

2011



CPEA® HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS



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INTRODUCTION

This document is written to encourage all persons involved in the implementation of the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA) to initiate conversations on one aspect of CPEA, namely, effecting *meaningful parental involvement* in their children's primary school education. As a parent or caregiver, you play an important role in your child's academic achievement. By taking steps to get involved in your child's education, you can bridge the gap between home and school to ensure your child's success in learning and in life.

This aspect of the CPEA is supported by research which has indicated that there is a direct correlation between effective parental involvement and student achievement. This involvement has a positive effect on your child and is greatly appreciated by the school. The exact nature of this relationship will be defined in collaboration with ministries of education, schools and parents.

The research-based tips in this publication provide both practical guidance and valuable information about how parents can successfully support their children and the school. We hope that you will find the information in this booklet helpful, as you get involved and stay involved in your child's education and help prepare him/her for school success and for a rewarding life of continuous learning.

Additionally, this handbook is one of the mechanisms which will be used to further refine and strengthen this relationship at the end of the first year of the implementation of the CPEA.

EFFECTIVE PARTNERS

There is *no one* more important than you, parents, when it comes to your children's success in school. Research has shown that when parents get involved in supporting their child's learning, they:

- ▲ complete their homework more often
- ▲ do better in school
- ▲ have better attendance
- ▲ behave better in school
- ▲ have better relationships with children at school
- ▲ are more likely to be successful

Through my involvement in my child's learning I can exert a positive influence on his/her educational outcomes.

Children with parents who are more involved in their learning do better in school than those with parents who are less involved.

I must be a partner and collaborate with the teacher in my child's learning and achieving. Teachers can be more effective when I participate in my child's learning.

How can I become a more effective partner in my child's life?



I can:

- ▲ volunteer in my child's school/classroom
- ▲ establish a daily study time at home (even when there is no homework)
- ▲ keep informed of school events and activities
- ▲ communicate frequently with my child's teacher
- ▲ prepare for and participate in parent-teacher conferences/meetings
- ▲ ensure my child has the nutrition and school supplies necessary to succeed
- ▲ volunteer to serve on one of the school's committees

MY CONCERNS

These are questions you might wish to reflect on.

- ▲ What role can I play in my child's learning?
- ▲ How do I share my views with my child's teachers and the school community?
- ▲ What steps do I need to take?
- ▲ How much time do I need to spend assisting and supervising my child's homework?
- ▲ When will I participate?

I only have 15 minutes. What can I do?

You can ask your child something specific about his/her day and listen to his/her stories.

- ▲ What did you make in art today?
- ▲ How did your English test go?
- ▲ What did you do during recess?
- ▲ What was the best thing that happened to you today?
- ▲ Tell me about something you learned today.
- ▲ What about your homework? Is it done? How difficult was it? Did it take very long? Was there anything that you could not do? How can I help you?

You will have the greatest impact on your child's education right in your own home, doing things together.

Homework: An Important Arena for Parental Involvement

Homework can serve as the catalyst and a vehicle for parents to begin the dialogue with teachers about their children's learning and their academic success. Homework can open the doors to effective parental involvement and effective partnership with the school. It also sensitizes parents to the work covered in class.

Homework is a significant and important strategy in the teaching/learning process. The teacher will set activities to consolidate recently covered learning experiences and promote good study habits.

How can I make the parent-child interaction with homework a positive experience?

- ▲ I can encourage my child.
- ▲ I can ensure that he/she has the necessary resources (for example, books).
- ▲ I can talk with my child about his/her school work.
- ▲ I can ensure that there is quiet time and a place for homework activities.



What strategies do I need to know in order to help my child with homework?

1. There are basic things that parents can do to help their children with homework.
2. Let your child be in control. Let him/her take the initiative to decide when his/her homework is complete and if he/she has done it correctly. Make sure you know the purpose of the assignments and how the teacher wants you to be involved in helping your child complete them.
3. If your child has a problem ask him/her what he/she can do to solve it. Support your child if he/she needs an adult to step in. Having control is especially important as your child gets older, it will give your child confidence.
4. Praise your child for his/her effort and for the progress he/she is making in school. Focus less on the grade and more on how diligent your child is. Instead of saying "You're just naturally good at Math so you'll do well." Say, "You didn't give up on that homework and gave it your best, so I think you will do well."

5. Keep it positive. When your child is stressed or frustrated and wants to give up, take the time to listen. Be encouraging and help your child figure out how to work through his/her frustrations. Focus on the things your child is learning.
6. Have great expectations. What you believe about your child's abilities affects what your child believes he/she can do. Regularly tell your child that you expect him/her to do well in school and to try hard. It is important to your child's success in school for him/her to know that you will listen to him/her and that you care.
7. Make sure the materials needed to do assignments — papers, books, pencils, a dictionary, encyclopaedia, computer — are available. Show your child how to use reference books or computer programs and appropriate websites. If you are unable to help your child with a subject, ask for help from a relative. Ask your child to let you know if special materials are needed and have them ready in advance.
8. Talk with your child about assignments to see that he/she understands them. When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers. Doing assignments for your child will not help him/her understand and use information or help him/her become confident in his/her own abilities.
9. Read the teacher's comments on assignments that are returned. If a problem comes up, arrange to meet with the teacher and work out a plan and a schedule to solve it. ***You may wish to suggest amendments to the assignment/task that would have allowed your child to do better.***
10. Watch for signs of frustration or failure. Let your child take a short break if he/she is having trouble keeping his/her mind on an assignment.
11. Reward progress. If your child has been successful in completing an assignment and is working hard, celebrate to reinforce the positive effort.

You may wish to select the conditions under which you find that your child learns best.

My child learns best when he/she

- ▲ listens to when I discuss the nature of the task/assignment
- ▲ talks about the assignment
- ▲ reads material related to the task
- ▲ writes about the research related to the task
- ▲ does some enabling activities related to the task
- ▲ see samples of how the task should be done

Helping with homework can be a way for families to learn more about what their children are learning in school and an opportunity for them to communicate both with their children and with teachers and principals.



The research has indicated that through modelling, reinforcement, and instruction, homework involvement appears to influence pupil success insofar as it supports pupil attributes related to achievement (for example, attitudes about homework, perceptions of personal competence, self-regulatory skills).

How to help our child with learning skills used in:

- ▲ reading;
- ▲ mathematics;
- ▲ science; and
- ▲ homework.

Helping with Reading

Reading with your child is vital.

It is best to read little and often.

Research shows that reading with your child is the single most important thing you can do to develop your child's learning skills.

Set aside some time each day for reading with your child.

Books contain more than words and pictures. They also contain new ideas and information for you and your child to discuss.

If your child enjoys talking about the content of any page, linger over it and talk about it for as long as you like.

Six tips for helping your child to enjoy books

1. Enrol your child in the library and visit the library as often as possible.
2. Encourage the child to take out CDs as well as books.
3. Schedule a regular time for reading – perhaps just before bed.
4. Talk about books and stories and develop a love for them.

5. Look for books that you know your child is interested in – maybe insects, cooking or a certain sport.
6. Make sure that children’s books are within their reach around the house.

Helping with Mathematics

As with reading, try to make mathematics as much fun as possible.

Play games (dominoes, checkers), puzzles and jigsaws with your child. This is a great way to start helping them to develop learning skills in mathematics.

It is important to show how we use mathematics skills in our daily lives and to involve your child in this. Cooking requires weighing and measuring and provides many opportunities for using mathematical skills.

Identifying problems and solving them can also help your child develop mathematical skills. If you see your child puzzling over something at home, talk about the problem and try to work out the solution together.

Four tips for helping your child to enjoy mathematics

1. Point out the different shapes to be found around your home.
2. Take your child shopping and talk about the quantities of anything you buy.
3. Let your child handle money and work out how much things cost.
4. Look together for numbers on street signs and on car registration plates. Talk about the information contained in these numbers.

Helping with Science

As with reading and mathematics, science is much fun.

Science is the way human knowledge advances. It depends on human beings asking questions and trying to find answers to their questions.

Science provides explanations about how and why things happen in the world around us. Some explanations have been with us for many years; for other explanations, we are now collecting more and more evidence.

The search for evidence to explain things around us is very important for all children, their teachers and their parents.

Every teacher is required to provide children with experiences in science as described in the Science curriculum (MOE).

Parents too should participate with their children in searching for evidence to explain things around them — in their homes, their gardens, and in the foods they eat.

Four tips for helping your child to enjoy Science

1. Encourage your child to measure or weigh objects around the home — often and accurately.
2. Give your child practical experiences in growing and caring for pets and plants at home, under your careful guidance.
3. Engage your child in conversation as you and your child participate in measuring and estimating quantities for cooking.
4. Encourage your child to handle home appliances safely — using a knife, a pair of scissors, a screw-driver, heating water, moving hot liquids from one container to the next.



Homework at primary school

Homework at primary school is very important.

First, it strengthens what your child is learning in school. It also provides opportunities for your child to practice certain skills.

Second, it gives you a chance to become involved in the learning process.

In certain classes, reading is the most important homework. Your child may have a book from the classroom library to read. Try to read the book together every night.

Sometimes your child will be asked to talk to you about what he or she learned in school on a particular day. This can be the most valuable homework of all, especially if you ask your child questions about his or her day.

Six tips for good homework habits

1. Find a quiet place at home to use as a homework area.
2. Do plan a homework timetable and agree on when your child will do homework.
3. Do allow your child to eat something nutritional before starting on homework.
4. Do discuss any homework tasks with your child and how it connects with what they are studying at school.
5. Do turn off the TV.
6. Do NOT teach your child methods you used at school. It could confuse them.

Please note

This handbook is a work in progress and will be updated as parents, students, teachers and administrators experience the first year of the implementation of the CPEA.