



A Union of Professionals

Pathways to Success

As a parent, you want the best for your children.

The American Federation of Teachers shares your expectations and knows you can make a big difference in your child's education.

Inside this brochure you will find helpful information on:

- How the School System Works
- School Issues and Program Information
- Tips on How to Help Your Child Succeed in School

**AN
AFT GUIDE
FOR
PARENTS**

Let the Journey Begin!

The School System

Besides your child's teacher, many other people are involved in your child's education.

The more you know about what they do, the more you can help your child.

TEACHERS

- Are the first people you should go to with a concern about your child.
- Talk to teachers about your child; the more they know the more they can help.

SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE

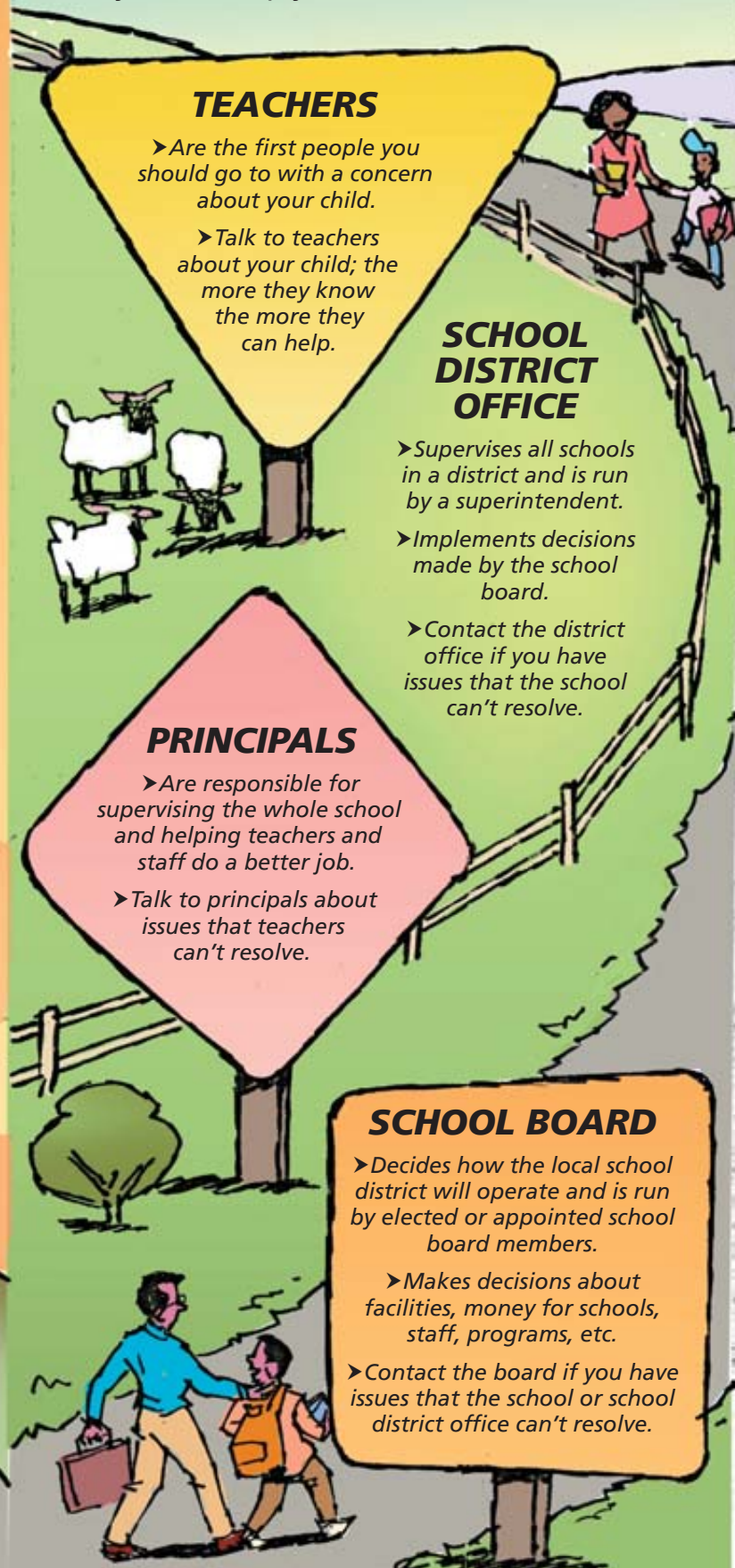
- Supervises all schools in a district and is run by a superintendent.
- Implements decisions made by the school board.
- Contact the district office if you have issues that the school can't resolve.

PRINCIPALS

- Are responsible for supervising the whole school and helping teachers and staff do a better job.
- Talk to principals about issues that teachers can't resolve.

SCHOOL BOARD

- Decides how the local school district will operate and is run by elected or appointed school board members.
- Makes decisions about facilities, money for schools, staff, programs, etc.
- Contact the board if you have issues that the school or school district office can't resolve.



A colorful illustration of a school scene. In the background, a large sign on a hill reads 'STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION' with three bullet points. In the middle ground, a red schoolhouse with a bell tower and an American flag stands on a grassy field. Several people, including children and adults, are walking around the schoolhouse. In the foreground, a red octagonal sign reads 'TEACHERS' UNION' with two bullet points. The entire scene is set against a blue sky and green grass.

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- Supervises all school districts and is run by a state superintendent.
- Implements state-level decisions such as standards, funding, etc.
- Contact the state department of education if you have issues that can't be resolved locally.

PARAPROFESSIONALS AND SCHOOL-RELATED PERSONNEL

- Help teachers and students in class, children with special needs, and provide other types of assistance and support.
- Other helpful school staff are secretaries, custodians, food service workers, bus drivers, and security guards.

TEACHERS' UNION

- Represents members regarding salary, benefits, and working conditions such as class size, professional development and school safety.
- Provides information and programs to improve schools and advocates for high-quality teachers, high standards, quality curriculum, etc.

A Note on Web Sites and Resources

The Web sites listed can help you and your child find resources for school or for fun. If you don't have a computer at home, remember you can use computers at the public library. If you need help, ask the librarian for assistance finding these Web sites or books on these and other topics.

FOR MORE HELP WITH READING:

National Institute for Literacy and Partnership for Reading: www.nifl.gov and www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/

The National Research Council's Starting Out Right—A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success: www.nap.edu

Reading Rockets: www.readingrockets.org/

U.S. Department of Education's Helping Your Child Become a Reader: www.ed.gov

PBS Kids and Children's Television Workshop's Sesame Street: pbskids.org/sesame/ and www.sesameworkshop.org/sesamestreet/

FOR MORE HELP WITH MATH:

Council on Competitiveness' Getsmarter.org: www.getsmarter.org

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' Family Corner and Figure This!: www.nctm.org/resources/families.aspx and www.figurethis.org/

FOR MORE HELP WITH SCIENCE:

National Science Foundation: www.nsf.gov/news/classroom/

Newton's Apple: www.ktca.org/newtons/

KidSpace@The Internet Public Library, Science Fair Project Resource Guide: www.ipl.org/div/projectguide/

Bill Nye, the Science Guy: www.billnye.com

FOR MORE HELP WITH SOCIAL STUDIES:

The National Council for the Social Studies: www.ncss.org/

Center for Civic Education: www.civiced.org/

Civnet/Civistas International: www.civnet.org/

The Close Up Foundation: www.closeup.org



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Standards and Testing

- Academic standards should be clear and specific about what all students are expected to know and be able to do at each grade level.
- Academic tests should be based on the standards.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What are the specific skills and subjects my child will be learning?
- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

- National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing—Parents Page: www.cresst.org

English Language Learners

- Schools are required to help children who don't speak English learn English in addition to studying the same material as other students in school.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What kind of services and programs does the school have to help my child learn English as well as the subjects all other students are studying?

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

- National Association for Bilingual Education: www.nabe.org/
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition: www.ed.gov

Students with Disabilities

- Schools are required to provide children with disabilities a "free, appropriate public education" and to place students in the "least restrictive environment."
- A parent or the school can request to have a child evaluated. Parents must be informed of this.
- Information provided by parents is used in the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How does my child's disability affect his or her education?
- What can I and the school do to help my child more?

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services: www.ed.gov
- Families and Advocates Partnership for Education: www.fape.org
- IDEA Partnership: www.ideapartnership.org

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Are You Ready To Help Your Succeed?

Vocational Programs

- Students in these programs explore different careers and receive hands-on training.
- The goal is to prepare students for higher education or work in fields like technology, business, auto mechanics, etc.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Why is this a good program for my child?
- What have past students gone on to do after graduating from this program?

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education: www.ed.gov
- The Association for Career and Technical Education: www.acteonline.org

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)

Law requires all public school students to take annual reading and math tests in grades 3 through 8 by 2005-06, and once in grades 10 through 12. By the 2007-08 school year, they'll also be tested in science once in each grade span (3-5, 6-9 and 10-12).

If a public school does not make enough progress (adequate yearly progress or "AYP") towards achievement goals for two years in a row, all students in the school are eligible to transfer to another public school that has made enough progress. After three years in a row of not making enough progress, all students are still eligible to transfer. Low-income students who do not choose to transfer to another school can receive extra academic help ("supplemental educational services"), instead.

States and schools must produce report cards for the public that include information on test scores, graduation rates, and test scores of other local schools.

For children who don't speak English, this law requires schools that receive federal money to provide special services and language instruction for three years, possibly five. After three or five years, students will be taught English with all other students.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How is my school performing?
- How do I choose a high-quality supplemental educational service provider for my child?

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

- U.S. Department of Education: www.nochildleftbehind.gov/
- American Federation of Teachers: www.aft.org/fixnclb/

College Preparatory Programs

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- Most programs are categorized as College Track, Honors, Magnet Programs and Advanced Placement (AP).
- The goal is to prepare students for higher education at a four-year college or university.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What programs does the school offer, and how do I get my child enrolled?
- Does the school have a counselor who will provide my child with information and guidance on admissions, costs, financial aid and entrance exams?

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

- The College Board: www.collegeboard.com/
- The Coalition of America's Colleges and Universities: www.collegeispossible.org/

●	Reading
●	Math
●	Science
●	Social Studies
●	Social Development and Health

Helping Your Child Succeed

**HELPFUL
PreK-12
TIPS**

School Registration Process

To register your child in school, you will need to have all the following documents:

- > A certified copy of the student's birth record
- > A copy of resident's lease, utility bill, or home ownership deed as proof of address
- > Immunization record and tuberculosis screening
- > Student records from the previous school if the student is transferring to another school

You may also have to take your child in for a physical exam by a licensed physician within 12 months of entering school.

Your child cannot be turned away from a school on the basis of race, disability, citizenship, national origin, religion, English language speaking ability, or family background.

FOR MORE HELP WITH MATH

Council on Competitiveness' Getsmarter.org
www.getsmarter.org
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' Family Corner and Figure This!
www.nctm.org/resources/families.aspx
www.figurethis.org/

FOR MORE HELP WITH READING

National Institute for Literacy
Partnership for Reading
www.nifl.gov
www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/
The National Research Council's Starting Out Right—A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success
www.nap.edu
Reading Rockets
www.readingrockets.org/
U.S. Department of Education's Helping Your Child Become a Reader
www.ed.gov
Children's Television Workshop's Sesame Street
pbskids.org/sesame/
www.sesameworkshop.org/sesamestreet/

START

PRE-K

READING

- > Read a book with your child every day and point out letters, numbers, pictures, colors, shapes, etc. Let your child handle the book, too
- > Talk to your child throughout the day to help build her/his vocabulary
- > Visit the library frequently to familiarize your child with the library's purpose

MATH

- > Count, Count, Count everything you see
- > Point out and read numbers on billboards, houses, signs, in stores and in picture books
- > Introduce very simple arithmetic (e.g., if you buy two apples and you eat one, how many do you have left?)

SCIENCE

- > Take nature walks and point out trees, flowers, animals, etc.
- > Explain the different kinds of physical reactions when you are cooking, cleaning, or washing
- > Ask your child to describe how different surfaces and objects feel (e.g., rough, soft, warm, cold, etc.)

SOCIAL STUDIES

- > Visit local museums and cultural centers
- > Share stories about family heritage and your ancestors
- > Involve your child in national holidays and celebrations

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

- > Hug, hold and reassure your child often
- > If your child does not attend a preschool, get her/him involved in a social and physical activity with other children of the same age
- > Teach your child basic safety precautions, hygiene, and healthy eating habits

READING

- > Set aside a time every day for reading a book together and talking about it afterwards
- > Encourage your child to read aloud what she/he has written
- > Ask your child to help you read a recipe before cooking, read a map while you drive, or read instructions for putting something together

MATH

- > Make up questions with numbers that come up in daily life (e.g., how much will two boxes of cereal cost? How much change should I get? Help me double a recipe.)
- > Encourage your child to draw pictures and diagrams to help him/her solve word problems
- > Make sure your child learns addition and subtraction facts by the end of grade 2 and multiplication and division facts by the end of grade 4

SCIENCE

- > Use a telescope, microscope, or magnifying glass with your child and ask her/him to tell you what she/he sees
- > Point out changes in the natural world (e.g., a kitten growing, a rainbow appearing) and encourage your child to find out why they happen
- > Talk to your child about how your state's weather is tied to its geographic location (e.g., southern Florida has tropical weather)

SOCIAL STUDIES

- > Be an example of good citizenship by volunteering in community service activities, voting and talking about issues affecting your local community and state
- > Talk to your child about famous historical figures in the U.S. and around the world
- > Visit historical places in your area

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

- > Always monitor and limit what your child watches on TV or the Internet
- > Discuss social values and appropriate behavior with other people
- > Make sure your child knows about safety, gets enough sleep and has a healthy diet

READING

- > Encourage your child to read different types of literature: newspaper articles, magazines, poems, etc.
- > Ask your child to help you look up words and answers using different resources: dictionaries, the Internet, etc. Help your child link this new knowledge and vocabulary with things learned previously
- > Set aside at least 15 minutes each evening for family reading time

MATH

- > Ask your child to help you make routine calculations (e.g., grocery or other shopping, amount of paint needed to paint a room, cost of weekend activities, etc.)
- > Encourage your child to solve math problems in more than one way
- > Make sure your child has taken pre-algebra or algebra by the end of grade 8

FOR MORE HELP WITH SCIENCE

National Science Foundation
www.nsf.gov/news/classroom/
Newton's Apple
www.ktca.org/newtons/
KidSpace@The Internet Public Library
Science Fair Project Resource Guide
www.ipl.org/div/projectguide/
Bill Nye, the Science Guy
www.billnye.com

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

- > Encourage your child to participate in activities like academic and special interest clubs and sports
- > Sit down together as a family at dinner time and discuss the day's events
- > Make sure you and/or your family doctor has a discussion with your child about the start of adolescence

SOCIAL STUDIES

- > Visit local government sites like city hall and the courthouse and discuss the work that is done there
- > Encourage your child to become involved in community service and projects
- > Discuss local, national, and international news with your child

SCIENCE

- > Read newspaper articles on science together and discuss them
- > If your child's school has a science fair, show excitement about your child's participation
- > Take your child to museums, exhibits, presentations, etc., that feature science discoveries and discuss what you have seen

READING

- > Help your child choose books and other reading materials that go beyond the assigned reading list for school and that tap into her/his interests or hobbies
- > Encourage your child to share a book she/he has read with friends or family and to start or join a book club
- > Encourage and model reading for pleasure
- > Encourage your child to read what you've read with your child

MATH

- > Help your child see the range of careers in which math is essential (e.g., accountant, doctor, pharmacist, auto mechanic, etc.)
- > Urge your child to persevere and understand that doing math takes time
- > Ask your child to explain to you the new math concepts being taught in school; if she/he has difficulty doing this, talk to the teacher to see what can be done to help

FOR MORE HELP WITH SOCIAL STUDIES

The National Council for the Social Studies
www.ncss.org/
Center for Civic Education
www.civiced.org/
Civnet/Civistas International
www.civnet.org/
The Close Up Foundation
www.closeup.org

SCIENCE

- > Encourage your child to read the science sections in newspapers and magazines and explain them to you
- > Help your child conduct science experiments that are part of his/her schoolwork or a science fair project
- > Encourage your child to explore different careers in science (e.g., archaeologist, meteorologist, nurse, etc.)

SOCIAL STUDIES

- > Encourage your child to express her/his opinion on national and world affairs and discuss possible solutions to problems
- > Discuss and compare past and present historical events
- > Talk to your child about the roles that diversity and culture play in society here and around the world

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

- > Be aware of your child's friends, get to know them; set limits and consequences for inappropriate behavior
- > Make sure your child has a clear understanding of negative peer pressure, drugs, sexually transmitted diseases and maintaining healthy habits
- > Offer your child encouragement and support

FINISH

Graduation Requirements

Before your child enrolls in the ninth grade, you should find out what the specific graduation requirements are for your child's high school. Generally, high school seniors have to fulfill the following basic requirements:

- > English Language Arts: 4 years
- > Math: 3-4 years
- > Science: 3 years
- > Social Studies: 3-4 years
- > Foreign Language: 2-3 years
- > Visual and Performing Arts: 1-2 years
- > Electives: 1-4 years
- > A passing grade point average (GPA)
- > Passing score on state exam(s)

**HIGH SCHOOL
GRADES
9-12**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
GRADES
6-8**

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
GRADES
K-5**