

## Parent Involvement Commission

# Family School Partnership Act brochure: questions and answers

### What is the Family-School Partnership Act?

The Family-School Partnership Act is a California law that allows parents, grandparents, and guardians to take time off from work to participate in their children's school or child-care activities. The law (*Labor Code* Section 230.8) first took effect in 1995. Its provisions were expanded in 1997 to add *licensed* child day care facilities to the kindergarten-through-grade-twelve levels included in the original legislation.

### What opportunities am I offered under this law?

If the following criteria are met, you may take off up to 40 hours each year (up to eight hours in any calendar month) to participate in activities at your child's school or day care facility:

- You are a parent, guardian, or grandparent who has custody of a child enrolled in a California public or private school, kindergarten through grade twelve, or *licensed* child day care facility.
- You work for a business that has 25 or more employees at the same location.

### How should I account for my time off work?

The law allows you to use existing vacation time, personal leave, or compensatory time off to account for the time you use participating in your child's school or childcare activities. You may also use time off without pay if permitted by your employer. The employee, not the employer, chooses from the options that are available.

### How can I take advantage of these opportunities?

Let your employer know in advance that you would like to take time off to participate in activities at your child's school or childcare facility. Although the law does not say how far in advance you should inform your employer, it is likely that rules are in place at your work site about reasonable notice for planned absences. And, if your employer requests, you are required to provide written proof of having participated at your child's school or child care facility.



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### **Does the law apply to parents who work the night shift or only to those who work the day shift? What about part-time employees?**

All parents working full time, regardless of the shift they work, are allowed up to 40 hours per year. Because a night worker normally sleeps during the day when school is in session, that employee might ask for approval of an absence during the night shift in order to rest adequately for participating in activities at his or her child's school or child care facility. Part-time workers are allowed a proportionate number of hours. For example, half-time workers may take up to 20 hours a year. Teachers, even though they might work only ten months out of the year, are considered full-time employees and may take up to 40 hours per year.

### **What kinds of school or childcare activities may I participate in with my child?**

Under the law *any* activity that is sponsored, supervised, or approved by the school, school board, or child care facility is acceptable. Examples might be volunteering in your child's classroom; participating in parent-teacher conferences, Back-to-School Night, Open House, field trips, or extracurricular sporting events sponsored by the school, school board, or child care facility; and assisting in community service learning activities.

### **Does my employer have the right to refuse my request for time off to participate in activities at my child's school or childcare facility?**

If your employer has 25 or more employees at the same location, he or she cannot refuse the request. All such employers must comply with the law and allow you to take off up to 40 hours a year to participate in your child's school or child care activities. At least one of the options—using vacation, personal leave, compensatory time off, or time off without pay—must be provided to the employee.

***For more information on this topic, go to the California Department of Education's website at [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)***



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# Reading: Tips to share with parents

## True or False

1. Parents should read to their children every day starting at 18 months of age.

**FALSE:** Read to your baby every day starting at 6 months of age. Reading and playing with books is a wonderful way to spend special time with them. Hearing words over and over helps them become familiar with them. Reading to your baby is one of the best ways to help them learn.

2. Background television noise helps young children learn to speak and to understand the meaning of words.

**FALSE:** Babies need to hear language from a human being. Television is just noise to a baby.

3. Students should focus on mastering one type of book before moving on to another

**TRUE:** Make sure that your home has lots of reading materials that are appropriate for your child. Keep books, magazines and newspapers in the house.

4. Undertaking a few simple reading strategies can make a significant difference in helping children develop into good readers and writers.

**TRUE:** Putting a few simple strategies into action will make a significant difference in helping children develop into good readers and writers. Through reading aloud, providing print materials, and promoting positive attitudes about reading and writing, you can have a powerful impact on children's literacy and learning.



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### What parents should look for in a good early reading program

- Every teacher is excited about reading and promotes the value and fun of reading to students
- All students are carefully evaluated, beginning in kindergarten, to see what they know and what they need to become good readers.
- Reading instruction and practice include helping students learn to blend letters and sound to form new words.
- Learning new words and their meanings is an important part of instruction.
- The school library is used often and has many books. Students may check books out during the summer and over holidays in addition to during the school year.
- All students have a chance to read both silently and aloud in school each day and at home every night.
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- Every classroom has a library of age-appropriate children's books. This includes easy books and books that are more difficult.



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# Making math and science fun

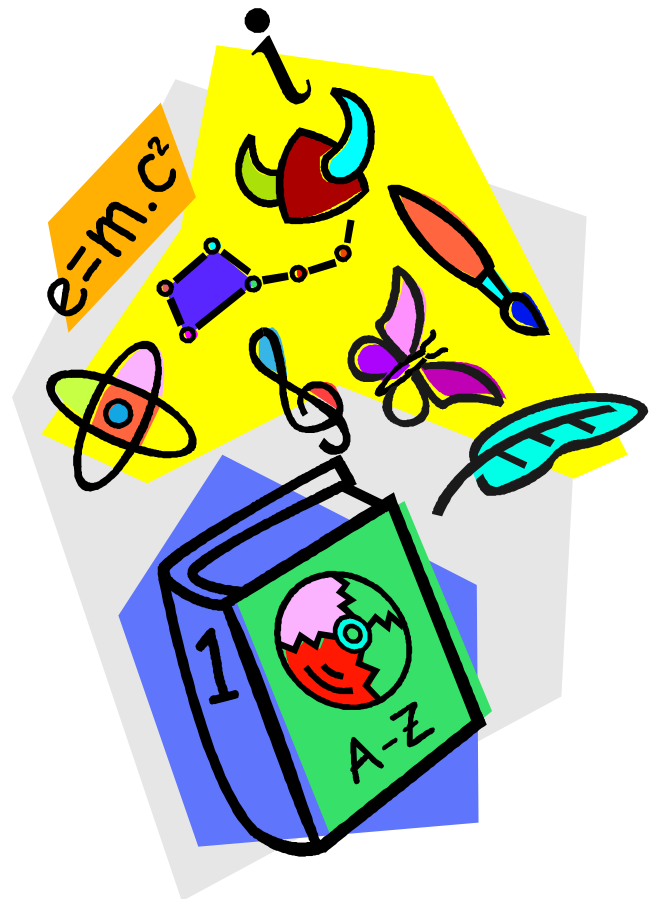
Many parents shy away from teaching math and science to their children. Whether it is from their own struggles as a child or concerns that they are not up-to-date on current teachings, parents often will tackle any subject but these. Here are some tips parents can use to help their children learn and more importantly enjoy these subjects.

Playing games or doing jigsaw puzzles are a good way to start. Both of these build on the skills needed in math and science. Random household items such as buttons or paperclips can be used to help children with counting and adding and subtracting. Teach your child how to count out money. Today, cash registers are doing the math for people and debit cards are making money handling a lost art. Make sure your child is confident about using cash.

Find a fun recipe that you and your child can do together. Go to the store to get the ingredients and have your child help figure out the quantities you will need. When starting the cooking process, let them do the measuring and talk about the difference between a teaspoon and a tablespoon.

Check to see if there is a natural science museum in your community. Many have programs that are suitable for all ages including adults. Other activities you can do together are taking neighborhood walks and talking about how many different types of trees or plants you see. Watching clouds take different formations. These may seem like simple acts to you but could help a child develop an inquisitiveness that hopefully could last a lifetime.

The important thing is to expose your child to these subjects. You don't have to know the laws of physics, you just need to do activities that spark their curiosity and allow them to find the fun in math and science.



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# The importance of family dinners

When thinking of family dinners our minds often go back to thoughts of *The Cosby Show* or if you are a baby boomer, *Leave it to Beaver*. However, current research shows that family dinners are an important activity in a child's development.

Teenagers who eat with their families at least five times a week are more likely to get better grades in school according to a new Columbia University survey. This same survey also showed that they are less likely to have substance abuse problems. This is not the only study to show the importance of family meals. A Harvard University study found that family dinners helped children develop language skills.

Most families would agree that eating together as a family is important, the problem is scheduling them. More and more children are involved in extracurricular activities that during the school year take place during the traditional dinner hour. Throw in parents work schedules and sometimes it seems like an insurmountable challenge getting everyone together in one place. It doesn't always have to be a home cooked meal if your schedule doesn't allow for it. The important thing is to find that 15-20 minutes several times a week with no distractions (yes, the TV should be off) and spending that time together. For families new to family dinners, the more often you plan them, the easier and more natural they will become.

