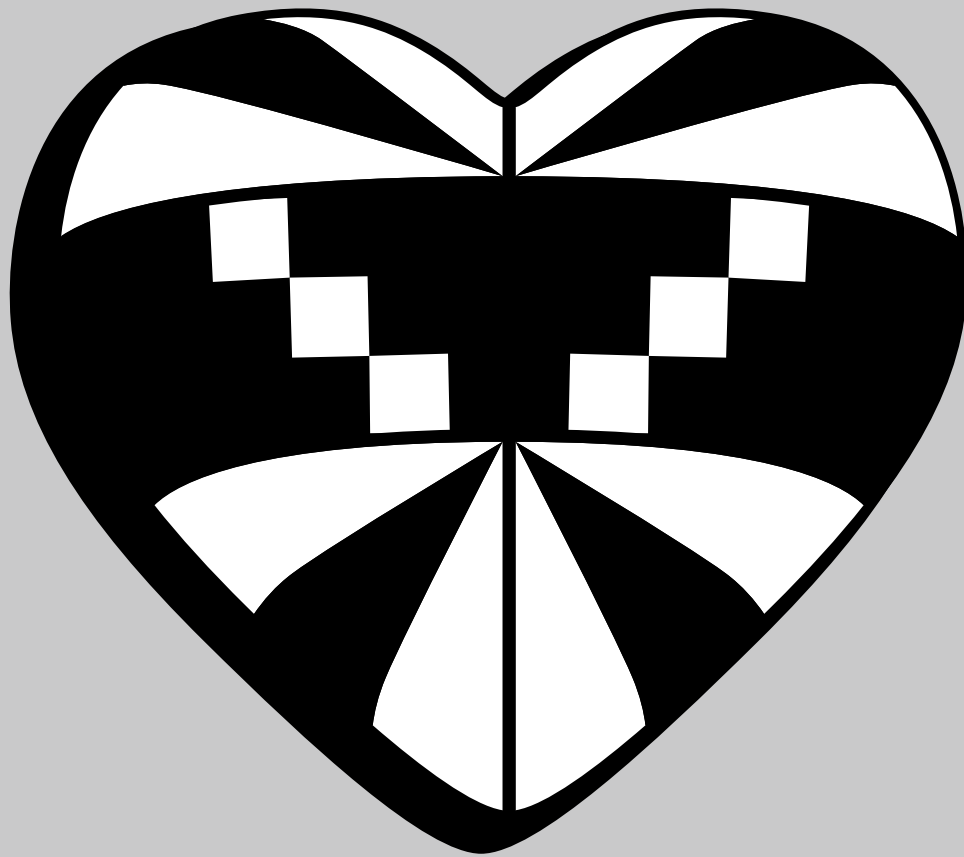
- Teachers work together with families to create positive learning environments.
- Teachers work together with students and families to build a positive learning community in the classroom.
- Teachers use knowledge of specific school, family and community resources that support learning.



Parent/Family Reflection on Positive Parenting

Use this checklist to rate the school in the area of positive parenting partnerships and think about specific questions and actions you can take to improve parenting skills.

	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Specific questions to ask at school	Actions to take to improve parenting
I receive useful information from the school about my child's physical, emotional and social development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I can go to the school for information and there is someone there to provide me support and discuss what is going on with my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I feel that the school staff respects and values me as a parent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I have high expectations for my child, in school and in life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I am comfortable sharing my hopes and dreams for my child with school staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I have access to the Parent Room or Resource Center and always feel welcome and comfortable there.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		



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Module 2



Resources



Resource 1

Worth a Click

<p>Bullying http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.asp?r=697 An article titled What Parents Can Do about Bullying offers practical advice on the topic.</p>
<p>Child Welfare League of America http://www.cwla.org/positiveparenting/ This site offers links to resources and advice for parents of children of all ages. The resources are divided into different categories to make access easy.</p>
<p>A Family Guide to Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy and Drug Free www.family.samhsa.gov Aimed at families of middle and high school students, this site has practical advice and information to help parents with their adolescents.</p>
<p>Healthier Schools New Mexico http://www.healthierschools.org/ This site highlights the coordinated school/health model from the State of New Mexico.</p>
<p>Kid's Health - For Parents http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/ This web site from Kid's Health includes topics on Talking to Kids, Learning and Education and Family Life.</p>
<p>Mental Health America http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/information/get-info/strengthening-families/ This site includes a fact sheet for parents with some tips for positive parenting.</p>
<p>Office of Child Development: New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department - New Mexico Kids http://www.newmexicokids.org/Family/ You can find information about networking, resource awareness and technical assistance for child care professionals, parents and health educators. Information is offered on child development, health and selecting quality child care.</p>
<p>Parents Reaching Out http://www.parentsreachingout.org/ Parents Reaching Out is directed at helping families learn to make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. This site includes information on special education issues that parents face, advocacy information and early intervention suggestions.</p>
<p>Parent Smart www.parentsmart.com This web site offers everything from help with homework to tips for talking with children about disasters.</p>
<p>Positive Parenting - Peace Begins at Home http://www.positiveparenting.com/ This web site has many resources for parents on parenting and positive discipline including articles, books and workshops.</p>
<p>Teaching Tolerance http://www.tolerance.org/teach/index.jsp This site is for anyone interested in creating communities that value diversity. It contains pages for teachers, parents, teens and kids.</p>



Resource 2

Ten Tips for Successful Parenting

Parenting is the most important job you will ever have. It is also one of the most challenging. Your job of parenting changes as your children grow and mature requiring you to adjust to the needs and ages of your children. Use the following tips to help guide your parenting in healthy and positive ways.

1. Celebrate the Positive

Recognizing children for their effort is as important as the actual effort. For example, if your child has just folded the laundry, celebrate that effort and accomplishment even though it may not be folded exactly the way you might have done it.

2. Take Time to Talk and Really Listen

Encourage children to talk openly and let them know that talking through their feelings is a healthy way of expressing themselves. Provide children with the words and be a role model by talking about your own feelings.

3. Use Discipline, Not Punishment

“Discipline” is a method of teaching children life-long responsibility and acceptable behaviors. Punishment, on the other hand, tends to force children to behave a certain way and does not allow for children to be responsible for their own behavior. The use of natural and logical consequences when children make mistakes or misbehave allows for discipline that teaches responsibility and life-long learning.

4. Teach Responsibility Constructively

Teach responsibility by giving children frequent opportunities to practice making decisions about what he or she needs to do in a given situation. For example, instead of saying “You made a mess, you left your dishes on the table and you need to take them to the sink and rinse them.” Try saying, “The table is a mess, what do you need to do to get it cleaned up?”

5. Separate the Child from the Behavior

Never tell a child that he or she is bad. This really hurts a child’s self-esteem. Communicate to your child that it isn’t that you do not like him or her, but it is the behavior that you are unwilling to tolerate. For example, instead of saying, “You are acting like a baby,” try saying, “I know you are upset but I can understand you better if talk to me in your regular voice.” Your child must know that your love is unconditional and although you may be upset with his or her behavior, it does not affect your love for him or her.

6. Actions Speak Louder than Words

If you find that your child has stopped listening, it is because, on average, we give our children over 2000 commands per day! They stop listening when they feel we are nagging or yelling. Instead of telling your child a third or fourth time, think about what action you could take. For example, if your child continues to throw his towel on the bathroom floor rather than hang it up, instead of doing it for him or yelling at him one more time, simply remove the towel or leave it in a heap on the floor. It will either be gone or still damp the next time and will better deliver the message of why it is important to hang it up.

7. Use Natural and Logical Consequences

Think about what would happen in a situation if you do not interfere. When we interfere unnecessarily, we rob children of the chance to learn from the consequences of their actions. By letting the natural consequence take place, we avoid nagging. If your child forgets his PE shoes one day, instead of taking them to school or to the game, let the child suffer the consequence of not playing that day. When natural consequences are not safe or not practical, be sure the consequence is logical. A consequence must be logically related to the behavior to be effective. For example, he forgets to return his video to the rental store where a daily late fee will add up, return the video, but deduct the late charge from his allowance or let him pay it off over time if it is already several days overdue. This allows your child to see the logic to the discipline.

8. Spend Quality Time with Your Child and Leave the Stress of Work at Work

We all lead busy lives and often we are thinking about all we have to do rather than spending 100% of our attention being with and listening to our children. We sometimes pretend to listen or unintentionally ignore what our children are saying. If we don't give our children 100% attention, they will start to misbehave. In a child's mind, negative attention is better than no attention at all. Remember that your child's feelings are important to recognize. If your child says, "Mom you never play with me", (even though you just finished playing with her) she is expressing what she really feels. It is important to validate her feelings by saying, "Yeah, I bet it does feel like we haven't played in a long time." Parents are all busy, but it is important to remember not to take your job home with you. When parents bring job related stress home with them, they are less tolerant and more prone to argue with their children.

9. Give Children Input into the Decisions that Affect Them and Hold Family Meetings

Ask your child's advice when it is appropriate to do so. This can help a child feel powerful and valuable. Give your child choices, let him/her help you and have input into simple daily decisions. It may seem like it is sometimes easier to do a simple task ourselves rather than waiting for the child to complete it, but this does not allow the child to make choices and feel important. Many families find that having a regular family meeting time is helpful. Family meetings allow time for everyone in the family to bring issues to the table and discuss them.

10. Be Kind Although Firm and Consistent

If you set a limit with your child and it comes time to act on it, act with reason and firmness and do not allow your child to get into a power struggle with you. For example, suppose that you have told your child that the toys must be picked up by the time the timer goes off or the remaining toys will be put away for a while. When the timer goes off simply pick up the remaining toys and put them out of sight without any more nagging or extension of time. Do not give in to pleas, tears, pouting or promises. Your child will learn to respect you more if she or he learns that you mean what you say.

Adapted from positiveparenting.com's Ten Keys to Successful Parenting and the National Mental Health Association's Strengthening Families Fact Sheet.



Resource 3

Parents Can Make A Difference . . . Daily

Your home may not be a classroom, but it is still a powerful place of learning. One of the most important things you can do as a parent or guardian, is to show (in words and actions) confidence in your child’s ability to succeed everyday in school and in life. Positive messages have a way of becoming real actions and attitudes. Use this guide as a reminder of ways you can make a difference in your family.

Encouraging children costs nothing and yet, offers big rewards. Remember to:

	I already do this	I will try doing this
• Always find something positive to say	_____	_____
• Praise your child’s efforts, not just his or her accomplishments.	_____	_____
• Help your child feel good about him or herself by saying things like:	_____	_____
“I can tell you worked very hard on that.”		
“You’re getting much better at that.”		
“I appreciate what you did.”		
“You really handled that situation well.”		
• Have faith in your child. Don’t be afraid to give your child increasing responsibility and independence.	_____	_____
• Discourage competition (in all forms) between brothers and sisters.	_____	_____
• Respect your child by treating him or her with dignity.	_____	_____

Another important way you can make a daily difference in the life of your children is by spending some quality time with them. Busy parents have a limited amount of time to spend with their children. Spending time with your child, no matter what the age, is extremely important. It is the *quality* of the time spent (reading together, playing, asking questions), not the *quantity* of time that is important. Communicating with your child encourages him or her to tell you what he or she is thinking and feeling. This will improve vocabulary and develop thinking skills, all of which are important for success in school and life.

Quality time can happen at any time or any place. The quality of the time you already spend together can be made even better, by talking with and listening to your child. Driving in the car or riding the bus, walking through the neighborhood or going for an ice cream after dinner are all good times to talk together and stay connected. Children of all ages enjoy having your full attention at bedtime to read or talk together. Reading together offers ways to discuss important issues that may not be discussed otherwise.

Think of ways you can spend quality time with your child/children. What are some ways you can turn chore time into quality time?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Being a good parent is not about *saving* time—it is about *investing* time. Our children need daily encouragement and quality time with us so that they will be strong individuals and successful adults.



Resource 4

Guiding Children and Youth in Making Healthy Choices

Healthy kids make better students.

Better students make healthy communities.

Children and youth who begin each day as healthy individuals can learn more effectively and are more likely to complete their education.

It is important for families to work together with schools and community to model and support children in their growth and development. Our children are faced with many decisions and it is our responsibility to guide them in healthy choices.

Use this as a guide on ways that parents and caregivers can influence children and youth in making healthy choices.

Nutrition and Healthy Food Choices

Healthy foods are the primary building block for a child’s physical growth, brain development and ability to resist disease. Food also affects a child’s emotions, sense of well-being and ability to learn.

Parents and family members can guide children in:

- modeling and making smart choices from every food group;
- finding a balance between food and physical activity; and
- monitoring healthy amounts of good foods.

Physical Education and Activity

Physical education and regular exercise provide the optimal opportunity for all students to learn and develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to decide to participate in a lifetime of healthful physical activity.

Parents and family members can:

- promote and model a physically active lifestyle;
- provide opportunities for children to participate in school and community activities which allow for movement and exercise such as team and individual sports programs, dance, martial arts and other activities;
- model responsible personal and social behavior in a physical activity setting; and
- provide other opportunities for physical self-expression, challenges, social interaction and enjoyment.

A Healthy and Safe Environment

A healthy and safe environment for children supports a total learning experience that promotes personal growth, healthy interpersonal relationships, wellness and freedom from discrimination and abuse.

Families can maintain a healthy environment by:

- supporting the child's personal safety through a violence/harassment-free environment;
- keeping the child's home environment inviting, clean, safe and in good repair;
- providing an environment where children and all family members feel accepted and valued, and high expectations are set for personal behavior and accomplishments;
- encouraging "global" citizenship through environmental awareness and activities that promote the child to act locally in the community; and
- creating and maintaining a home environment that is free of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

Social and Emotional Well Being

Families can support healthy social and emotional well-being in children and youth by encouraging:

- acceptance of self;
- the ability to express thoughts and feelings in a responsible manner;
- understanding and respect for differences in others;
- positive interpersonal relationships;
- the ability to give and receive support;
- balance between meaningful work and play;
- awareness of stressors which interfere with health development; and
- willingness to request assistance when needed.

Health Education and Life Skills

Through modeling, the promotion and support of health education and life skills, families can help with the prevention of the following six risky behaviors:

- use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs;
- dietary patterns;
- sedentary lifestyles;
- behaviors that result in sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancy;
- behaviors that result in unintentional injuries; and
- violent and other anti-social behaviors.

Contact the New Mexico Public Education Department's School and Family Support Bureau for more information at

www.healthierschools.org



Resource 5

Finding Positive Ways to Talk About Your Children

Use these suggestions to guide you in finding positive and encouraging ways to talk about children.

Instead of . . .	Say . . .
"She talks too much."	"She is very verbal."
"She is a know-it-all."	"She knows and remembers facts."
"He asks too many questions."	"He is curious about many things."
"He has weird ideas."	"He has creative and innovative ideas."
"She is the class clown."	"She has a keen sense of humor."
"She is a bookworm."	"She reads a lot on her own."
"He tries to dominate everything."	"He shows leadership abilities."
"He is argumentative."	"He is good at defending his position."
"She always looks for the simple solution."	"She is good at solving problems."
"She is into everything."	"She has many interests and collections."
"He is so hyper."	"He has a high energy level."
"He is stubborn."	"He is goal directed."

Add other positive ways to talk with your children.

Instead of . . .	Say . . .



Resource 6

Natural and Logical Consequences

Use this tool to guide you in using natural and logical consequences with your child.

Discipline is a method of teaching children life-long responsibility and acceptable behaviors. Punishment on the other hand, tends to force children to behave a certain way and does not allow for children to be responsible for their own behavior.

The use of natural and logical consequences when children make mistakes or misbehave allows for discipline that teaches responsibility and life-long learning. Below are some examples of natural and logical consequences. Think about how these can be used with your child.

Example of Behavior	Consequence	Lesson Learned
Child forgets to return library book to school.	Child cannot check out another book.	Child learns to be more responsible in remembering the next time.
Child chooses not to study for a test or exam.	Child receives a poor grade.	Child learns that his or her decision can affect the overall outcome (in this case his or her grade).
Child forgets shoes or uniform for a sporting event.	Child is not allowed to play in the game.	Child learns the value of being prepared.
Child uses negative name calling with a friend.	The friend expresses hurt feelings.	Child realizes how powerful words can be.
Child doesn't put dirty clothes in the appropriate place.	His or her clothes do not get washed that week.	Child learns that he or she must do their part in helping with chores.
A teenager consistently shows up late for work.	He or she loses the job.	He or she learns the value of being prompt.

Points to Remember When “Disciplining” Children

- Natural and logical consequences can teach children to:
- be responsible for their actions.
 - recognize both parent and child’s rights.
 - focus on present and future behavior.
 - make decisions and learn from mistakes.
 - develop mutual respect between parents and children.
 - feel encouraged and develop positive self-esteem.



Resource 7

Promoting Responsibility

Use this guide to help teach children to think about their actions and make decisions for themselves.

Handling typical situations with “think starters” like the suggestions noted in the chart below will encourage children to be responsible for their own behavior.

Situation	Think Stoppers	Think Starters
Parent is on the phone or busy with another child; other child is noisy.	“Be quiet. You’re making too much noise.”	“Your noise is making it hard for us to hear. What can you do to help?”
It’s clean up time.	“Put the dishes in the sink, pick up the toys in the living room, and wipe off the tables.”	“It’s time to clean up. What do you need to do to clean up?”
One child is distracting another.	“Paul, move away from Ron.”	“Paul, find something else to do so that Ron can concentrate.”
One child is making noise while another is trying to speak.	“Be quiet.”	“It’s Pat’s time to talk. What do you need to do?”
A child is whining.	“Stop whining.”	“I can understand you better if you talk in your regular voice.”
Siblings are fighting.	“Stop it! Each of you sit on opposite sides of the room.”	“We can’t have fighting. Take time to cool off and then let’s talk about what you can do to let someone know that you are angry with him.”
A child forgot to put her name on her work.	“Remember to write your name on your work.”	“How will we know this belongs to you?”
A child is scared of the dark.	“There is nothing to be afraid of.”	“I know you are scared when your room is dark. What would make you feel more comfortable?”
A child is upset about a grade on a test.	“You should have studied harder.”	“What are you going to do to improve your grade?”
A child can’t figure out how to do something and says, “I can’t do this.”	“Here’s how to do it: First you…”	“Which part is giving you trouble?”



Resource 8

Raising a Reader

Use this tool as a guide to support your children in acquiring reading skills.

Learning to read happens over time in a developmental sequence.

Children will use several strategies for reading within the same sentence such as sight, sound or how the word fits in the sentence. Many experiences and activities help children learn to read such as talking and interacting, recognizing and connecting sounds and letters, life experiences and being exposed to all types of reading materials.

Reading is the written form of language.

Children need vocabulary and word recognition skills, phonics skills, and ways to see if what they read makes sense. Toddlers and preschoolers learn about reading by being read to and by early attempts to write and translate what they have written. The correct translation can be written below the scribbles and read back to the child. Reading and writing go hand in hand, and plenty of reading and writing materials should be available in the home. These materials say reading is important. Children must also be discouraged from watching too much television and encouraged to do other activities such as homework, playing games and having conversations with family members.

To be successful readers, children need to spend lots of time reading or being read to.

Parents can make reading fun by having a regular routine for reading—before bed each night, after dinner, before school or any time during the day for preschoolers. The important thing is that it happens regularly and is a *positive* experience.

“Understandings” About Reading

- Reading is the construction of meaning from written text and involves thinking and feelings.
- Background knowledge and prior experience are critical to reading.
- Social interaction is essential to learning to read.
- Reading and writing develop together.
- Reading involves complex thinking.
- Environments should be filled with reading and writing experiences.
- Children must be interested and motivated.
- Children’s understanding of print is different from adult’s understanding.
- Children develop awareness and knowledge of phonics through experiences with language.
- Children need to be taught many different reading strategies.
- Children need the opportunity to read, read, read. It is important that they are monitored and assessed.



Ages and Stages

<p>Infants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy action nursery rhymes • Fall asleep to nursery songs and lullabies • Listen to stories as they are rocked • Make the sounds of animals in books 		<p>Toddlers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like to read the same books over and over • Pick favorite books from the shelf • Can name objects in books and magazines 	
<p>Things to do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect them to put books in their mouths • Talk about the books with them • Listen to children’s music and move to it • Provide books with heavy pages • Repeat nursery rhymes 			
<p>Preschoolers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold books correctly • Are able to write some letters in their name • Pretend to read own “writing” and books • Can tell the difference between print and picture • Know some letters and point to them 	<p>Kindergarteners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize individual letters and words • Can read and write name and some words • Use illustrations to tell a story • Can say some rhyming words that start with sounds such as “t”, “m” and “d” 	<p>First-graders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize and know letters and sounds • Write some small words from memory • Can read “easy to read” books 	
<p>Things to do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read daily to your child and visit the library • Let child tell story from his drawing • Reread the story and let her tell the ending • Let child read aloud and accept mistakes 			
<p>Second-graders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take pride in showing off their reading • Can read early reader and “transitional” words • Are able to read silently • Can work out unknown words 		<p>Third-graders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use encyclopedia, computer and atlas • Read assignments and follow directions • Make predictions about the outcome of a story • Use the computer to write and search for information 	
<p>Things to do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow your child’s interest • Continue to read more difficult books • Limit television viewing • Play games that involve reading • Provide blank books for drawing and writing • Visit the library regularly 			
<p>Fourth-graders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read familiar text with ease • Can tell fact from opinion • Can read silently for extended periods • Read and understand instructions/recipes 		<p>Fifth-graders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for new information • Use table of contents and reference materials • Choose to read for leisure • Use the computer to write and search for information 	
<p>Things to do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep reading aloud to your child • Link movies and TV shows to books • Use computer software that matches the interest of the child • Provide supplies for children to write and illustrate their own stories • Visit the library regularly • Give gift cards to bookstores 			

By the time children are in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, they are fluent, independent readers who use reading as an important part of their everyday lives. They read for entertainment, information and learning. Remember to model reading and give gifts that encourage reading.

Adapted from: Parents Reaching Out, www.parentsreachingout.org



Resource 9

Preparing for the Teen Years

Consider using some of these ideas with your adolescent or teenage children who are going through the difficult stages of becoming young adults.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Share your values with your teens. Let them know what's really important to you and help them clarify their own values.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't fight the small stuff. Minimize the number of household rules, but stick to the ones you do set. Save major power plays for issues that compromise health and safety or important values, like drinking, drugs and sex.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep communications honest and open, listening to what's really going on before jumping to conclusions. Be ready for those unexpected in-between times when your teen wants to talk in the car, doing the dishes or at bed time. That's when real closeness develops.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoid the "20-questions" approach to conversation, which teens find intrusive. At this stage, privacy is very important to them. Instead engage in open-ended conversations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	As teens try to separate from their childish selves, they sometimes feel that your existence is an embarrassment. Don't take it personally... and do drop them off a block from school or the mall and save your hugs and kisses for private times.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teens sometimes try on behaviors and roles the way we try on clothes. Although it can be scary to watch, these new personas usually don't last long.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Even though it's tempting to be your teen's friend, it's much more important to be the parent, setting reasonable limits and being a force of stability in their lives.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tell teens they can use you as the "bad-guy" excuse for declining to participate in activities that make them feel uncomfortable. That way, they know you're cool, but they can pretend you're not.
<input type="checkbox"/>	When offering advice, don't expect a positive response; you're more likely to see irritation or disgust. It's important to know, however, that much of what you say is absorbed anyway, waiting to come out.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage teens to exercise and develop their problem-solving and decision making skills by helping them evaluate potential choices and responses to situations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain perspective, being careful not to over-parent and over-manage on the one hand, or to under-parent and under-support on the other.

Source: Parents Place, www.ParentsPlaceOnline.org



Resource 10

Ideas for Busy Parents

No matter how busy you are, spending quality time with your child cannot be put off. Giving personal time and effort to your child will provide many long-term benefits for both of you.

Each of the following ideas take less than thirty minutes – and it just may be the best half hour you could spend to help your child learn and grow. Go through this list and check the things you are doing now. Go through the list a second time and check the things you can start to do right away.

- Read to your child**—at least twenty minutes a day. Keep lots of books or magazines around. Books and books on tape can be checked out of most libraries. Studies show that children of parents who read to them earn higher grades.
- Help your child organize his/her work area.** Make sure they have pencils, markers, crayons, glue sticks, a dictionary and any other materials they need to complete their assignments in a quiet environment.
- Review homework assignments to make sure it is done.** Talk to his/her teacher right away if the homework seems too hard or too easy for your child.
- Find out what's going on in school.** Let your child know that you will ask questions everyday about what he or she learned at school. Read the school or classroom newsletter to learn about what is going on in school.
- Play word games or listening games.** Play “Simon Says” with your child to increase vocabulary and memory skills. Ask your child's teacher or the librarian for other ideas of things to do.
- Set rules about your child's TV viewing time.** Instead of letting your child watch television for fun and relaxation, have him or her read a good book, play a board game or have free-play time.
- Get to know your child's teacher.** Write a personal note or introduce yourself in person. Share with the teacher your child's feelings about school and any special needs or interests that he or she has.
- Talk as a family about everyday happenings.** Whether it's from the front page of the daily newspaper, or something you saw or read, help your child see their place in the larger world. Listen carefully to your child and he or she will learn how to listen to others.
- Take advantage of time in the car.** Use this time to chat with children about what is going on in your lives (save heavier issues or concerns for family meetings). This is also a good time to share musical interests and listen to books on tape.



Resource 11

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is when a child does something he or she does not want to do as a result of being pressured by friends. All children experience peer pressure and give into it at one time or another. Consider these steps that parents can take to minimize the effects of peer pressure or gang activity.

Family is important to teens:

- Develop a close, open and honest relationship with your children so that they will want to identify with and work to please their parents. These children are much more likely to come to their parents when they are in trouble or are having problems. Talk to children about morals and values - the best defense against peer pressure.
- Help children understand peer pressure so they will be better able to make good decisions. Let them know peer pressure is something all children and adults experience at some time and that it is normal to want to fit in. Gangs are less attractive to children who get their needs met at home.
- Plan regular and frequent activities the whole family can participate in such as picnics, hiking, sports, etc. Parents who spend quality time together develop close relationships with their children; thus children are less likely to give in to peer pressure or gangs.

Stay Involved in Your Child's Life

- Encourage friendships with positive role models and join groups or activities which involve interacting with positive role models (i.e. scouting, sports, church groups).
- Get to know your children's friends and their parents to determine if they are a positive influence and have similar values.
- Know where your children are at all times. Supervise them at home, know where they are, who they are with and what they are doing.
- Don't criticize children's friends who might be a negative influence. They will become defensive and continue to be with them. Do discuss specific behaviors and actions. "It seems like every time you are with Tom you get into trouble."
- Encourage a wide variety of friends. This promotes individuality and makes it less likely for children to give in to peer pressure from any one group.
- Teach responsibility. Responsible children consider their options. They tend to cooperate more consciously than "people pleasers" (children who are motivated by approval) by considering their options rather than automatically making choices to avoid conflict or negative reactions from someone.



Help Your Child Develop a Positive Self-Image

Encourage individuality and independence by modeling or demonstrating those behaviors. Parents who resist peer pressure are teaching their children to do the same. Discuss independence with your children and stress the importance of being one's own person and doing what he or she feels is right.

Teach assertiveness through role playing so that children will be able to stand up for what they believe is right. We can also teach problem solving when children are faced with peer pressure by suggesting alternative activities or explaining why they refuse to participate in a certain activity.

Praise assertiveness—behavior that is praised is much more likely to be repeated.

Provide appropriate discipline when children give into peer pressure such as restricting privileges, or not letting the child spend time with the friend or friends with whom he got into trouble.

If you are suspicious that your child may have given into peer pressure, try to figure out the reason the child has given into peer pressure and address it. If they lack self-confidence or self-esteem, then work on building those qualities.

Seek help if a child is consistently giving into peer pressure.

Signs of Peer Pressure

- Excessive demands for material things his friends have
- Disregarding your rules in order to do things with friends
- Stealing with friends
- Any hint of alcohol or drugs
- Teens seriously misleading you about friends or whereabouts
- Doing things to avoid rejection like going along with friends who use poor judgement

Show Teens We Care

- Always take time to really listen
- Give children privacy; teens need space
- Be accepting of our children and not too critical
- Don't rush the teen years or raise false expectations
- Develop a strong sense of family unity by spending time together
- Talk about sex, drugs and alcohol

Peer pressure can be positive. It can keep youth participating in extra-curricular activities, going to meetings and playing on sports teams. The peer group is a source of affection, sympathy and understanding; it is a place for experimentation and a supportive setting for achieving the two primary developmental tasks of adolescence. These are identity (who I am) and autonomy (seeing oneself as separate and independent from parents).

Adapted from: Parents Reaching Out, www.parentsreachingout.org



Resource 12

Bullying

Being bullied or bullying is not just a part of growing up! Use this information to help you better understand bullying.

Bullying among elementary school children and teenagers is a growing problem in many schools. It's happening in urban, suburban and rural schools. Children who have learning or other disabilities seem to be especially prone to bullying. While bullying isn't new, professionals today have a new level of understanding of the problem. Bullying is a learned behavior that can be prevented! Effective bullying prevention programs are being used in many school systems throughout New Mexico. It's important for parents, students, teachers and school administrators to understand and learn to manage bullying that occurs at school and elsewhere.

What is Bullying?

Bullying may involve physical aggression such as fighting, shoving or kicking; verbal aggression such as name calling; or more subtle acts such as socially isolating another child. It is important for adults and youth to understand the difference between bullying and normal conflict.

Normal Conflict	Bullying
Happens occasionally	Happens repeatedly
Accidental	Done on purpose
Not serious	Serious — threat of physical or emotional harm
Equal emotional reaction	Strong emotional reaction on part of the victim
Not seeking power or attention	Seeking power or control
Not trying to get something	Trying to gain material things or power
Remorseful — takes responsibility	No remorse — blames victim
Effort to solve the problem	No effort to solve the problem

If you're a parent concerned about bullying, it's important to recognize the signs that a child is a bully, as well as the signs of one who is being victimized. Being alert and observant is critical, since victims are often reluctant to report bullying. Many victims don't report it to their parents or teachers because they're embarrassed or humiliated by the bullying. They may assume that adults will accuse them of tattling or will tell them to deal with it themselves. If bullying behavior is reported, bullies usually deny their involvement.

What can parents of the victim do?

If you know or suspect your child is being bullied, but the school hasn't communicated with you about the situation, you should contact your child's teacher(s) right away. Keep in mind that your primary goal should be to get the school's cooperation to get the bullying to stop. Knowing your own child is being victimized can evoke strong feelings, but you'll get much more cooperation from school personnel if you can stick to the facts and not become emotional. While you may want assurance that everyone involved is punished, try to focus on putting an end to the bullying. If your child is a victim of bullying, try helping him with the following strategies:

- Listen carefully to your child's reports of being bullied. Be sympathetic and take the problem seriously. Be careful not to overreact or under-react.



- Do not blame the victim. When a child finally works up the courage to report bullying, it isn't appropriate to criticize him for causing it or not handling the situation correctly. For example, don't ask, "Well, what did you do to bring it on?"
- Realize that for a child who is being bullied, home is a refuge. Expect the child to have some difficult times in dealing with victimization. Talk to the school counselor for support, if needed.
- Encourage your child to keep talking to you. Spend extra time together. Provide constant support and encouragement.

What can the parents of the bully do?

Parents of bullies should understand that children who aggressively bully peers are at increased risk for engaging in antisocial or criminal behavior in the future. It is therefore important to try to help bullies change their negative attitudes and behavior toward others.

- Take the problem seriously. Resist a tendency to deny the problem or to discount the seriousness of it. Avoid denial thinking such as "Bullying is just a natural part of growing up."
- Listen carefully and check out the facts. Do not believe everything your child tells you. Children who bully are good at manipulating adults and can be very artful at weaving a story that makes them look innocent.
- The school or the victim's parents may be documenting reports of your child's bullying behaviors. It doesn't serve your child to deny his involvement if there is evidence to the contrary. Check out the dates and the activities and determine if there is a pattern in his bullying behavior.
- Explore the reasons for your child's negative behavior. Speak with the school counselor or get professional help, if necessary, for your child and/or your family.

What can — and should — parents expect the school to do?

Whether your child is a bully, victim or bystander, you should expect the following from the school:

- School administrators, teachers, counselors and staff should take bullying problems seriously. The school should investigate the situation and let you know what steps they're taking to help stop the bullying.
- Written school policies and rules against bullying, harassment and intimidation should be in place and be enforced.
- Teachers, counselors and administrators should speak to the bully and his or her parents. They should also tell the child what the consequences will be if he or she doesn't stop bullying others. If the bullying continues, the school should enforce the pre-determined consequences immediately.
- Teachers and administrators should increase adult supervision in the areas of the school campus where bullying incidents are most likely to occur.
- School personnel should be informed about the children who are being victimized by bullies so they can monitor and provide support to the victims as needed. They should also communicate often with the victims' parents to tell them how the situation is being handled at school.

Finally, be aware that bullying prevention programs in schools are often a very effective way to stop bullying. If you believe that your child's school would benefit from a bullying prevention program, get involved in finding out how to bring such a program into the school.

Notes