

# Parents as Partners

Dear Parents:

You, your child's teacher, and Jeffco Public Schools have the same goal: that your child has a successful year. The best way to accomplish this goal is for us to work together.

**Parents + Schools =  
Parents as Partners**

Research proves that children whose parents are actively involved in their school do better in school and in life. Over time, you'll notice fewer disciplinary problems, higher grades and attendance and motivational levels in your children. This will, in turn, strengthen your children's self-esteem, making them a happier part of the family. Your involvement will benefit not only your children and the teachers, but also benefit you as you develop a network among parents.

**Parents as Partners: You're Part of the Equation** is a "tool kit" for you as a parent. It provides ideas and techniques you can use to develop a partnership with your children's school and teachers. Here's what you find in this booklet:

**Parent involvement** – Parents as partners; National PTA standards for parent and family involvement; helping your children prepare for school; getting to you're your child's teacher, even if your children aren't in trouble; providing support at home; and volunteering to let children know "I care about what you do here."

**Tips for parents** – Discipline; homework; parent-teacher conferences; problem solving; report cards; testing; transitioning; and resources.

We hope you find this information beneficial. If you have comments about this guide, contact Communications Services, 303-982-6808. This information is also available online at <http://jeffcoweb.jeffco.k12.co.us>.

Thank you for your willingness to work with your school. Together teachers, parents and students can create opportunities for success and improve student learning.

Sincerely,

Jeffco Public Schools  
Jefferson County Council PTA  
Jefferson County Education Association (JCEA)

# Table of Contents

## Parent involvement

Parents as partners.....	3
National PTA standards for parent and family involvement.....	3
You can help children prepare for school.....	3-4
Get to know teachers, even if your children aren't in trouble.....	4
Become an involved parent.....	4-5
Volunteer to let children know "I care what you do here".....	5

## Tips for parents

Discipline.....	6-7
Homework.....	8-9
Parent-Teacher Conferences.....	10-11
Problem Solving.....	12-13
Report Cards.....	14-16
Testing.....	17-18
Resources.....	19

# Parent Involvement

## Parents as Partners

You are your children's first and most influential teacher. The majority of their time is spent with you, the parent. That's why it's so important for you to be an active part of your children's learning process. When parents are involved in their children's education, those children:

**Parents + Schools =  
Parents as Partners**

- Have higher grades, test scores and better attendance and complete homework more consistently
- achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic or racial background or the parents' education level.
- Exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.
- Have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education.
- Are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, and are less likely to be violent or antisocial.
- Are less likely to fall behind in academic performance.

Jeffco Public Schools supports parent involvement. Schools are working to ensure that they have the level of parent and community involvement needed for students to reach high standards.

## National PTA standards for parent and family involvement

- Communicating – communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.
- Parenting – parenting skills are promoted and supported.  
Student learning – parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Volunteering – parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- School decision making and advocacy – parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Collaborating with community – community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.

## Help children prepare for school

You can help your children be more successful in school and come prepared to learn. In addition to providing proper rest and nutrition for your children, teachers recommend that you communicate positively about school and learning. Remember that you set the example for communicating the value of learning. Everyone in your children's lives – you, childcare workers, grandparents, and neighbors – should all speak positively about learning.

- If you think school is your children's most important job, so will your children.

- If you set aside a place and time to study, your children will understand the importance you place on learning.
- If you expect your children to do well, try hard and finish what is started, then with your support, your children will meet those expectations.
- If you ask questions about school, your children will know you care about the day's events.

If you continue to learn new skills, read, and take classes, your children will see that education is a life-long process.

### **Get to know teachers, even if your children aren't in trouble**

- Ask the teacher how you can help your children at home with schoolwork. The teacher will have specific ideas, which will depend on the unique needs of your children.
- Find out what is taught in the classroom. What subjects and skills are covered? What are the content standards to be achieved? What books and materials are used? How are grades determined? What are the classroom and school policies? You'll learn some of this information during the "back to school" night, or you can make a conference appointment with the teacher.
- Find out when you can call the teacher. Most teachers have access to school voice mail so parents can leave them messages. But remember, working with students is a teacher's top priority, so please be patient about return calls.
- Tell the teacher how to reach you – whether it's best to call you at work or at home, or at certain times of the day. If you are out of town (a non-custodial or a traveling parent), ask the teacher how you can be kept informed about your children's progress. Many teachers have preparation periods or conference times when you can call or get together.
- Call or write the teacher if your children have special needs, such as a learning disability, a hearing loss, or special health concerns. Although this information may be in the school records, it may not have reached the teacher. Sharing this information is important to learning. While school records are very helpful, they cannot provide the complete picture teachers need.

### **Become an involved parent**

- Show your children you care about what they are doing in school, and ask to see their work each day. Display their work on a bulletin board, refrigerator, etc.
- Support homework by creating a quiet time and place for studying, and make sure your children have necessary materials. Teachers suggest that TV is turned off, and the phone is not available for socializing. Set aside time on school nights to review and apply skills learned at school.
- Help your children with choices about how to spend time after school. Teachers report that many students are "overbooked" in activities and lessons. You and your children can explore together the many opportunities and activities available before, during, and after school so there is a reasonable balance of activities. Help make choices.

- Create a “school spot” at home. Choose one place where you and your children will always know where to look for the lunch box, lunch money, school notices and announcements, school papers, and messages. Whether you choose the top of the TV or the dining table, your “school spot” can become your vital communication center.

### **Volunteer to let children know "I care about what you do here"**

When parents volunteer, both families and schools reap benefits that come in few other ways. By assisting in school events and activities, parents let their children know, "I care about what you do here."

- Attend back-to-school nights, conferences and programs that involve your children. This sends a message that school is important.
- Volunteer at school. If you can't volunteer on a regular basis, ask if there is something you can do one time, such as speaking about your career in a classroom or being a guest reader. Join your children for lunch at school one day.
- Volunteer to do something from home. Write an article for the newsletter, make phone calls, design a flyer, make a poster.
- Join the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), parent teacher group or advisory committee. Attend their meetings and become a member if you have the time.
- Become an informed parent. Attend parent education programs or curriculum presentations at school.
- Read the school and district newsletters to keep informed about what's happening.
- Pursue more education. Your children need your encouragement to pursue education beyond high school. You can find out more about choices for education and financial aid through your local library or the high school counselor. Your children need a partner in this maze of choices.

# Discipline

Discipline at school, starts with discipline at home. Teachers and parents share a common dilemma because when it comes to teaching children appropriate, responsible behavior and instilling self-discipline, there are no magic answers. But, to be successful in life and in school, discipline is crucial.

To provide a safe, positive learning environment for your children, every classroom, the school and the school

district establish rules. Generally, the classroom teacher will work with students at the beginning of the school year to develop and reinforce what behavior is expected. Students will also bring home a copy of the school district's Conduct Code, which includes district wide policies about conduct, discipline and other important student issues.

**Parents + Schools =  
Parents as Partners**

To help your children know the rules, go over the Conduct Code when it comes home in the fall. Then, file it in a convenient place so you can refer to it during the school year. You can help make school a safe place by reinforcing the rules and emphasizing how important it is to follow them. If your children have a discipline problem at school, follow up with the teacher right away. Find out what happened and what actions are needed to correct the problem. Encourage your children to report dangerous behavior immediately to the teacher or another adult.

## **Parents can promote self-discipline and responsible behavior**

Think about discipline as the daily practice of enforcing pre-determined rules in a fair and consistent manner. When your children are old enough, they can help make appropriate rules. Such rules encourage an understanding that personal choices lead to consequences. They promote self-discipline and development of responsible behaviors in the family, the school and the community.

Discipline can be a continuous process of how you interact and relate with your children, not just something you do for misbehavior. Begin by thinking positively, praising good behavior, listening, and correcting bad choices through fairness and consistency. This will set the pattern for self-discipline.

Positive discipline starts with effective communication – telling your children what you expect, listening to their needs, and developing fair, clear rules together:

- Avoid giving your children a mixed message by behaving in one manner and asking him/her to behave in another.
- Be fair, firm and consistent. Children like the security of strong support and clear expectations.
- Be your children's parent first and friend second. Don't try to dress, act or talk like a member of your children's peer group. Remember that your children will have many important people and friends in their lives, but only a few who can play the critical nurturing role of parent.

- Be a guide. Let your children know what you value and believe.
- Admit and apologize for your own mistakes.
- Reinforce good behavior with words of encouragement or a hug.
- Impress on your children the importance of not repeating wrong behavior. Stealing, lying, cheating, being cruel, bullying, getting tough – all hurt other people in ways we would never want to be hurt ourselves.
- Be honest. Be truthful and direct. Be generous with sincere praise. Even criticism is more easily accepted when it's sprinkled with praise.
- Have fun together. When parents and children frequently share fun times, fewer serious discipline problems arise.
- Help your children learn to make their own decisions.

### **If your children make bad choices...**

#### **...you can improve the behavior by:**

- Talking about the problems that cause distress.
- Encouraging respect for authority.
- Creating an atmosphere of trust and letting the children know they can turn to you.
- Being firm, but allow your children to express feelings and points of view.
- Limiting the punishment to no more than the misbehavior warrants, and always doing it with love, not anger. If the child continues the same behavior, think about trying another form of punishment.
- Examining your own attitudes toward authority and discipline. Are they clear? Firm? Consistent? Most important, are they fair?
- Watching for signs that your children are turned off to you, to school, to valuable friends.
- Helping your children understand the need for taking personal precautions.
- Allowing your children to experience the results or consequences of their actions, and to take responsibility for what they say or do.
- Not giving in to children's tantrums. If you do, you'll show that tantrums work.
- Keeping cool. Model self-discipline and control. Don't lose your temper. Your children need to trust and respect your authority.

### **Self-discipline is for life**

Discipline should mean constructive guidance and positive guidelines that will help your children learn self-discipline now and later in life. Instilling self-discipline means your children will choose to do things, not out of fear of punishment, but because the choices lead to positive consequences and rewards. Teaching self-discipline is not an easy job. It's not something you can do in one heart-to-heart talk. It will take time and effort over many years, so be patient.

# Homework

When parents check on homework, they let their children know that school is an important responsibility. Remember that there is a strong connection between the amount of time students spend on homework and the success students' experience.

Homework has value because it: extends learning experiences beyond the classroom and into the home and community; reinforces learning by giving children a chance to practice; teaches children to organize time, work independently, and develop good study skills and self-esteem; integrates several skills such as research, writing, oral delivery and research; and involves parents in their children's education

**Parents + Schools =  
Parents as Partners**

## **Expect homework regularly**

Most schools regularly assign homework. If your children don't bring home assignments, find out whether they completed them in school or forgot to bring them home. Make sure that whatever is assigned is understood and completed.

## **Think of homework as "helpwork"**

Encourage and assist your children when they need help, but be careful not to fall into the trap of doing it for them. Helping with homework means answering questions, helping children find additional resources or materials like books, newspapers and magazines, and being persistent in your daily attention to children's homework by reviewing and discussing completed work.

## **Set a study schedule**

Set aside a regular time on school nights for study. Agree on a schedule and stick to it. Decide together when chores will be done, when activities fit in, when television, computer games, telephone, and music will be allowed.

## **Create a study place**

Create a study place with good lighting, a comfortable chair and table, and good ventilation. Make supplies available, such as pens, pencils, paper (lined, unlined, graph, and scratch paper), erasers, dictionaries, note cards, pencil sharpeners, and calendars outlining assignments and deadlines. Choose a quiet place free from distractions such as the telephone, television and computer games.

## **Keep track of assignments and supplies**

To get past "it's lost" or "I forgot the assignment," label all school supplies, including coats, hats, sweaters, book, and gym bags. Help your children choose a waterproof book bag or backpack, notebooks or binders for multiple subjects with pockets for pens,

pencils, and erasers, and a calendar, day planner, or notebook for scheduling assignments.

### **Provide access to technology**

Clearly, it is important for our children to be exposed to technology. The use of computers and calculators can aid in homework and skill building. Ask teachers what they recommend. Investigate used computers as a way to save money.

### **Offer praise**

Praise the things your children do well. Don't dwell on shortcomings.

### **Help with memory work**

Drill or review material by calling out words or questions and by listening to recitations.

### **Take a break**

Let children take a break during homework. A few minutes can often refresh a tired mind.

### **Emphasize learning, not grades**

Your children need to know that you care enough to want them to do their very best, but if you talk about it too much, they may break under the pressure of living up to your expectations. Look for signs of children being over-pressured. Temper tantrums, cheating, delinquent behavior, alcohol or drug use, inability to concentrate, and total preoccupation in a single area of interest can all be indications of a developing problem. Be a positive force in your children's lives by teaching them to live within their limitations, and talk with the teacher to get some help.

### **Call the teacher if you have difficulty**

Teachers can most likely clarify or solve a problem. Do not complain about homework to your children. This may cause a loss of confidence in the teacher or a loss of interest in school. Talk it over with the teacher. Your attitude toward homework and school can influence your children's success.

# Parent-Teacher Conferences

You've been invited to meet with your children's teachers. Is your first reaction, "What have my children done wrong?" Relax. In all probability they have done nothing wrong. Schools today rely more on conferences to supplement progress reports and other written forms of communication between parents and teachers. Conferences are designed to let you know how your children are doing. Teachers realize they cannot do the best possible job of educating each child without the help of the parents.

**Parents + Schools =  
Parents as Partners**

Two-way communication is very valuable. Parents can provide insights that will help the child's learning. Teachers can offer suggestions on how parents can help at home. Often, the best way to discuss such matters is during an informal face-to-face meeting. It gives both you and the teacher an opportunity for full exploration of your children's progress at school.

## **Before the conference**

Teachers spend considerable time preparing for the conference. They gather records, select samples of work, and analyze how best to maximize your children's success. To get the most out of the conference, you might also want to prepare by knowing what to expect and then following up with actions. Here are some suggestions for making your parent-teacher conference successful:

- Decide what you want to ask the teacher. Discuss the upcoming conference with your children to see if there is anything they would like you to talk about with the teacher. Check with your spouse about additional questions or concerns. Ideally, both parents should attend the conference.
- Determine what you want to tell the teacher about your children. The teacher sees only one side of your children. There may be things you know about your children that could help the teacher better understand and teach them.
- If you have young children, please get a baby-sitter. Normally, it's best not to bring brothers or sisters to the conference. They may not only be disruptive, but also they may inappropriately repeat what they hear.
- Be on time. Write down the time of your appointment and arrive on time. The teacher may have many other appointments after yours. If you know another parent conference follows yours, please leave promptly when your time is up. If you feel you need more time, make an appointment to continue the conference.

## **During the conference**

Some conferences are for problem solving, to seek ways of improving your children's success in school. But, in many schools, teachers schedule conferences with parents as a

routine procedure, regardless of whether the children are having problems. The parent-teacher conference provides a chance for you and the teacher to discuss the progress and potential of your children. Ask the teacher how you can help at home. Jot down notes at the conference or immediately after. You might ask:

- What skills and knowledge will my children be expected to learn this year?
- Are my children working up to their ability?
- May I see an example of some of their work?
- What content standards will be mastered in this class?
- Are they prepared for class?
- How will you measure my children's progress?
- Have they shown any special interest or ability?
- How are grades determined in this class?
- How do the children get along with their peers?
- How will I know how my children are doing?
- What about participation in group activities?
- How much homework do you give, and how will I know what my children's homework is?
- Do they show any leadership qualities?
- Are there discipline problems?
- What textbooks and other resources are you using?
- How can I help at home?

The teacher, too, may have some questions. Teachers are not trying to pry, but to obtain information to work better with your children. Be ready to discuss such areas as: your children's reaction to school; health and emotional problems; hobbies, special interests, and abilities; homework – when it is done and where; rules and responsibilities at home; and the type of discipline that works best at home.

### **After the conference**

The most important part in your role in the conference begins now! Discuss the conference with your children. Make sure your children understand that you and the teacher are working together to improve learning. When your children know that you and the teachers are partners to improve learning, the impact is positive and productive. To your children, it demonstrates that you care.

First, point out their strengths; then talk about the areas that need improvement. Start immediately on any action to be taken. Did the teacher recommend books for your children to read? Did she/he suggest a better arrangement for studying at home or getting help in a special area? Begin at once to follow through with the plan you and the teacher discussed. Call the school for advice, help or just information. If you wish to check on your children's progress, or if you think another conference is necessary, call your children's teachers. Teachers value such interest on the part of parents.

# Problem Solving

Students succeed best when parents, teachers, and principals work together. Because our children learn by our example, we have a special responsibility to demonstrate to them how problems can be constructively resolved. That shouldn't change because of a problem or disagreement at school.

Sometimes, parents may feel overwhelmed, or even intimidated, because they don't know the chain of command in the school district. The key to feeling more comfortable, is knowing how to approach the problem and where to go for help. In general, most problems – no matter how difficult – can be resolved if people treat each other with dignity and respect.

**Parents + Schools =  
Parents as Partners**

## **Problems with teachers, student performance or grades**

If the problem is concerning a specific teacher or a child's performance in a specific grade, follow these steps:

1. Always discuss the issue with your child's teacher first. You can request a conference and/or communicate your concerns over the phone. What's important is that both you and the teacher have an opportunity to piece together the necessary information to try to resolve the problem.
2. If the problem is not resolved to your satisfaction, the next step is to contact your school principal. When you contact him/her, identify the problem or concern and explain that you have already discussed the situation with the teacher. The principal will then make every effort to get all parties together to resolve the problem.
3. If you are not satisfied with the principal's response, the next step is to discuss the situation with his/her supervisor, the area administrator assigned to your school. If you not sure who that is, ask your principal or call school district information, 982-6500 or Communications Services, 982-6808. When you contact the area administrator, let him/her know you have already talked with the teacher and principal but have been unable to resolve the problem.

## **Problems with teaching, library materials or activities**

If you have a complaint regarding teaching or library materials, activities or presentations, the school district has established a specific procedure to follow:

1. Tell the teacher or other staff member that you have a concern. That staff member will refer you to the principal. The principal will invite you to a conference with the teacher, the librarian or other staff member responsible for using the learning material. After the conference, the principal will issue a report and recommendation about either using or withdrawing the resource.
2. If you are not satisfied with the principal's decision, ask for the form, "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Learning/Human Materials." After you submit the form, the principal will forward it, along with the

report from the conference, to the assistant superintendent for Instructional Services.

3. After reviewing the form for completeness, the assistant superintendent may appoint a challenge review committee if the materials have not been previously challenged. You may submit oral or written testimony. After review, the committee will send a written recommendation to the superintendent. Copies will be provided to all participants. The superintendent will make a decision, and the Board of Education may review, affirm, amend or reverse the decision.

### **Contacting the Board of Education**

The Board of Education, composed of five members elected at-large who represent different areas of Jefferson County, establishes educational policies and programs for all Jeffco Public Schools.

The Board of Education meets twice monthly – once for a business meeting, and once for a public engagement meeting. There is an opportunity for public comment at each meeting. If you wish to address the Board, you may sign up on the public comment roster located in the foyer outside the Board Room between 4 and 7 p.m. on meeting days. Board meetings are held in the fifth floor Board Room, Educational Services Center, 1829 Denver West Drive, Bldg. 27, Golden. Call the Board office, 303-982-6800, for the meeting schedule.

To give all citizens the opportunity to be heard, there is a time limit for public comment, and the Board may shorten the time if there are a large number of speakers. It's best to plan your presentation in advance and have copies of any written materials to distribute to the Board.

The School Board considers public opinion when making future decisions, but will not necessarily take immediate action on concerns raised at a meeting. Sometimes the Board of Education will refer the matter to the administration for study.

If you wish to write a letter to the Board of Education about any policy or program, address it to: Board of Education, Jefferson County Public Schools, PO Box 4001, Golden, CO 80401-0001. Letters to the Board become public documents, and the Board secretary will respond to you in writing.

# Report Cards

Remember how you felt when you received your school report card? You may have felt a strong sense of achievement and accomplishment because your grades reflected your hard work. And, if you were like many other children, learning may have come easier in some courses than in others. As a result, your report card may have caused you to feel anxious. Did you worry about what your parents would say or do? That's normal. Children want to feel good about themselves, and they want their parents to be proud of them, too.

**Parents + Schools =  
Parents as Partners**

Today, teachers communicate in many different ways with parents about how their children are doing in school. Still, one of the most important is the report card, which continues to be a good indicator of student success and progress. The report card can be of significant value in motivating students to achieve their full potential.

Parents often ask teachers how to use report cards to motivate their children. Whether the report shows satisfactory or unsatisfactory achievement, it always provides a valuable opportunity to sit down and discuss school with your children. Start by recognizing your children's successes.

## **Recognizing accomplishments**

It's natural to react to those areas of the report card that indicate unsatisfactory progress, rather than recognizing the success that has been achieved. All children need to feel good about their work at school and need to be encouraged when they require help.

### **When your children bring home a "good" report card:**

- Tell your children how pleased you are with their progress. Don't assume your children know you are proud of them, show it. And, remember that older children need as much positive reinforcement and praise as younger children do. A hug, pat on the back or handshake is always appreciated by children of all ages.
- Ask if your children would like to do something special to recognize school achievements. Depending on the age of the children, this will vary. The important thing is to ask what your children would like, and then discuss its appropriateness. If this is done in a sincere, genuine manner, the value of the achievement and education will be reinforced. Many parents consider using money as a reward for good grades; however, according to research, that practice seems to have limited value. Of greater long-term importance to children is whether their parents take an active interest in their education and model the value of life-long learning.
- Talk about setting goals for continued achievement at school. "Can you raise that C in math to a B?" "Can you read four books this month?" Ask how you can help your children achieve their goals.
- Discuss what your children would like to do after graduating from high school, and continue to reinforce the relationship of success in school and in life.

- In general conversation, talk to your children about how education played an important role in preparing you for adult responsibilities. Consider reminiscing about a favorite teacher who really made you work hard and how much you appreciated it later on.
- Continue to reinforce the notion that learning is a lifelong process. Model that belief in your home by keeping newspapers, books and magazines that can stimulate family discussions and continuous learning.
- Don't take success in school for granted. Let your children know when you're proud, and help create a sense of pride in their achievements.

### **Encouraging children to do better**

When children receive an unsatisfactory report from school, it's generally no surprise to them. Regardless of their ages, children know how well they are doing. They also know how other children – their peers – are doing. Children feel bad when they don't perform as well as their peers or up to the expectations of their parents and teachers. But, they should never feel afraid to share their report with you. Your reaction to the report card and how you handle the information will have an immediate impact on your children's feelings about self and school.

**When the report card indicates unsatisfactory progress, remember: learning begins at home** Ask yourself how you can support your children's learning. For example, do you:

- Provide a quiet, suitable place for homework and study?
- Is doing homework a part of your children's daily routine?
- Show that education is valued in your home? Is it considered a lifelong process?
- Do you model this value by keeping books and magazines that stimulate learning?
- Ask what your children are learning in school and relate it to everyday life or how it might be applied to the future?
- Share your school experiences (both good and bad) and relate how they helped prepare you for adult life and a career?

When achievement is not satisfactory, let your children know that you are disappointed, not in them, but in the lack of progress.

Ask if your children know what the problems are. Solve problems together. Ask what your children are willing to do about it and how you can help.

Work with your children to establish new goals for the next reporting period. Try to make these goals reasonable and achievable so your children will experience success.

Contact your children's teachers and share your perceptions and concerns. Set up a conference if you think it will help.

Don't be afraid to seek help and ask questions. A word of caution – while it is important to set high expectations for achievement, these must be based realistically on each children's abilities. Remember that every child is different. What comes easily to one may be difficult for another, even within the same family. It's not unusual for children to do better in some subjects. Avoid comparing one child to another.

If you see your children are making sincere efforts to improve but are not getting results, contact the teacher. By working together, each of you will gain valuable information that will improve learning.

The important thing is to always encourage your children to do the best they can. This is an attitude that, if applied successfully in school, will last a lifetime!

# Testing, Testing, Testing!

When we hear the word “test,” our hearts may race, our stomachs may get queasy, or we may get excited to show what we know. We might think about our own schooling and times we were successful or other times when we had trouble with tests. Our children have the same reaction. To help you and your children understand testing, you might ask the following questions of the teacher:

**Parents + Schools =  
Parents as Partners**

- What kinds of tests will my children take this year?
- What is the purpose of these tests?
- What do the test scores mean?
- What does the school do with the test results?
- How can I use the test results to help my children’s progress?

## Tests are important

Why are tests so important? Tests are one important tool to let us know how a child is doing. Teachers and schools use tests for a number of different purposes. Some are used to show if students understood what they learned in class in the last day, week, month or semester. Other tests measure knowledge and skills acquired over time, perhaps even more than a year. Some tests compare students to each other, while others measure how well your children are mastering standards. Remember this about testing:

- The primary purpose of teacher-prepared tests is to improve student learning. These tests help teachers know what skills your child and the rest of the class have mastered and where they still need help.
- State and national tests provide information and accountability to the public. They also help teachers learn areas of strength and weakness.
- Tests are only one way to look at children’s achievement. A test is a snapshot in time, and children change from day to day, from month to month.
- Some children do better on tests than others. If your children react negatively to tests, talk to the teacher about how you might be able to help overcome “test anxiety.”
- If your children come home with an unusually low score on a test, try to learn the source of the problem. It could be that they didn’t understand the directions, or that your children were confused, tired or ill that day.
- If you don’t understand the scoring of the test, ask the teacher to explain it.
- While your children are responsible for their performance on a test, your role to support and help prepare is important.

## Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)

CSAP reports student achievement in relation to standards set by the State of Colorado. Students are not compared to each other but are measured on their progress on meeting standards. Those standards define what students should know and be able to do at certain

grade levels. The results are reported according to four performance levels: advanced, proficient, partially proficient, or unsatisfactory.

CSAP scores are also important because the state uses these scores to measure how well our schools are doing. So, it is important that children do their very best on these tests.

### **Parents can help children do their best**

- Be supportive
- Don't show anxiety and don't judge children based on a single test
- Foster a positive attitude
- Encourage your children to try hard and take the test seriously
- Help your children stay calm
- Remind them to bring a No. 2 pencil with a good eraser
- Make sure they get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast
- Encourage them to develop good work habits at home and school
- Make sure your children attend school regularly
- Follow up with your children and their teachers after the test to review results

### **Avoid "test anxiety"**

It's good for children to take testing seriously, but it's not good when they feel test anxiety. Students who suffer from test anxiety become afraid of failure instead of feeling challenged by the prospect of success. This makes them anxious about their own abilities. There are ways parents can reduce test anxiety. Encourage your children to do these things:

- Space studying over days and weeks instead of cramming the night before. Real learning occurs through studying that takes place over time.
- Read the directions carefully when the teacher hands out the test. Ask the teacher to explain if you don't understand them.
- Look quickly at the entire test to see what types of questions are included. This will help you pace yourself.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, skip it and go on. Don't waste time worrying about it. Mark it so you can return to it if you have time at the end.

# Resources

## **Colorado Department of Education**

201 E. Colfax Ave. Denver, CO 80203 303-866-6600 HYPERLINK  
"http://www.cde.state.co.us" [www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us)

## **Jefferson County Council PTA**

809 Quail Street, Bldg. 4 Lakewood, CO 80215 303-982-2419  
HYPERLINK "Http://www.jeffcopta.org" [www.jeffcopta.org](http://www.jeffcopta.org)

## **Jefferson County Education Association (JCEA)**

1050 Wadsworth Blvd. Lakewood, CO 80215 303-232-6405  
HYPERLINK "http://www.jcea-cea.org" [www.jcea-cea.org](http://www.jcea-cea.org)

## **Jeffco Public Schools**

Communications Services 1829 Denver West Drive, Bldg. 27 Golden, CO 80401 303-982-6808 HYPERLINK "http://jeffconet.jeffco.k12.co.us"  
<http://jeffconet.jeffco.k12.co.us>

## **National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)**

1615 Duke Street Alexandria, VA 22314 800-38-NAESP [800-386-2377]  
[www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org)

## **National Education Association (NEA)**

1201 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW Washington DC, 20036 202-833-4000 [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

## **National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)**

330 N Wabash Ave., Suite 2100 Chicago, IL 60611-3690 312-670-6782 [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

## **U.S. Department of Education**

Washington, D.C. 20202 [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

"Moving America to the Head of the Class: 50 Simple Things You Can Do" To order a free copy, call 1-800-USA LEARN

"National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs" by the National PTA, [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) or 1-800-733-6786

"School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action" by Joyce L. Epstein (Editor)