

Parent & Teacher

RESOURCE
GUIDE



Helping Children Learn to Read

Learning to read takes place as much at home as it does at school. Strong readers are usually those who were encouraged to read at home.

Reading is one of the most important skills a child can develop, laying the foundation for academic success and life-long learning. According to Golden Step, the benefits of reading are many. For example, reading can boost emotional development and career prospects by 50 to 100%. Children who read for pleasure have higher academic achievement and better mental health.

CREATE A READING-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Start by making your home a literacy-rich environment. Fill your home with books, magazines and other reading materials that are easily accessible to your child. The National Literacy Trust reported children who have access to books at home perform better in school and are more likely to be proficient readers.

Create a cozy reading nook where they can sit and explore books comfortably. The more exposure children have to printed materials, the more likely they are to develop an interest in



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reading.

Read aloud to your children every day. Choose a variety of books, including picture books, stories with repetitive text and age-appropriate chapter books. Reading aloud helps children develop listening skills and introduces them to new vocabulary and concepts. Make reading a fun and engaging activity by using different voices for characters and encouraging your child to participate by predicting what will happen next.

PRACTICE READING SKILLS

Phonemic awareness is hearing, identifying and manipulating individual sounds in spoken words. You can help your child develop this skill through simple activities like rhyming games, clapping out syllables and playing “I Spy” with beginning sounds. Singing nursery rhymes and songs helps children become aware of the sounds in words.

Help your child become

familiar with the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. You can do this through fun activities such as alphabet puzzles, flashcards and games. Point out letters in everyday situations, such as on signs, labels and packaging. Encourage your child to trace and write letters, and praise their efforts to build confidence.

PROMOTE READING HABITS

Encourage your child to choose their own books based

on their interests. Take regular trips to the library and let them explore different genres and topics. Show enthusiasm for their selections and make time to read together. Sharing a love for books helps children associate reading with positive experiences.

Let your child see you reading regularly, whether it’s books, newspapers or magazines. Talk about what you’re reading and share interesting stories or facts. Your enthusiasm for reading will inspire your child to see it as a valuable and enjoyable activity.

Integrate reading into your daily routines. Read recipes while cooking together, follow instructions for a craft project or read a bedtime story every night. These everyday reading experiences help children understand the practical applications of reading and its importance in daily life.

Technology can be a useful tool in teaching children to read. Educational apps and e-books can provide interactive and engaging reading experiences. However, it’s important to balance screen time with other reading activities to ensure a well-rounded approach.

Learning to read is a gradual process, and each child progresses at their own pace. Celebrate your child’s achievements, no matter how small, and offer encouragement when they encounter challenges. Patience and positive reinforcement will help build their confidence and motivate them to keep improving.

Collaborate for Student Success

With a child's future hanging in the balance, the people in their life need to be able to communicate.

Even though teachers and parents both have the best interest of the child in mind, connecting can sometimes be fraught with challenges.

Yet, effective communication between parents and teachers fosters a supportive educational environment. When parents and teachers work together, they can address students' needs more effectively, enhance their academic performance and support their social and emotional development.



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REGULAR COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Scheduled parent-teacher conferences are a conventional and important platform for discussing a student's progress, strengths and areas for improvement. These meetings provide an opportunity for face-to-face interaction, allowing for detailed discussions and personalized feedback. Both parties can share observations and set goals for the student's development.

Regular updates through newsletters, emails or school portals keep parents informed about classroom activities, upcoming events and their child's progress. These

updates help maintain an open line of communication and ensure that parents are aware of important dates and expectations.

Classroom communication apps like ClassDojo, Remind and Seesaw facilitate real-time updates and easy interaction between parents and teachers. These apps allow teachers to share student progress, post announcements and send messages, making communication more convenient and consistent.

COLLABORATIVE TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

For younger students or those with specific needs,

home-school communication books can be an effective tool. Teachers and parents can use these books to share daily or weekly notes about the student's behavior, academic progress and any concerns. This method ensures ongoing dialogue and helps address issues promptly.

Many schools use parent portals that allow parents to access their child's grades, attendance records and assignment submissions online. These portals provide transparency and enable parents to stay updated on their child's academic performance, fostering a proactive approach to addressing any issues.

With advancements in technology, virtual meetings via platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams have become more accessible. Virtual meetings offer flexibility, allowing parents and teachers to communicate without the constraints of physical location. This can be especially helpful for working parents or those with busy schedules.

BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

An open-door policy encourages parents to visit the classroom or school and meet with the teacher as needed. While it's essential to schedule these visits to avoid

disruptions, this approach fosters a welcoming environment and shows parents that their involvement is valued.

Regularly sharing positive news about a student's achievements and progress helps build a strong, positive relationship between parents and teachers. Highlighting successes and strengths creates a supportive atmosphere and encourages continued collaboration.

Inviting parents to participate in classroom activities, such as reading sessions, field trips or special projects, enhances their engagement and investment in their child's education. This involvement helps parents better understand the school environment and the teacher's methods, fostering a stronger partnership.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TOGETHER

When issues arise, parents and teachers should strive to approach problem-solving collaboratively. Open discussions, active listening and a focus on finding mutually agreeable solutions help address concerns effectively. This teamwork ensures that both parties are working in the best interest of the student.

After identifying and addressing an issue, regular check-ins help monitor the student's progress and ensure that implemented strategies are effective. This ongoing collaboration allows for adjustments and continued support as needed.

Developmental Kindergarten

Developmental kindergarten, also known as transitional kindergarten or begindergarten, is a program designed to cater to young children who may not be ready for the traditional kindergarten curriculum.

This option has gained traction among parents and educators alike, but it comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

PROS

One of the primary benefits of developmental kindergarten is that it allows children to learn at their own pace. Unlike traditional kindergarten, which follows a more rigid curriculum, developmental kindergarten provides a flexible approach. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for children who may need extra time to develop essential skills such as fine motor skills, social interactions and basic literacy and numeracy.

In developmental kindergarten, teachers can give more focused attention to each child. Smaller class sizes and a tailored curriculum mean that educators can identify and address individual needs more effectively. This personalized approach helps children build



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confidence and fosters a love of learning from an early age.

Developmental kindergarten serves as a bridge between preschool and kindergarten. For children who might find the leap to traditional kindergarten overwhelming, this program offers a gentler transition. It gradually introduces them to more structured learning

environments while still maintaining the play-based, exploratory nature of early childhood education.

Emphasizing social and emotional development is another significant advantage. Developmental kindergarten programs often prioritize activities that help children develop empathy, cooperation, and self-regulation.

These skills are crucial for their overall success in school and later life.

CONS

One of the main drawbacks of developmental kindergarten is the potential stigma attached to it. Children in these programs might be perceived as “behind” their peers, which can

affect their self-esteem and confidence. Additionally, parents might worry about labeling their child as needing special help.

While the focus on social and emotional development is beneficial, there is a concern that children in developmental kindergarten might lag academically. They may not cover the same material as their peers in traditional kindergarten, which could lead to challenges when they eventually transition to first grade.

Developmental kindergarten programs can be costly and may not be available in all school districts. Parents might face financial burdens if the program is not covered by public funding. Additionally, limited availability means that not all children who could benefit from developmental kindergarten have access to it.

The quality of developmental kindergarten programs can vary significantly. Not all programs have the same standards or resources, leading to inconsistent experiences for children. Parents must thoroughly research and choose a program that meets high educational and developmental standards.

Developmental kindergarten offers a tailored approach that can be highly beneficial for children who need a bit more time to prepare for the rigors of traditional kindergarten. However, it is important to weigh the pros and cons carefully. Parents should make informed decisions based on their child’s unique needs and the specific offerings of available programs.

Teaching Online Responsibility

The internet is a powerful tool that offers children and teenagers endless opportunities for learning and social interaction.

However, it also poses risks, including exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying and online predators. For this reason, teaching students how to navigate the internet safely and responsibly can make a difference between them having a positive versus a negative experience.

SET CLEAR RULES AND GUIDELINES

Setting clear rules about internet use is the first step in promoting online safety. Parents and educators should outline acceptable online behavior and the types of sites and content that are appropriate for different age groups. Establish time limits for internet use to prevent excessive screen time, which can negatively affect a child's health and well-being.

Implement parental control software to restrict access to inappropriate content. Many devices and browsers offer built-in controls that can filter websites, block certain types of content, and monitor online activity. Regularly update these settings to keep up with new threats and trends.

EDUCATE ABOUT PRIVACY

Teach children the importance of protecting their personal information. Explain why they should never share personal details such as their full name, address, phone number or school name online. Encourage them to use nicknames or aliases instead of real names when creating online profiles.



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Show students how to use privacy settings on social media and other online platforms. Help them understand that these settings can limit who sees their posts and personal information. Regularly review and adjust privacy settings to ensure maximum protection.

ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Create an environment where children feel comfortable discussing their online experiences. Encourage them to report any uncomfortable or suspicious interactions immediately. Assure them that they will not be punished for coming forward and that their safety is the top priority.

Educate students about cyberbullying

and its effect. Discuss ways to handle and report bullying, emphasizing the importance of not responding to bullies. Provide resources and support for those who experience or witness cyberbullying.

PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING

Teach children to evaluate the credibility of online sources. Explain that not everything they read online is true and show them how to verify information using reputable websites. Discuss the dangers of misinformation and the importance of critical thinking in the digital age.

Inform students about common online scams and phishing attempts. Teach them to recognize suspicious

emails, messages and websites. Encourage them to avoid clicking on unknown links and to report any suspicious activity.

MODEL RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR

Parents and educators should model responsible internet behavior. Demonstrate how to use the internet safely and respectfully. Discuss your online activities and show children how to handle various online scenarios responsibly.

Stay updated on the latest internet safety trends and threats. Join online safety communities and attend workshops or seminars to learn more about protecting children online. Share this knowledge with your children to help them stay informed and prepared.

Well-Rounded Students

Students need more than the three Rs to survive in the world.

In addition to teaching traditional skills and topics, schools today are recognizing the importance of helping students develop socioemotional skills that affect their ability to interact with others, manage emotions and navigate social complexities.

These skills are essential for success both in and out of the classroom and both parents and educators play a role in helping students develop them.

Socioemotional skills encompass a range of abilities that enable individuals to understand and manage their emotions, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. Key socioemotional skills include:

- **Self-awareness:** Recognizing and understanding one's emotions, strengths and limitations.

- **Self-management:** Regulating emotions, thoughts and behaviors in different situations.

- **Social awareness:** Understanding and empathizing with others, including those from diverse backgrounds.

- **Relationship skills:** Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships through communication, cooperation and conflict resolution.

- **Responsible decision-**



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making: Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior.

DEVELOPING SOCIOEMOTIONAL SKILLS AT SCHOOL

Many schools are adopting SEL programs designed to teach socioemotional skills explicitly. These programs include structured activities and curricula that promote self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

Teachers can model socioemotional skills through their interactions with students and colleagues. Demonstrating empathy, effective

communication and conflict resolution sets a positive example for students to emulate.

A supportive classroom environment fosters socioemotional development. Teachers can create a safe and inclusive space where students feel valued and respected. Encouraging open discussions about emotions and experiences helps students feel understood and accepted.

Group projects and cooperative learning activities promote social interaction and teamwork. These experiences help students develop relationship skills and learn how to work effectively with

others.

Incorporating literature and storytelling into the curriculum can enhance socioemotional learning. Books and stories that explore diverse perspectives and emotional experiences allow students to develop empathy and social awareness.

DEVELOPING SOCIOEMOTIONAL SKILLS AT HOME

Parents can model healthy emotional regulation by managing their own emotions constructively. Teaching children techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness and positive self-talk helps them learn to manage their emo-

tions effectively.

Creating an environment where children feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings sets the foundation for children developing emotional maturity. Regular family discussions and check-ins allow children to share their experiences and emotions, fostering self-awareness and communication skills.

Parents can promote empathy by encouraging children to consider others' perspectives and feelings. Discussing different scenarios and how others might feel helps children develop social awareness and compassion.

Arranging playdates, group activities and family gatherings gives children opportunities to practice their socioemotional skills in various social settings. These interactions help them develop relationship skills and learn how to navigate social dynamics.

Teaching children about boundaries and the importance of respecting others' limits develops responsible decision-making and healthy relationships. Consistently setting and enforcing boundaries at home reinforces these concepts.

Involving children in family decision-making and problem-solving activities helps them develop critical thinking and responsible decision-making skills. Discussing potential solutions and their consequences teaches children to make thoughtful and ethical choices.

Accessing Special Education

School can be extra challenging for neurodiverse students. Navigating services for them is no less tricky for parents and educators.

Understanding the resources available and how to access them ensures students with diverse learning needs receive the support they require to thrive academically and socially.

UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education provides tailored instructional services to students with disabilities. These services are designed to meet the unique needs of each student, ensuring they receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Special education services cover a range of disabilities, including learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbances and physical disabilities. Each student's needs are assessed to develop an individualized education plan (IEP).

ACCESSING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The process begins with the identification of a student's need for special education services. Parents, teachers or



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other school staff can refer a student for evaluation. If you suspect a child may have a learning disability, it's important to communicate your concerns to the school promptly.

Once a referral is made, the school must conduct a comprehensive evaluation to determine the student's eligibility for special education services. This evaluation includes various assessments and observations to identify the child's specific needs.

If the evaluation determines

that the student is eligible for special education, an IEP team, including parents, teachers and specialists, will develop an individualized education plan. The IEP outlines the student's current performance, specific goals, services to be provided and how progress will be measured.

TYPES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Special education includes direct instructional support tailored to the student's needs. This might involve one-on-one

teaching, small group instruction or specialized teaching techniques.

Related services are additional supports that help students benefit from special education. These can include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling and transportation.

Accommodations are changes in how a student learns the material, such as extended time on tests or preferential seating. Modifications involve changes in what

the student is expected to learn, such as a simplified curriculum.

PARENT AND EDUCATOR ROLES

Parents play a crucial role in the special education process. Stay informed about your child's rights and actively participate in IEP meetings. Regular communication with teachers and service providers ensures that you're up to date on your child's progress and any adjustments needed.

Teachers and special education staff are responsible for implementing the IEP and providing the necessary support. Regular monitoring and assessment help ensure the student's needs are being met. Collaboration with parents and other professionals boosts the student's chance for success.

ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

Familiarize yourself with the rights of students with disabilities under IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. These laws protect against discrimination and ensure access to necessary educational services.

Many organizations offer resources and support for families of children with special needs. Local advocacy groups, online forums and national organizations like the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) provide valuable information and assistance.

Electronic Tools for Learning

The integration of technology in education has revolutionized the way students learn and teachers instruct.

Educational technology tools and apps have become indispensable in modern classrooms, offering a range of benefits from personalized learning to enhanced engagement.

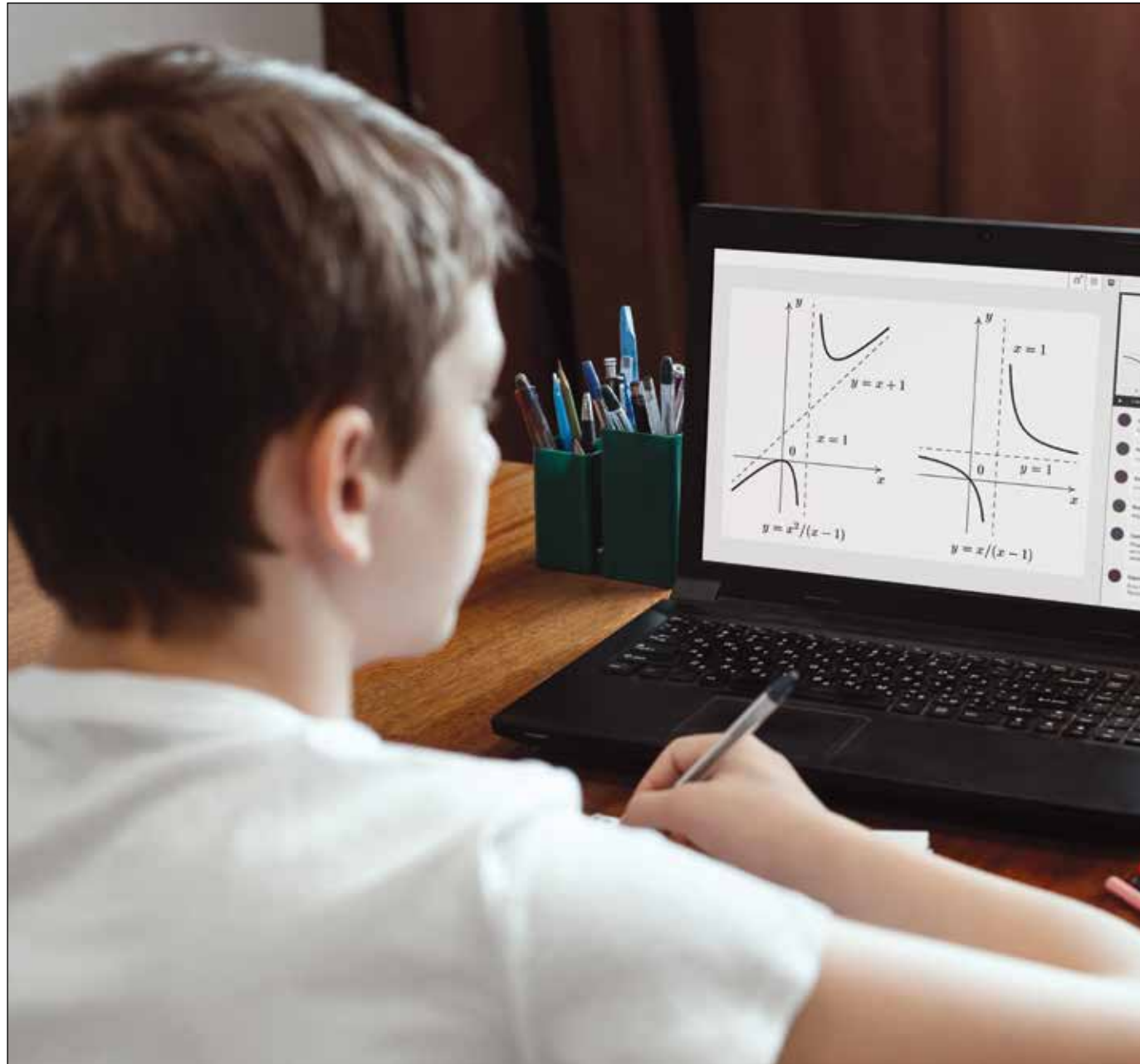
TOOLS FOR STUDENTS

Khan Academy provides free online courses, lessons and practice in a wide range of subjects. With its extensive library of interactive exercises and instructional videos, it supports personalized learning by allowing students to learn at their own pace.

Quizlet offers a variety of study tools, including flashcards, quizzes and games, to help students master new concepts. The app allows users to create their own study sets or use existing ones, making it a valuable resource for reviewing material and preparing for exams.

Duolingo is a popular language-learning app that makes learning a new language fun and engaging. Its game-like structure and progress tracking motivate students to practice regularly, enhancing their language skills over time.

Seesaw is a student engagement platform that enables students to document and share



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their learning experiences. It allows them to create digital portfolios, collaborate on projects and receive feedback from teachers and peers. The visual and interactive nature of Seesaw makes it particularly effective for younger students.

TOOLS FOR TEACHERS

Nearpod is an interactive presentation tool that allows teachers to create engaging lessons with multimedia elements

such as videos, quizzes and virtual reality experiences. It supports formative assessment by enabling real-time feedback and participation from students.

Flipgrid is a video discussion platform that promotes student voice and collaboration. Teachers can post topics or questions, and students respond with short video clips. This tool is particularly useful for fostering classroom

discussions and enhancing student engagement.

Socrative is a formative assessment tool that helps teachers gauge student understanding through real-time quizzes, polls and exit tickets. It provides instant feedback and detailed reports, enabling teachers to tailor their instruction based on student performance.

Padlet is a digital bulletin board that allows teachers and

students to collaborate on projects and share ideas. Users can post text, images, links and videos, making it a versatile tool for brainstorming, project planning, and showcasing student work.

TOOLS FOR BOTH

Google Classroom is a versatile tool that helps students stay organized and connected. It allows teachers to create classes, distribute assignments, send feedback and see everything in one place. Students can easily keep track of their work and communicate with teachers and classmates.

Microsoft Teams is a collaboration platform that integrates with Microsoft Office 365. It supports virtual classrooms with features like video conferencing, file sharing and collaborative document editing. It's an essential tool for remote learning and hybrid classroom environments.

ClassDojo is a classroom management tool that helps teachers build a positive classroom culture. It allows teachers to track student behavior, share updates with parents, and celebrate student achievements. The app promotes communication and engagement between teachers, students and parents.

Zoom has become a staple for virtual learning, offering reliable video conferencing with features such as breakout rooms, screen sharing and recording. It's a valuable tool for conducting online classes, meetings and collaborative projects.