

Ask the Expert

Family Involvement Plays a Role in Academic Success

By Brenda Lyle, NCPG Past Director and Saint Thomas the Apostle PTO President

In the past 30 years many studies have been published on the effects of parent involvement on children's academic achievement and performance in schools.

"In fact, evidence suggests that active parental involvement in schools is a critical factor in a child's educational success at all grade levels. Good parent-school links also have a positive effect on parents and teachers." (*Teachers College Record Volume 94, Number 3*)

I have been fortunate to have first hand experience with two wonderful organizations that value parent involvement. I served as NCPG Director in 2010 and am currently the PTO President at Saint Thomas the Apostle School. I thought the toddler years were a whirlwind of changes, but adolescence is an equally fascinating period of development with rapid change. I don't want to miss a thing! I want to partner with my children's teachers during this exciting transition from childhood into adulthood.

Family involvement can take on a variety of roles. During the early childhood years taking Parent Education classes, attending library time, participating in music classes, and providing crafts at home to build fine motor skills are ways to be involved in your child's education. In the elementary years involvement can include assisting in the classroom, collaborating with teachers, and volunteering around campus. School and parent partnerships are important. Not only do they lead to a better educational environment for all of the students, it creates a stronger relationship within the larger community.

When teachers, parents, and staff work together they can create an educational environment that meets the needs of each student. "The meaningful involvement of parents in children's schooling can enhance the educational process. Parents can contribute insights and knowledge that complement the professional skills of schools' staffs in ways that strengthen academic and social programs" (*The Elementary School Journal Volume 91, Issue 3*). At Saint Thomas the Apostle, parent volunteers assist the teachers in small



Brenda Lyle (center), with Mrs. Schurman (Kindergarten Teacher), Mrs. Brecheisen (4th Grade Teacher), her son, Jack (4th grade), and daughter, Savannah (Kindergarten),

group settings, listening to our youngest students practice reading out loud. Beginning in 3rd grade, parents host advanced readers' book club before the school day in addition to the differentiated learning that students receive in the classroom. We are gifted with a number of parents with varied professional careers and experiences who enjoy working with teachers to sponsor many events on campus and who find new opportunities and challenges for our students from community service programs to the Honeywell Aerospace Challenges.

Finding a tight-knit community of parents and educators is a blessing. Every school has their own personality, flow, and spirit. Just like all of our children are different and special in their own way, the same goes for elementary schools. There is no one "best" school, but there is likely a best school community for you and your child that matches your level of involvement.

So, stay open minded. Embrace the journey. You will know when you have arrived.



First day of Kindergarten for two little boys with Principal Mary Coffman.