

The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

Home & School

"Together We Can Make a Difference"



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Skip Forsyth

When I was a kid we had a "Slip N Slide." On a hot summer day we'd roll out the long plastic mat, hook up the hose, and have loads of fun cooling off. Kids from the neighborhood would gather as we tried to outdo one another with unique sliding form.

It has been a long year with school closures, at-home learning, hybrid arrangements, and the slow return to face-to-face classroom instruction. Unfortunately many students have already fallen behind their grade-level expectations. Upcoming, many will suffer the academic summer slide which is neither fun nor necessary.

During summer 2021 families need to encourage their children to continue reading and practice math skills.

- To ensure your child is reading, read with your child. Have them read to you aloud and you can read to them as well. Ask them to name the characters in the story and describe their personality or behaviors.
- Check your local library as they may offer some type of summer reading program.
- Seek suggestions from your child's teacher about summer reading and math strategies or online reading programs offered through the school district.
- Read the packaging and ingredients on food products. Look up unknown ingredients in a dictionary to expand your child's understanding.
- Read the promotional and marketing information in the junk mail. Talk about the product or service. What is it? Why is it beneficial or not? Is this honest advertising or is this a "scam?"
- If your child enjoys sports, talk to them about their favorite players. Read the player's bio. Also, look up the players stats. Sports has all sorts of information about player statistics, percentages, averages, etc. The math can be simple or more complex depending upon the child's math skills.
- If you have the opportunity to go on a summer get-away, map out the trip with your child. Show him or her how to use the legend, how to calculate distance, and how to estimate travel time.
- If you are doing any fixer-upper tasks, ask your child to help with the measurements. Show them how to read a tape measure (including the fractions), and how to set and read a mitre (it's all about angles).
- I like to garden. Deciding where to plant the garden rows, how far apart, how deep, and how many seeds to plant is all about math and measurement. Then, tending to the plants as they grow and flower and fruit is all about science, not to mention the pests.

A water park or city water-themed play area is wonderful fun. The academic summer slide is no laughing matter. Enjoy the summer, the change of pace, and the gradual return to "normal" as the pandemic loosens its grip on restrictions. Nevertheless, use the summer to maintain your child's interest in learning and their skill levels. Their success next school year depends, in part, upon your willingness to encourage and assist them this summer.

Dear Parents

*I've worked with your flower
and helped it to grow.
I'm returning it now,
but I want you to know.
This flower is precious,
as dear as can be.
Love, take care of it,
and you will see.
A bright new bloom
with every day.
It grew and blossomed
in such a wonderful way.
In August, just a bud.
Then January, a bloom.
Now a lovely blossom
I'm returning to you.
Remember, this flower,
as dear as can be.
Though rightfully yours,
part will always be with me!*

Author unknown.



8 Practical Tips for Finding the Summer Job of Your Dreams.

Do your research. Tap into your network of friends and family. Don't give up.

With limited education, skills, and connections, young people have a hard time finding summer employment. A study cited by the White House found that 46 percent of students who applied for a summer job last year were turned down. Ouch!

Here are a few tips for students or recent graduates just launching their job search. Any of these tips can also be applied to job searches by people who are already in the workforce today, but are looking for a bigger and better opportunity:

1. **Focus your search.** Narrow your search to a few industries, and within each of those, a handful of companies. This will make the entire search process less overwhelming.
2. **Tap into your existing network of friends and family.** Besides social media, you probably have a much bigger network of relationships that you can leverage than you even realize.

Start with those you know best--your family and close friends --and see if they can introduce you to people they know. You'll need to take the initiative and reach out for help.

When you start to plug into their networks, you might find that you're just one or two connections removed from someone who works at one of your target companies and is either in a position to hire you or can introduce you to the one who can.
3. **Identify your two strongest skills and show how you might apply them to the job.** You can strengthen your application and gain visibility with recruiters by identifying your two or three strongest skills and explaining in your cover letter how you can put them to use at their firm. Make your cover letter stand out by explaining why they should hire you.
4. **Research the company and get familiar with what they do.** It's tempting to send a generic cover letter and resume to dozens of companies. But imagine what a recruiter on the receiving end of such a generic letter is likely to think (and do) when they see an uncustomized form letter land in their inbox. Take some time to understand the company and the role you're applying for, and make that visible in your cover letter.
5. **Don't be afraid to ask.** Looking for a job when your resume is empty, and you don't have a lot of self-confidence can be a daunting experience. But I've found that the students who end up finding a job are generally the ones who had the courage to ask. So, don't be afraid to ask.
6. **Be persistent.** Businesses get a lot of email every day, the bulk of which is related to the full-time positions they're seeking to fill. If you want to get noticed, don't give up the first time you reach out and fail to get a response.
7. **Develop a tolerance for rejection.** It's tough to face rejection just as you're starting out. But get used to it, and don't take it personally. Job searches can be a hit and miss game --and there will be a lot of misses early on. And that's okay--we've all been there before.
8. **Don't burn bridges.** When you do get rejected, remain calm and stay professional, and thank the person for their time. Don't rant about it on social media, either. A company might keep your resume on file and reach out to you when an opportunity does open up.

Identify your strengths, do your research, reach out for help, and don't give up. Good luck with your search!

Taken in part from an article by Glenn Leibowitz

<https://www.inc.com/glenn-leibowitz/8-practical-tips-for-finding-the-summer-job-or-any-job-of-your-dreams.html>

Mark Your Calendar
December 9-10, 2021
8:30AM-4:00PM
Virtual
Statewide Parental
Involvement Conference
NO travel costs + LOWER registration fee
= MORE staff & parents can attend
www.StatewideParents.com

“Listen earnestly to anything your children want to tell you, no matter what. If you don't listen eagerly to the little stuff when they are little, they won't tell you the big stuff when they are big, because to them all of it has always been big stuff.”

Catherine Wallace

2021 Promising Practices Winners

CROCKETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: *Latino Family Literacy Project*



CROCKETT
EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL
AUSTIN Independent School District

What is the goal of the practice?

1. Establish and support a family reading routine.
2. Strengthen parent/child interaction.
3. Improve literacy skills in Spanish.

How was the practice identified as a need?

There is a clear connection between being able to read and speak English and whether young Latinos graduate from high school or engage with gangs. (California Department of Education)

WEIMAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: *Family Literacy Night—Winter Wonderland*



What is the goal of the practice?

The goal of family literacy night is to enhance enjoyment of reading and build a strong relationship between family and schools.

How was the practice identified as a need?

There were not many family engagement opportunities available for parents to come into the school and learn from teachers how to build students' literacy skills, which includes a book rich environment at home. Data suggested that 40%-50% of K-2 students did not exhibit academic readiness at the beginning of the school year.

PINE TREE PRIMARY SCHOOL: *Bring Your Parent to School*



What is the goal of the practice?

The goal of the day was to provide parents opportunities to become the best learning partner for their student that they can be. Parents built their capacity as they learned side by side with their students through self-selected sessions led by teachers, Parent Liaisons, and Region 7 ESC staff. To support these efforts once they returned home, each family received a bag with reading and math activities geared towards either pre-kindergarten or kindergarten.

How was the practice identified as a need?

Pine Tree Primary is a Title I School-wide campus with 76% economically disadvantaged students. For many of these students, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are their first learning experience. Through our annual needs assessment, our parents expressed a desire to learn how to work with their child at home. They had the will and want to, but did not feel confident in their abilities.

PINE TREE ISD: *Raising Highly Capable Kids*

What is the goal of the practice?

The purpose of the thirteen week series, Raising Highly Capable Kids, is to help build stronger families by giving parents the confidence, tools, and skills they need to raise healthy, caring and responsible children through the use of 44 research-based assets. Parents and especially couples are encouraged to complete the 13-week series comprised of 1-1/2 hour classes each week.

How was the practice identified as a need?

Through conversations with stakeholders and our Title I parent survey we realized there was a need to offer resources for our parents within the school district. It has been a challenge to get parents to the schools and engage them with school projects. The Raising Highly Capable Kids project became an additional resource specifically for parents as a means to address family structure.

KLEIN HIGH SCHOOL: *Parent Orchestra*



What is the goal of the practice?

The goal of this project was multi-faceted. The initial goal was to increase parent involvement in the orchestra program by providing parents an opportunity to re-ignite their passion for music. This project also provided an opportunity for parents to connect with their students through a shared interest. With this newfound shared interest, students would gain inspiration to be fully invested in the music program and student retention would increase.

How was the practice identified as a need?

Orchestra Director, Mr. Creston Herron, noticed how parents talked about not being able to connect with their high school students. At the same time, he heard often from parents about their desire to continue or begin learning to play a musical instrument. He then saw the opportunity to build strong connections within families through music.

To see all Promising Practices submitted, go to: <https://www.esc16.net/page/titleswi>. [Promising Practices](#)

Surprisingly Healthy Snacks for Kids

Popcorn is a sure-fire hit with kids, and...it's a whole grain! Popcorn actually has 4 grams of fiber per 3-cup serving, which makes it a filling snack. Plus, it's endlessly versatile. You can transform air-popped popcorn with all sorts of toppings, including grated cheese, nutritional yeast or cinnamon and sugar.



Ice Pops couldn't be easier or more versatile to whip up. And when you make them yourself, you control exactly what goes in them. Frozen orange pops deliver a helping of vitamin C and calcium to

your child, courtesy of the main ingredients: orange juice and nonfat Greek yogurt.

Peanut Butter. Natural peanut butter (the kind without added sugars and other kinds of fats) is a great snack option. It gives your kids protein and healthy fats, and pairs perfectly with apples, bananas, celery and whole-grain crackers or toast.



Cookies. Here's the thing about cookies: You can make them healthy when you use the right ingredients. Whole-wheat pastry flour can be subbed for white flour in most cookies. Rolled oats add even more fiber. Add in some recipes, like

certain Oatmeal-Chocolate Snack Cakes, you can replace some of the butter with applesauce to lighten up the saturated fat. Serve them with *lowfat* milk and you have a nutritious, balanced snack for your kids.

HEALTH & NUTRITION TIPS THAT ARE EVIDENCE-BASED

Don't Drink Sugar Calories. Sugary drinks are the most fattening things you can put in your body. Fruit juices are almost as bad as soda in this regard.

Eat Nuts. Despite being high in fat, nuts are incredibly healthy. They are loaded with magnesium, vitamin E, fiber and various other nutrients.

Avoid Processed Junk Food. These foods have been engineered to be "hyper-rewarding," so they trick our brains into eating more than we need, even leading to addiction in some people.

Drink Water, Especially Before Meals. Studies show that drinking half a liter of water, 30 minutes before each meal, increased weight loss by 44%.

<https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/packages/recipes-for-kids/healthy-meals-for-kids/10-surprisingly-healthy-snacks-for-kids>

Car Games for Kids

By Suzanne Rowan Kelleher

What do parents dread most about family road trips? It's not the cost of filling up the gas tank. It's also not traffic or toll roads or Sunday drivers. It's the thought of their own little cherubs stuck together in tight



quarters for hours. Oh, the backseat squabbling. The poking. The whining. The impatient cries of "Are we there yet?" Just make it stop! Luckily, there are lots of ways to keep kids happily entertained and enjoying each other's company. And the best part? You can achieve it without spending a dime.

I Spy. "I spy with my little eye, something red."

This easy-to-learn game is perfect for preschoolers, and can keep them entertained for unbelievably long periods of time. The directions are simple: One person spies something and recites the line, ending in a clue. Everyone else takes turns trying to guess the mystery item.

Tic Tac Toe. All you need are two players and a pencil to play this popular standby. Player One places an X on the grid, Player Two plots an O. They continue to take turns until one player has three across.

Connect the Dots. Why is it that all the best games are so gosh darn simple? This "make a box" game works best when each player uses a different colored pencil or crayon.

I'm Going on a Picnic. This alphabet based memory game is great for kids 5 and up. You don't need a game board or any materials. The game can be played with as few as two players, but it's more fun when the whole family joins in. The first player says "I'm going on a picnic and I'm bringing..." followed by something that begins with A, such as apples. The second player repeats what the first person said, but adds something that begins with B. So she might say "I'm going on a picnic and I'm bringing apples and bananas." And so on with C, D, and the rest of the alphabet. If someone forgets an item, she is out. To be fair, feel free to be lenient and give hints to younger players. The last player to be able to recite all the items on the list wins.

20 Questions. This easy-peasy game is great for younger kids, thanks to its straightforward rules. Player One thinks of a person, place or thing. Everyone else takes turns asking questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. After each answer, the questioner gets one guess. Play continues until a player guesses correctly.

<http://www.minitime.com/trip-tips/10-Best-Car-Games-for-Kids-article/>

COLLEGE CHECKLIST:

Emotional Preparation

Living in a tiny room with a stranger or two probably isn't something you've experienced before. But here's a secret: It's new for everyone else, too.

Here's how to get yourself emotionally ready for college:

- ⇒ Identify your goals (academic, social, personal).
- ⇒ List your personal beliefs and morals so you ensure that the choices you make in college align with who you are.
- ⇒ Know what activities recharge you and make plans to continue those at school by looking into groups and activities on or near campus. Check out student life pages on the college website and meetup groups in the local area.
- ⇒ Build your confidence by making a list of all your accomplishments. Get your friends and family to tell you something that they think is exceptional about you.
- ⇒ Spend one-on-one time with family members.
- ⇒ Spend one-on-one time with good friends.
- ⇒ Decide on how you'll communicate with friends and family while you're at school.
- ⇒ Take a spontaneous trip and experience what it's like to do something unexpected.
- ⇒ Plan how you'll continue to practice your religion/faith/spirituality away from home.
- ⇒ Know that you'll change because of your new experiences. Remember, sometimes change can feel uncomfortable, but that doesn't mean it's bad.

Financial Preparation

If you've had a summer job or a part-time gig while in high school, you probably have some handle on financial planning. But moving away to college may be the first time in your life that you're making financial decisions on a daily basis on your own.

Living on a budget isn't impossible, but it's easier if you've done some planning before you head off on your own. Here's how to prep while you still have some support at home:

- ⇒ First off: figure out where your tuition money is coming from (scholarships, grants, work study, job, parents, savings, etc.).
- ⇒ Create your budget so necessary expenses are covered (books, car payments, insurance, etc.) and you know how much money is left over after expenses.
- ⇒ Decide on how much you'll spend on other necessities, like food and college costs (events, fees, etc.).
- ⇒ Use a banking or budgeting app to keep track of your spending.
- ⇒ Stick to your budget in the months leading up to college—remember, practice makes perfect!
- ⇒ Don't add to your budget every month if you have money left over. Put that money into savings and pretend it's not available.
- ⇒ Look at your bank statements each month.
- ⇒ If possible, see if your budget will allow you to start paying back loans while still in school.

**GET
YOUR PELL
ON!**

Federal Pell Grants are usually awarded only to undergraduate students.

The amount of aid you can receive depends on your financial need, the cost of attendance at your school, and more. Federal Pell Grants usually are awarded only to undergraduate students who display exceptional financial need and have not earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree. (In some cases, however, a student enrolled in a postbaccalaureate teacher certification program might receive a Federal Pell Grant.) You are not eligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant if you are incarcerated in a federal or state penal institution or are subject to an involuntary civil commitment upon completion of a period of incarceration for a forcible or nonforcible sexual offense.

A Federal Pell Grant, unlike a loan, does not have to be repaid, except under certain circumstances.

How do I apply?

You should start by submitting a *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA[®]) form. You will have to fill out the FAFSA form every year you're in school in order to stay eligible for federal student aid.

How much money can I get?

Amounts can change yearly. The maximum Federal Pell Grant award is \$6,495 for the 2021–22 [award year](#) (July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022).

The amount you get, though, will depend on

- Your Expected Family Contribution,
- The cost of attendance (determined by your school for your specific program),
- Your status as a full-time or part-time student, and
- Your plans to attend school for a full academic year or less.

In certain situations, an eligible student can receive up to 150 percent of his or her scheduled Pell Grant award for an award year.

For example, if you are eligible for a \$2,000 Pell Grant for the award year and are enrolled full-time for both the fall term and spring term, you'll likely receive \$1,000 in the fall and \$1,000 in the spring. However, under certain circumstances, you may be eligible to receive up to an additional \$1,000 for attendance in an additional term within that award year (resulting in your receiving 150% of your original award). You might hear this situation being referred to as "year-round Pell."

For more information go to:

<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/pell>

Article taken in part from Nitro: <https://www.nitrocollege.com>

5 Tips for Better Behavior

Sometimes, when tasks and schedules get overwhelming, it's helpful to make a to-do list to make things feel more manageable and focused.

Invest in one-on-one time with kids daily.

By far, the best thing you can do to improve your children's behavior is spending time with them individually every day, giving them the positive attention and emotional connection they're hard-wired to need.

When they don't have that positive attention, they will seek out attention in negative ways, and consequences and other discipline methods won't work. Aim for 10-15 minutes a day per child and you'll see measurable improvement almost immediately.

Get serious about sleep.

Think of how you feel when you're overtired, cranky, irritable, your head and stomach hurt. It's the same for kids, and most toddlers (up to teens) get far less sleep than their growing bodies need.

Teens even need more sleep than some younger kids. Consult your family physician about the hours of sleep your kids need by age. If your child has a sleep deficit, try moving up bedtime by 10 minutes every few nights. A well-rested kid is a well-behaved kid and can function better throughout the day, including during school.



Article taken in part from Positive Parenting Solutions

Focus on routines.

Kids thrive with a routine, so set clearly defined routines for the most challenging times of the day, like mornings, after school, mealtimes and bedtimes.

Let your kids help decide how the routine will go—do we get dressed or brush teeth first? How can you help get dinner ready?

For younger kids, write out the order of the routine using pictures or words and let them decorate it, then hang it where they'll see it every day. Then stick to it.

Everyone pitches in.

For better behavior, kids need to understand that everyone needs to contribute to make a household run smoothly.

All kids, from toddlers to teens, should have "family contributions" (not "chores!") they do daily – this helps bring your family closer together, teaches them life skills and works to prevent the entitlement epidemic.

Encourage your kids to be problem solvers.

Time to retire your referee whistle – when parents step in the middle of a sibling disagreement and determine who's at fault and dole out punishments, it actually makes things worse.

To kids, they see a winner and a loser and a need to escalate the sibling rivalry. Encourage your kids to find a resolution to the problem on their own, which will help them solve conflicts as they grow older. If you have to get involved, don't choose sides, but ask questions that will help them figure out a solution that all parties can feel good about.

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The Parent and Family Engagement Connection is posted on our website four times a year for parents and educators of Texas. This newsletter is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, German, Tagalog and Korean.



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