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Parents should be involved in school

Darin Drill

This is an exciting time for parents and students all across the state.

Educators are preparing to instruct students at every learning level, but parents too must prepare for the challenge of another school year. One of the most effective ways you can help your student succeed is to be a parent who is willing to get involved — volunteer, listen to your local school talk about its goals, and ask questions when you have them.

Many schoolhouse doors look exactly the same as they did years ago, but much has changed in the way we educate our students. Educators by and large do a tremendous job of teaching to every kind of student today, but they cannot do it alone. Parents must step up and step into the school to be a partner in their student's education.

Parents who want to make a difference can start in their student's school. Volunteering in a classroom is a great way to assist with your child's education. If you are unavailable during the school day, volunteer for a school project or an annual activity.

The best opportunity to ask questions about how you can specifically help your student succeed is a face-to-face conversation with your child's teacher and even the principal or counselor. If your child knows that you and their teacher are talking to each other, you will be more informed about what the classroom looks and feels like, everyone will be on the same page about what the expectations will be, and the chances of a successful year will dramatically increase.

Parents can also get involved at the district level by attending a district board meeting. You will come to understand what initiatives are important to the district, how financial decisions get made, and what curriculum and instruction goals are being focused on.

Any parent can also access a number of Web sites that provide a wealth of information about their child's school and district. The Oregon Department of Education's Web site (www.ode.state.or.us) lists state standards for student learning. Parents can compare what is being taught in their child's classroom with the state requirements. The Open Books Project (www.openbooksproject.org), an initiative of the Chalkboard Project (www.chalkboardproject.org), gives parents information about how their school district compares to others with regard to district spending, student achievement, and teacher and student data.

Ultimately, getting involved in your student's education is a responsibility that goes with being a parent. Schools need parents to be involved, ask tough questions, and understand the challenges educators face as they try to best serve all students.

Research shows that when parents are involved in their student's education, everything from student test scores to school attendance to social skills improves. Working with your son or daughter on their homework is a great first step, but taking the time to be involved at the school level provides a better

understanding of the actual education experience and gives the school another resource to help improve student success.

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Additional Facts

Online

Oregon Department of Education: www.ode.state.or.us

Open Books Project: www.openbooksproject.org

Chalkboard Project: www.chalkboardproject.org
