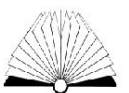
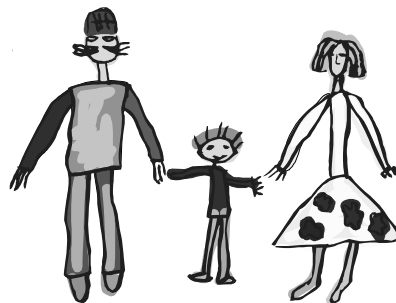


# How To Kit

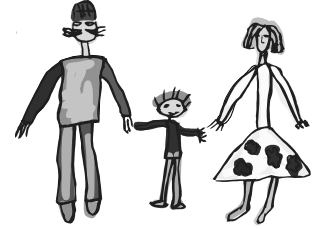


## Involving Families in Children's Learning





## Involving families in children's learning

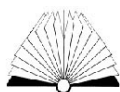


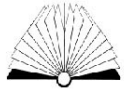
Learning is very complex. It begins at birth, and continues throughout life. At first, young children learn within the family. Then gradually their learning environment changes. They move from informal learning in the family to more formal educational programs, like daycare programs, early childhood programs, Aboriginal Headstart programs or schools.

Research shows that when parents are involved in their children's education, children are more likely to be successful in early childhood and school programs.

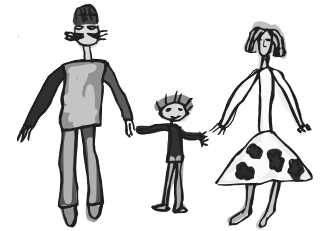
In this *How to Kit*, you will find ...

- ✓ Information on why educational programs should involve parents/ families in children's learning
- ✓ Information on the benefits of involving parents
- ✓ Tips for programs on how to get parents involved in a meaningful way
- ✓ Practical ideas for parents to support their children's learning





## Why are families important in children's learning?



- Learning begins at birth. Children's experiences in their family shape their learning and their literacy development.

- Parents are their children's first teachers. They are role models for their children and have a strong influence on their learning. They socialize their children into particular types of literacy.

- Home literacy and literacy in educational programs may be different. When they match, children are more likely to be successful. Both home literacy and educational literacy are valuable. Programs and parents need opportunities to find out about these different literacies and to build on them to help children succeed.

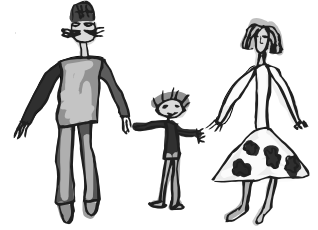


- All parents want the best for their children.





## What are the benefits of involving parents in children's learning?



Research shows that everyone benefits when parents are involved in learning. Communication between families and programs helps staff understand the needs of the children in their program. And it lets parents become partners in learning.

### *Children:*

- Children are more likely to be successful in educational programs.
- Their grades improve.
- Children's attitudes and behaviours are more positive.
- Their attendance in programs is better.
- They are less likely to drop out of school.



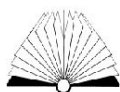
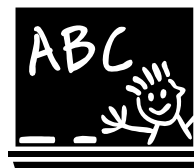
### *Families:*

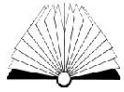
- The program becomes a natural extension of family learning.
- The family has opportunities to understand the program better.



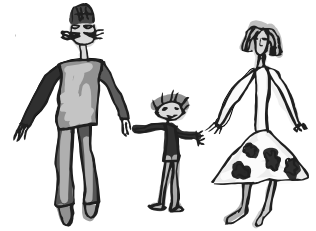
### *Programs:*

- Programs become more effective overall.
- Programs have opportunities to understand home literacy and home cultures better.
- Teachers and early childhood staff have higher expectations for children.



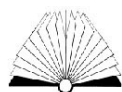


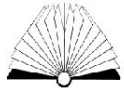
## Why are parents sometimes reluctant to get involved?



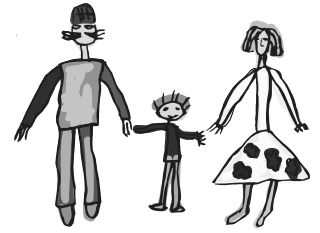
Programs sometimes find it difficult to involve parents in children's learning. Just because they are not involved, however, may not mean they are not interested. There may be many reasons that prevent them from becoming involved.

- As children, they may have had some negative experiences in the formal education system.
- They may not know how they can contribute.
- They may find the program environment uninviting, and may feel uncomfortable there.
- There may be a language barrier.
- They may lack resources, like transportation or childcare.
- They may have personal factors in their lives, like domestic violence, that hold them back from becoming involved.
- They may not understand they have a role in their child's learning in formal programs. For example, they may think, 'It's the school's job.'

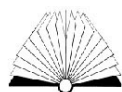


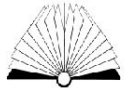


## How can programs increase family involvement in learning?

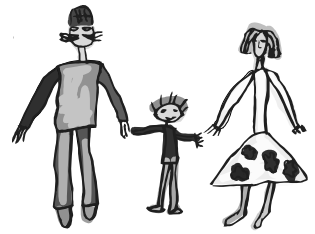


- Find out what families want to do.
- Be sure the first contact with families is positive.
- Go and visit families in their homes and ask them what their skills are and what they would be interested in doing.
- Talk to social workers or health care workers who work with families.
- Send out questionnaires to homes, but don't rely only on written communication.
- Don't use educational 'jargon'.
- Accommodate people's schedules, like their work schedule.
- Accommodate language and cultural differences.
- Make sure information is clear, concise and understandable.
- Create an environment that supports family involvement.





## Activities to involve families



- Create a regular **Class Newsletter** that tells what children will be studying. Make some suggestions for activities that children can do at home. Send it home with samples of children's work for parents to review.



- Hold a **Getting to Know You Night**. Parents, staff and children spend an informal evening getting to know each other. Hold it somewhere other than the program building—a barbecue in the park, a potluck supper, or sporting event.

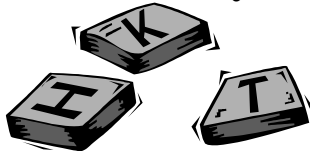


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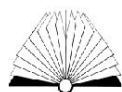
- Make **Take Home Bags** that include a book and/ or some hands-on activities that families can do together. Include directions for the activity and anything that families might need for the activity. Ask families to return everything in the bag when they have finished the project.

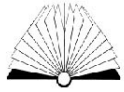


- Hold **Family Literacy Evenings**, where families and children come together to play games, read stories, do arts and crafts, and eat snacks!

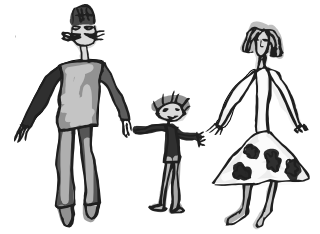


- Host a **Learning Breakfast** for families that features storytelling and reading circles.





## Activities to involve families (cont.)



- Have a **Family Pyjama Party** at the library or the program. Encourage everyone to wear their pyjamas for a session of stories, games and snacks.

- Organize **Parent Workshops** on how parents can help their children with reading and writing.



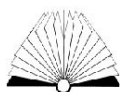
- Organize a **Family Book Swap**. Have families bring in their old books for one or two weeks before the actual book swap, and give them a book token for each book. On the book swap day, they can then use the tokens to ‘buy’ a book they have not read. If families have lots of books, they can donate some tokens for families who don’t have many books at home.



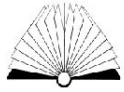
- Plan a **Family Scavenger Hunt**. Place clues around the program library or the public library and have families look for information in books.



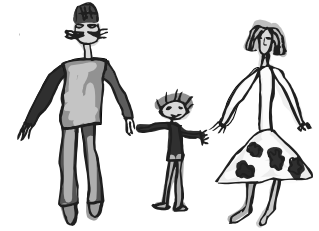
- Organize a **Storytelling Festival**. Ask a few parents and children to tell stories to the class. Make them short and active, if possible.







## Activities to involve families (cont.)



- Organize a **Cultural Event**, where parents from specific cultures plan and do the activities. If you have several different cultures, you can host several events. You can end with a cultural food event for all the families in the class or program.



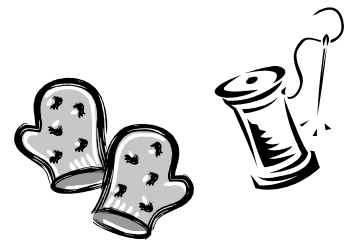
- Plan and deliver a **Family Literacy Program**, like *1-2-3 Rhyme with Me*, *Books in the Home* or *Families First*. Contact the NWT Literacy Council for help with training and materials.

- Invite parents into the program as volunteers, as book buddies, to work with small groups of children, or to help with outings.

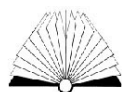


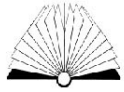
- Create a **Parent Resource Centre**. In it, place materials on issues of interest to parents, like child development, literacy development, health and safety, and so on.

- Invite parents to give demonstrations or teach their specialized skills, like sewing or cooking.

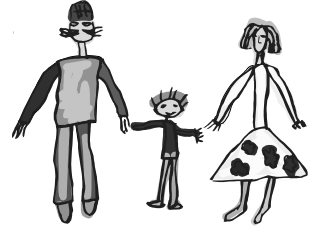


- Provide a list of things, like craft materials or stapling newsletters, that parents can provide or do. Make sure the list includes a variety of things.



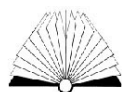


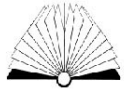
## Parents: Helping your children learn



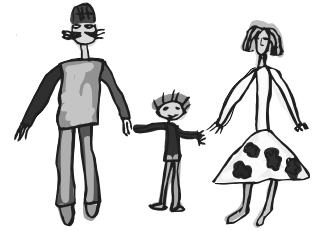
Here are some ways parents can help their children learn.

- Talk to your children about the program they are in. Ask them questions and show them you're interested in what they are doing.
- Make sure your children have a quiet, comfortable place at home to do their homework and to study.
- Set aside a specific time each day for your children to do their homework.
- Ask about their homework, look at it, and encourage them.
- Look for your children's strengths.
- Don't be afraid to visit the program and talk to the staff.
- Limit how much time your children can watch TV. Help your children choose suitable programs.
- Set aside time every day to read, sing or tell stories to your children.







# Parents: Helping your children learn (cont.)



- Make an effort to become familiar with your children’s educational program.
- Show an interest in the program by visiting it and joining in some activities.
- Join in some of your children’s activities, like discussing books, watching TV programs, or visiting places of interest.
- Play board games with your children. They can help your children match pictures and words. They can also help with numbers. You can even make your own games. Look!



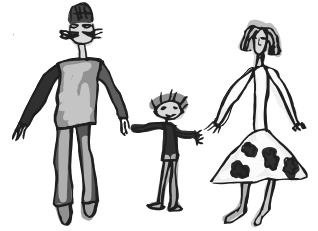
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- If there’s a library in your community, join the library, and let your children choose their own books.





## Tips for parents on reading



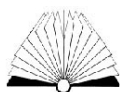
### How can I help my children learn to read?

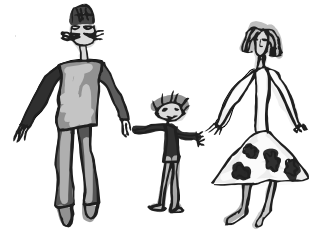
- ✓ Let them see you reading
- ✓ Share books together
- ✓ Point out the print that's all around, like street signs, labels, posters
- ✓ Make scrapbooks from photos or magazines
- ✓ Cook together



### Steps to reading

- ✓ Choose a book from the library or from your home.
- ✓ Take turns reading aloud, or tell the story by looking at the pictures.
- ✓ Talk about what's happening in the story.
- ✓ Help your child with difficult words.
- ✓ Encourage your child.



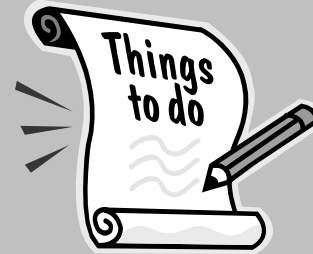


## Tips for parents on writing

### How can I help my children learn to write?

Let your children watch you when you:

- ✓ fill in forms
- ✓ write letters
- ✓ write cards
- ✓ make notes
- ✓ pay bills
- ✓ write shopping lists



### What materials do I need to encourage writing at home?

- ✓ Lots of paper
- ✓ Pens, pencils, crayons
- ✓ Scissors and glue
- ✓ Old envelopes or greeting cards to copy
- ✓ Blank books for children to make their own stories
- ✓ A box to keep all the materials in

