

Practical Guidelines:

How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools



basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Massive gains have been made in the area of education access since 1994, and pockets of excellence can be found scattered throughout the country. Yet, the general achievement of education outcomes remains poor, often below that of much poorer and less resourced countries. Government has identified improving the quality of education as a national priority. In an effort to improve education outcomes for all learners, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has introduced a number of programmes at school. However, the role of parents and guardians in their children's education is vital.

Research has proven beyond dispute that effectively engaging parents and families in the education of their children has a positive influence on the success of the learners¹. Currently the level of parent and community participation in schools is low. Government is committed to redressing this: The DBE has developed this booklet to guide parents on what parents can do at home, in school and their communities to maximise learning outcomes and learner achievement.

1.2. Purpose of the booklet

The role of schools is to give children the best possible opportunity to learn and be successful. Successful schools have parents and teachers working together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Consequently, the DBE has developed this booklet for everyone who is a parent, in an attempt to respond to the following questions:

- *How is my child doing at school?*
- *How can I make sure that my child is successful at school?*
- *How can I make sure that my child improves?*
- *What can I do to make sure that my child has a positive experience at school?*
- *How can I support my child and encourage them through difficult times?*

The aim of this booklet is therefore to empower parents with information to enable them to become more involved in their children's education so that children can reach their full potential. The African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child" means that the work of raising and educating a child cannot be left to the parent alone but rather needs an entire community. It is only as the 'village' participates and strives together that children will receive good education.

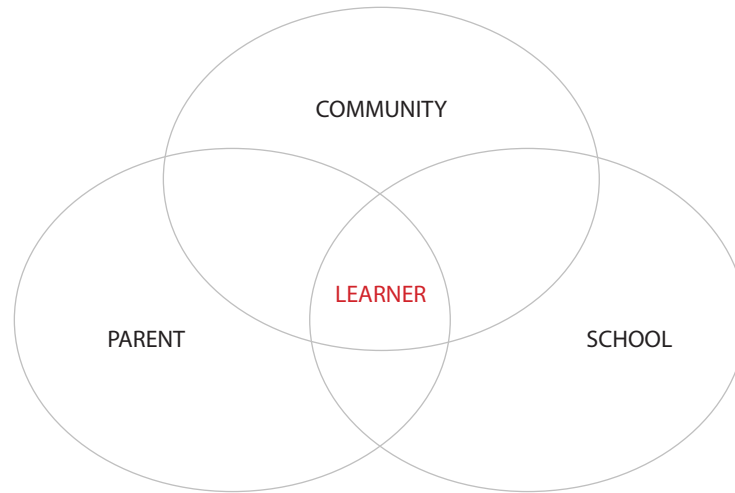
As a result, this booklet, in addition to empowering parents on school matters, also encourages community participation, i.e. the working together of recognised structures from the community to guide and support their school.

To reach the goal for quality education, the DBE is seeking to create learning communities. To this end this booklet is also meant to assist parents and communities to understand the vital role they can play and join forces with schools in their communities to make learners successful and proud of their academic achievements.

¹ Hoover-Dempsey, K & Sandler H.M. 1995; Parental involvement in Children's Education: Why Does it Make a Difference: Teacher's College Records Vol 97:2 pg 311- 331: Available on www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/family-school/.../childrens_education.pdf Accessed on 6 March 2015.

1.3. Why is a school - parent - community partnership important?

At the centre of the relationship between school, parent and community is the learner, with the goal of optimum achievement for *all* learners.



The relationship is important because no learner exists in a vacuum. Children's behaviour and performance is impacted by multiple spheres of influence, ranging from direct influences, such as a relationship with a caregiver and the home environment, to more indirect influences such as national laws and policies. As influences may be positive or negative, every sphere of influence has the potential to increase risk and/or offer protection; to hinder and/or create an enabling environment for success. It is neither possible nor desirable to address the goal of children reaching their full potential outside of children's spheres of influence and environment – and in this case, the very direct influence of parents, caregivers, home and community environments.

'Learning does not begin when children walk through the school doors nor does it end when they exit for the day. It takes place all the time and everywhere, throughout life. There is a pedagogic dimension to the links between schools and homes and localities. Children bring to school their family and community beliefs, practices, knowledge, expectations and behaviours. Similarly, when they return from school they bring back to their homes and communities new forms of knowledge, practices, behaviours, attitudes and skills. Children are engaged in a continuous, dynamic process of bridging the world of school and the world of home and community. They learn from both worlds, facilitated by teachers, family members, neighbours and others. Linking schools and communities is widely recognised as good pedagogic practice.

UNICEF. 2009. Page 2'

National and international research confirms the crucial role that parents and communities play in their children's success. The positive impact of effective school- parent- community engagement on learning outcomes is well documented, as are the benefits for all role-players, some of which are listed below.

1.4. Who are South African Parents?

South African parents and communities are heterogeneous and are socially, politically, linguistically, culturally and economically dissimilar. They exist in diverse urban and rural contexts within geographical locations. Family structures include caregiver's age, ranging from teen parents and child-headed households to older siblings and grandparents. The education levels, health and wellness status, mental and physical abilities, socio-economic status, religious and cultural beliefs, practices and value systems are all part of the mix. School communities reflect this diversity, both within and between schools.

In these guidelines, the term **parent** is used in a broad and inclusive way to mean any caregiver responsible for caring for, and supporting, a learner. This is referenced to the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996)(SASA), as amended, which defines a parent as:

- (a) The biological or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a learner;
- (b) The person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or
- (c) The person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) towards the learner's education at school.

1.5. Successful parent involvement in education

A parent is the most important partner in a child's education. Successful parent involvement in the child's education means **active, ongoing participation** of a parent in the education of his or her child.

'When parents get involved in their children's education, children are more likely to do better in school, be better behaved, have more positive attitudes toward school, and grow up to be more successful in life.' Colorín Colorado (2008)

Schools exist to provide children with an education and opportunity to succeed and both parents and teachers need to be involved in the education of children. Teachers, the principal, and the school governing body (SGB) have responsibility for the education and well-being of children while at school. Parents are their children's first and most important teachers, they influence and shape their children's behaviour, discipline and habits. Children need to feel supported both at home and at school and to have learning environments where they can grow and develop to their full potential.

Parents and schools need to work together to educate their children, helping them to develop into young adults who are confident, successful and are able to contribute to the growth of the country. Parents, regardless of the level of education or income, race, ethnicity or religion have the responsibility to be involved in their children's education. If parents are actively involved in their children's education, teaching and learning at school can be optimised. Some of the ways that parents can support their children's learning at home and throughout the school year are as follows:

- Teach their children discipline and routine;
- Develop a partnership with their children's teacher, staff and the school;
- Understand their children's academic demands;
- Get involved with their children's school; and
- Develop a positive relationship with their children.

Parents might find it difficult to understand what their children are learning, however it is important that they check their children's school work and avoid expressions such as:

"I do not know the subject"; "I am not educated"; "I work long hours and I am tired when I reach home"; "Teachers are paid to do it and I was a failure at school".

2. Support at home: laying the foundation for successful learning

Homes are environments where children learn, grow and develop their potential. Research shows that when the family becomes more involved in a child's school, the child's learning improves. By showing interest in the child's education, parents influence their children to see education as a priority. Therefore parents need to be positive role models for their children so that the children's opinions and attitudes are positive about learning. Children need their parents' support and supervision regardless of whether their parents are educated or not.

If for whatever reason a parent is unable to provide support to his or her child, it is the responsibility of the parent to find the support they need from relatives, neighbours or other community members. What follows are some of the things parents can do at home to support their children to reach their full potential at school.

2.1. Family Values

Each family has values that determine the way that family functions. Values are important because they form the foundation on which the rules, routines and tasks of the family are built. It is important for parents to 'walk the talk' i.e. family values are lived out by parents and what they say is what they do. If parents live differently to what they say, it can be confusing to the child. The table below shows some of the values that are important in building children's characters.

Time Keeping Arriving at school on time; and Handing in tasks on time.	Working hard Setting realistic goals and targets and achieving them; and Being consistent.	Self-Motivated Identify your strengths and build on them; and Accept your short comings but learn from them so as to improve.
Love one another Treat others the way you expect them to treat you.	Democracy Equity, non-sexism, Equality, fairness, respect, empathy.	Care for the Environment Take care of your surroundings; Do not litter; and Recycle.
Honesty Take responsibility for what you've done wrong; and Tell the truth.	Caring for People Ubuntu; and Be helpful and have a positive attitude.	Respect others Respect people, young and old; and Recognise strengths of others and capitalise on them.
Rule of Law Doing what is expected of you even if you are not rewarded.	The value of life Life is precious so do not expose yourself and others to danger.	Self - Discipline To have the will-power to persist at difficult or unpleasant tasks until they are completed.

2.2. The importance of discipline

Home rules are based on the family values, routines and the different home chores. Rules have influence on behaviour and attitudes of the children. Parents have to introduce rules to minimise wrong doing and not use rules as punishment when things go wrong. It is important that there is a consistent routine e.g. time to go to bed, a time to get up, a time to eat and a time to study. Simple rules such as these give family structure, security and a feeling of safety.

Furthermore rules create responsibility and accountability. Parents should ensure that their children know and understand the rules. The role of parents is to not only role model the rules but also implement the rules that children have to obey. Children should be taught to respect the rules and know the consequences of breaking or ignoring rules.

Parents must support teachers in their daily task of maintaining school discipline without administering corporal punishment. Administering corporal punishment at a public school is illegal and punishable by law, as stipulated in SASA.

Every public school is required to have a Learner Code of Conduct as well as provide alternative ways to maintain discipline at schools. It is important that parents work closely with schools to ensure that schools are not rendered dysfunctional as a result of unruly children.

Maintaining discipline can be challenging for parents as it needs to be consistent through the different stages of a child's life. Below are some guidelines on things parents can do in crafting better learner habits:

- Parents should have clear rules in their homes that also indicate the consequences for breaking the rules. Consistency and fairness are vital in the way rules are applied. Usually the fewer the rules, the better.
- Children should be assigned tasks and have routines in the home. These tasks should include tidying and caring for their possessions.
- Children should be praised and encouraged when they achieve or display the appropriate behaviour.
- Children should be assisted to be disciplined in adhering to times set to do their school work at home. This implies appropriate time for play and relaxing depending on the age of the child.
- Each child should have a routine for waking up and going to sleep. Parents should establish healthy communication with their children.

Parents that consistently apply the rules in their homes will provide their children with a safe and secure environment where learning can take place.

2.3. Modelling positive attitudes and behaviour about schooling

By involving themselves in their child's educational life, parents demonstrate that schooling is worthy of interest and time. Parents can spark enthusiasm in their children and lead them to a very important understanding that learning can be enjoyable as well as rewarding and is well worth the effort required. By paying attention, showing interest and praising good performance and behaviour, parents motivate their children to maintain the spirit of hard work and doing more of what leads to success. Parents can influence their children by direct instruction, which takes two primary forms:

- a. **Closed-ended instruction:** This involves giving orders, commands and requests for correct answers or the right way of working. These tend to promote factual learning and knowledge but will not necessarily influence your child towards higher levels of cognitive complexity.
- b. **Open-ended instruction:** This involves questions and requests to plan, anticipate and explain that tend to promote higher levels of cognitive complexity and ability as well as factual knowledge in your child.

Role-modelling by parents is an enabling factor for a for their child's positive educational outcomes. Children are likely to behave in the same manner as their parents, for example if parents are unhappy about some matters at school; they should communicate the issue in a cordial manner to the school. The tone used at home during discussion of the issue should demonstrate respect for the teacher by the parent; this will go a long way in encouraging children to respect their teachers. Parent's positive attitude to learning will shape the children's attitude and success at school.

2.4. Making reading a habit

The importance of reading simply cannot be overstated. Children who are groomed into readers are more likely to succeed in school and in life. Reading assists children in all school subjects and more important, it is the key to lifelong learning.

'Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.'

Richard Steele

On the other hand children, who cannot read well, cannot learn and must be supported by their parents and teachers to overcome the reading barriers. Research has shown that children who read do better in school, and stay in school longer. Therefore, it is important that parents should read with their children from a very young age for at least twenty minutes every day, until they get in high school. Here are some tips to help children read:

- Develop a routine of daily reading with children;

- Make magazines, picture books, comics, newspapers and other books readily available in the house;
- Encouraged children to subscribe with libraries that are within reach;
- Give children books as gifts; and
- Use electronic gadgets that children are inclined to for reading purposes e.g. download books in ipads.

2.5. Communicating with children

From the very young age, it is through hearing their parents and family members speak and how they verbally respond to each other assist children to pick up language skills they need. Talking, listening and spending active time with children is also one of the major contributors to children’s school success. Communicating with children should be a two-way process where parents exchange information with their children by talking, writing, or using a common system of signs or behaviour. It is not advisable to let things such as television and other technical gadgets take a larger percentage of the children time compared to quality family time.

Patterns of negative interaction between parents and their children are possible. This can be minimised from the parents’ side by recognising good performance and rewarding it with positive comments or praise. Children need encouragement from the people whose opinions they value most —their family. Encouraging comments can motivate and cement children’s good relationship with their parents. Parents can use the questions below to check if they really communicate with their children.

<p style="text-align: center;">1. Listen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you spend time each day during the evening meal to talk about the day? • Do you use your car or taxis trips to talk and listen to your child? • Do you use opportunities to facilitate conversation and debate. 	<p style="text-align: center;">2. Encourage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you congratulate or praise your child when he or she has performed well; • Are you aware of any specific subjects that your child excels in; and • Do you encourage your child’s aspirations, if yes, what actions do you take to motivate or assist your child?
<p style="text-align: center;">3. Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you reassure or encourage your child when he she has not done well or experiences difficulties? • What do you do to assist? • How much do you know about your child’s progress? • Are you aware of any specific problems at school 	<p style="text-align: center;">4. Correct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you instil a positive attitude towards the school or teachers when you talk to your child? • How can you tell if a child is doing school work? • Do you correct your child when they behave in an inappropriate manner; and • Do you teach and instil values in your child.

3. Supporting children’s learning at school

3.1. Understanding children’s rights and responsibilities in relation to education

The Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa and is available in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. With regards to education the Bill of Rights affirms that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education. Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. This means that every child has the right to be admitted at any public school, and to participate in all school activities. All schools must admit learners without discrimination against anyone in any way. No learner may be refused admittance in a public school because her/ his parents:

- Are unable to pay school fees;
- Do not subscribe to the mission statement of the school;

- Have refused to sign an indemnity contract; and
- Are unable to afford all part of the school uniform.

While at school children have all the rights that are enshrined in the Bill of Rights, equality, human dignity; freedom and security of a person; privacy; freedom of religion, belief and opinion; freedom of expression etc. It is important to note that learners have responsibilities too and parents must instil in their children that rights go with responsibilities.

It is the responsibility of every parent to ensure that their children:

- Are registered for the following year, well before the end of the current school year;
- That are between the ages 6 and 15 years attend school; and
- Attend school regularly and do their school work as required.

Furthermore in supporting children, parents should acquaint themselves with the Children's Act 38 of 2005 that sets out principles relating to the care and protection of children and further defining parental responsibilities and rights in this regard.

3.2. Understanding the learning areas

For each learning phase, there are different subject requirements for learners to progress to the next phase. To support children through the schooling, parents need to know what the requirements are at each schooling phase. This information can be obtained from the school at the beginning of the year.

Learning phase	Grade/s	Subjects required	Achievements to progress / promotion
Foundation	R	3 Subjects 1 official language Mathematics Life skills	50-59% - Home Language 40-49% - Mathematics
	1-3	4 Subjects 1 official language – home language 1 official language – fist additional language Mathematics Life skills	50-59% -Home Language 40-49% -1st Additional Language 40%-49%- Mathematics
Intermediate	4-6	6 Subjects 1 official language – home language 1 official language – additional language Mathematics Natural science Technology Social science	50-59% - Home Language 40-49 - 1st Additional Language 40-49% - Mathematics 40-49% - in any other 2 subjects
Senior	7-9	9 Subjects 1 official language – home language 1 official language –1st additional language Mathematics Natural Sciences Life Orientation Social Sciences Technology Arts and Culture Economics and Management Sciences	50-59 % - Home Language 40- 49 % - 1st Additional Language 40 – 49 % - Mathematics 40 – 49 % - in any 3 required subjects 30- 39 % - in any 2 of the other required subjects
FET	10 – 12	7 Subjects 1 home language 1st additional language Mathematics or maths literacy Life orientation	40% in three subjects 30% in three subjects School Based Assessment submitted for failed subject

3.3. Understanding learner assessment

Assessment is a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners. Assessment is made up of School-Based Assessment and Practical Assessment Tasks a final end-of-year examination from grade 4 onwards.

School Based Assessment: Learners are assessed on a regular basis during the school year. This assessment provides teachers with a systematic way of evaluating how well learners are doing in a particular subject and in a grade. School based assessments are also used to assess skills that cannot be assessed in a written format, i.e. with tests or examinations. Examples of formal assessments include projects, oral presentations, demonstrations, performances, tests, examinations, practical demonstrations, etc. The formal assessment tasks are recorded and included in the final School-Based Assessment schedule for promotion (Grades 1-12). Thus it is important that parents verify and check their child's homework.

Examination: means the conduct of an end-of-term and/or once-off end-of-year assessment. In the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6), Senior Phase (Grades 7-9) and the Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10-11) learners are required to be examined through the end-of-year examination. Parents should be aware of the examination time tables and encourage their children to develop a study roster.

Parents can get information from their children's school about the assessment process for each phase to be able to assist their children to prepare. Schools usually hand out assessment rubrics in the beginning of each term that indicates how tasks will be assessed. In preparation for the assessments, parents can support their children by drawing a programme that will be followed for study purposes. This programme must indicate when and what needs to be done. When the programme is in place, parents should ensure that the child studies as planned and most of the time is spent on books. Additionally, children must be encouraged to get enough sleep and eat healthy, including a good breakfast.

3.4. Reading and understanding the school report

Reporting is a process of communicating learner performance to learners, parents, schools and the other stakeholders such as the employers, tertiary institutions, etc. Learner performance can be reported in a number of ways such as report cards, parents' meetings, school visitation days, parent-teacher conferences, phone calls, letters, class or school newsletters, etc. A report card is an official document that is used to give feedback to parents on the achievement of learners. Formal report cards, which reflect learner performance for a term, are sent to parents once a term.

The main purpose of reporting is to:

- Inform teachers, parents and others about the performance of learners;
- Provide constructive feedback to learners about their progress;
- Inform the planning of teaching and learning activities; and
- Inform parents on intervention strategies during parent's evenings.

The end-of-year report card should indicate cumulative (added) learner performance for the year.

Comments on the report provide more information on the strengths and developmental needs of the learners. Parents should know that schools may not withhold report cards from learners for any reason whatsoever.

Rating codes and their achievement description

Rating code	Achievement description	Marks %
7	Outstanding Achievement	80 – 100
6	Meritorious Achievement	70 – 79
5	Substantial Achievement	60 – 69
4	Adequate Achievement	50 – 59
3	Moderate Achievement	40 – 49
2	Elementary Achievement	30 -39
1	Not Achieved	0-29

The DBE has also made provision to support learners who have barriers to learning. Parents of learners who experience any form of barrier to learning e.g. impaired hearing or vision should discuss with the school principal / representative regarding how the learner can be supported at school, at home and in the community.

3.5. Encourage good school attendance

Attendance is one of the most important factors in a learner's academic success. Learners who come to school on time, prepared to learn are in a good position to be successful. If a child is ill, s/he has to be kept at home, but otherwise, parents must ensure that children are at school. Missing too much work can put children so far behind that they may not be able to catch up. A written explanation on why he/she missed a school day is needed.

3.6. Communicating with the school

Children spend at least 7 hours a day at school, from Monday to Friday in almost 10 months of each year. It is important that parent understand what goes on in their children's life during that time as it can either build or break their children. Parents know their children's strengths and weaknesses and they are in the best position to ensure that their children benefit from attending school.

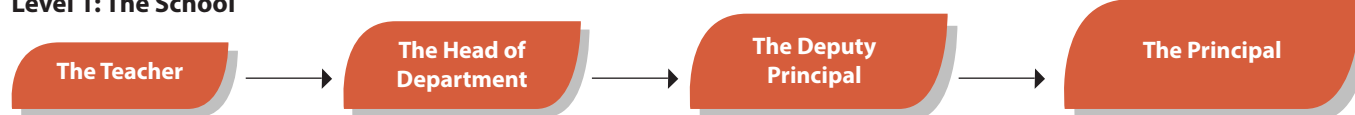
Communicating with the school should be a two way process. Children remain the responsibility of the parents even when they go to school. However, by virtue of being adults, teachers cannot ignore being parents (*loco parentis*), although this does not minimise the role of parents. Teachers are at school to perform a specific function: that of teaching children and not to replace parents.

It is the duty of parents to communicate directly with the school to get first -hand information about what the school offers and what is expected from the parents as well as what parents can expect from the school. Parents cannot depend on the child for this kind of information. The school has a responsibility to keep parents informed about the school activities as well. Sometimes schools request parents to a meeting at the school only when a child has committed an offence, this can be discouraging for parents. Parents should be prepared to listen to the professional advice that teachers provide and try and find the best way to support their children.

At times a parent might have questions about the performance of their child. When parents approach the school to seek answers to questions, it is advisable for them to observe the line of authority at all levels of the schooling system. If a matter has not been satisfactorily addressed then a parent should engage the next level of authority.

The Line of Authority

Level 1: The School



Level 1: The District and Provincial Education Department



Level 3: Basic Education



3.7. Participating in decision making at school

The idea of participating in decision-making is based on the fundamental principle that individuals who are affected by the decision, possess expertise regarding the decision, and are responsible for implementing the decision, should be involved in making the decision. Parent's sense of ownership in the learning of their children can be enhanced by participating in decision making at their children's school. The school can also benefit by including the parent in the school decision making processes. The benefit includes the development of parent leaders and representatives who can sustain good practices. Teachers come and go due to promotions and a range of other reasons but parents belong to the community where the school is located. Parent's participation in decision making can be in different forms as listed below:

a. School meetings

- *The Annual General Meetings of the School (AGM).*

It is important for all parents to attend the AGM (Sept /Oct annually), since the decisions taken at this meeting are legally binding. The meeting is intended to discuss important issues such as finances, school fees, school uniform and language of learning and teaching. The AGMs are important meetings because they review the previous year and set the budget and vision for the following year. It is at these meeting that parents can find out what is happening at the school, their successes and failures. It is at these meetings that parents make their voices heard and also get to know the school family and those who serve on the School Governing Body.

- *Parent-teacher Meetings (formal and informal)*

Each year schools have quarterly parent meetings, in which parents can meet the teachers and learn more about how their children are doing at school. At such meetings, it is important for parents to find out how their child is performing academically, whether they do their homework, how they respond socially and what the behaviour is like in the class. The responses provided by the teacher to each of these matters can help parents plan how they will support and encourage their children. It is not advisable to barge-in in class while teaching and learning is taking place. If a parent has a matter to discuss with a child's teacher it is advisable to make a formal appointment to meet the child's teacher during the term. Most schools supply parents with year plans that indicate dates when teachers will be available to meet parents on learner performance matters. Parents are also encouraged to make appointments to meet teachers outside these planned dates.

b. School Governing Body (SGB)

Every three years the parents have an opportunity to elect a new SGB. The importance of this process is that it is about democracy in action where all parents may elect a new SGB. When the school's SGBs function well, parents have the opportunity of practising good governance. SGBs create a platform where willing parents are able to serve the school and volunteer their skills and expertise. If parents participate in the different SGB sub-committees with other parents, they form a pool for future leadership in the governance of the school. The SGB can draw future members from the group of parents who have volunteered in the school and understand the meaning of parent involvement and how it contributes to the success of their children.

4. Supporting children's learning at home

4.1. Creating a routine for studying (space and time)

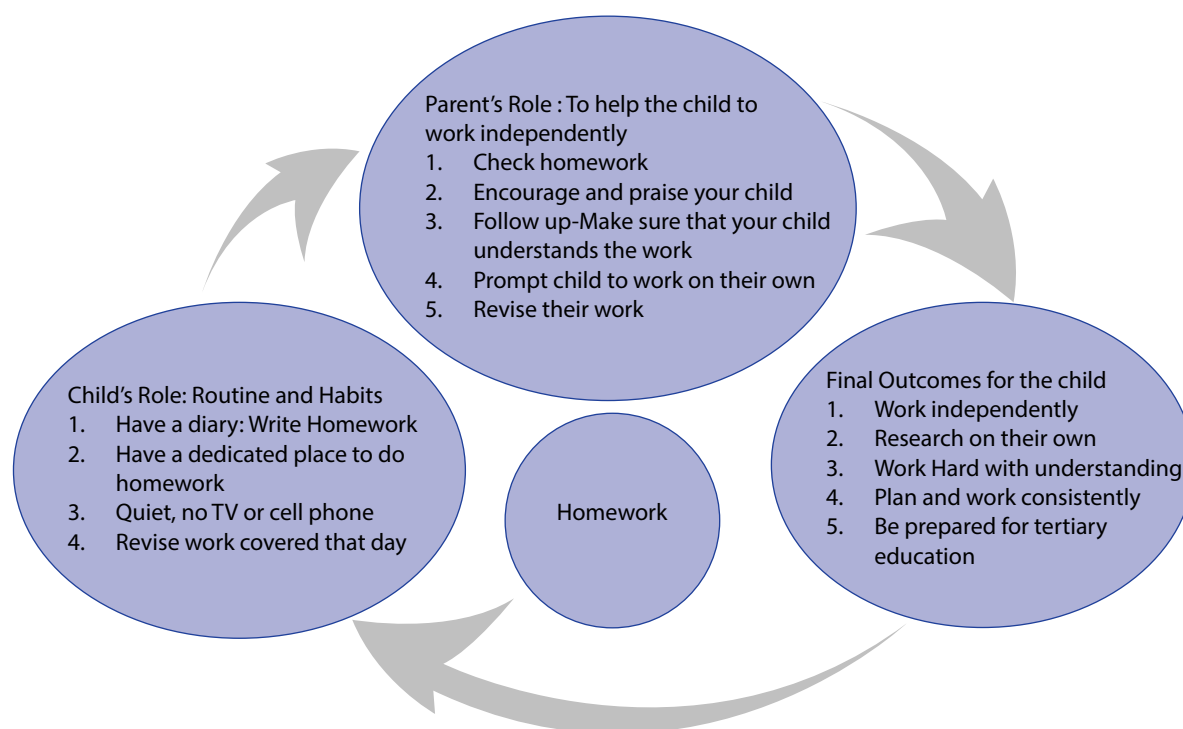
Routines are important because they give children a sense of security and help them develop patterns of self-discipline. A predictable routine allows children to feel safe, and to develop a sense of mastery in a safe secure environment. As this sense of mastery is strengthened, it then persuades a child to tackle larger challenges. Helping children feel safe and ready to take on new challenges is one of parent's responsibilities. Structure and routines allows children to internalise constructive habits and function well with others. Establishing a family routine with regular mealtimes, bedtimes, homework time, and outdoor play and exercise time is important. Sharing time with family in a structured routine gives a child a sense of meaning, belonging and security.

It is a parental responsibility to make the home a suitable environment for learning. Part of this includes ensuring that there is space for the child to study. If it is not possible to create a space for studying at home, parents have the responsibility to look for alternative safe spaces in the community. Examples of alternatives spaces in the community include – the use of school afterhours, community hall, a space in one of the homes in the community etc. Additionally, having a set time and space to do homework, kids learn how to sit themselves down to accomplish a task.

4.2. Supporting and supervising children's homework

Homework is one way of encouraging the child to study and work independently; however children need and supervision from their parents. Parents have to make sure that their children do the homework and also check if the work is completed. Children must know that homework time is "serious business". The diagram below outlines parent and children's roles in getting homework done effectively

In cases where parents are unable to assist their children with homework, they can work with the school to set up homework clubs or home study groups. It is for these clubs or groups that parents working with other parents can offer to provide suitable space for children to do homework. Parents can request community member like a pensioned teacher or nurse, a priest, responsible unemployed youth, etc. to assist with the homework. It is advisable that the homework clubs or home study groups be monitored by an adult to ensure that they are used for what they are intended for.



4.3. Monitoring a Child's Performance

How can a parent tell if work is done at school?	How can a parent let the child's educator know that the child's work is monitored at home?
Check the child's daily class timetable, the assessment timetable against the child's work schedule.	Signing on learner books at every opportunity.
On a daily basis page through the exercise books to monitor that homework is being completed.	Signing the homework diary (for those schools using it).
Check the exercise books to establish if the children are given exercises and if these are teacher controlled.	Giving feedback to the child's teacher through electronic mail or notes.

a. How to tell if a child is doing school work

A child that does school work likes talking about school related matters; is willing to show parents books even before being asked to; is always looking forward to next school day; on a daily basis checks, completes and revises his/her work done in school exercise books; and gets positive remarks from the teacher.

4.4. Documents parents' can use to monitor their children's school work

Document	What it tells you	How can it be used?	Where should it be placed?
The Work Schedule	All areas that should be covered in the grade for that particular academic year.	Assist parent to monitor if the child is on par with set time frames.	50-59 % - Home Language Parent's file Pasted in the workbook of the child.
The Child's Personal Time Table	Informs parents about what subjects are taught for a particular day.	Prepare homework for the next day. Inform on correct books for that day.	In the Child's bedroom or study. A copy should be in the child's diary.
Assessment Programmes	Assessment Timetable. Study timetable.	Parents can monitor if child is preparing him/herself for the test on time. Allows parent to monitor if the child does study and also pays attention to the subject(s) that challenge him/her.	Child's bedroom or Study. A copy should be pasted in the child's diary.
Annual National Assessment (ANA) results	How the child is performing at school compared to other learners nationally.	ANA results give parents clear ideas of how their children perform in Mathematics and Literacy Action plans to address challenges in conjunction with the class teacher.	Parent's file. The child's exercise book.
The child's report	How the child is performing at school.	Observing the child's progress. Set obtainable goals. Use to encourage the child.	Parent's file.

4.5. Role of parents in health and psychosocial support of their children

a) Children's nutrition

Most parents have extremely busy and hectic mornings; however nothing should get in the way of taking the time to focus on children's nutrition. Children are constantly growing and changing, and they need adequate vitamins and minerals to fuel that activity on a daily basis. Parents are encouraged to monitor and control what their children eat. Parents need to plan and budget for balanced 'lunch box' that children can take to school. For children that get their lunch from the school tuck shop, parents need to monitor and guide their children spending and choices that they make. The national school nutrition programme will provide children with one nutritious meal a day in all Quintile 1-3 schools. This food is intended to give learners energy and make them alert and receptive in class. All learners should be encouraged to balance their nutritional intake with regular exercise such as jogging, cycling and playing different kinds of sport.

b) Children's health

Early intervention to address health barriers to learning is critical to enhance children's development and educational gains. Preventable and treatable physical barriers such as problems with vision, hearing and oral health can compromise children's ability to achieve to their full potential. If a child is struggling to learn it is important that they get screened at nearest health facility to rule out any health problems that could be barriers to learning.

Several strategies to improve health of learners have been developed by the DBE with other key government departments, the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Social Development (DSD). These include the Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP); Policy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS); Care and Support for Teaching and Learning framework (CSTL) and the draft Strategy for Provision of Psychosocial Support at Schools.

All schools in Quintile 1-3 should receive visits from the school nurse to screen learners for health problems. The nurse will check the children's sight, hearing, oral health, nutrition, as well as chronic diseases such as TB and asthma. Learners who are identified with health problems during the screening, for example poor sight, will be referred to an appropriate health services. It is important that parents should take their children to a health facility if they have been referred for a service following the screening at school. During the screening, the nurse will also check if all immunisation has been done for children. Annexure A provides a schedule of inoculation that children should receive, parents can check if their children have received all necessary immunisation. Additional services such as deworming and vaccination for cervical cancer are being at schools rolled out nationally.

It is also important to note that all school health services will only be provided to learners with the parental consent. Therefore, learners will be sent with information about the service and a form for parents to sign – to indicate their consent that their child can get the services. No service will be provided to the child without a signed consent form.

c. Psychosocial well-being

Psychosocial term is used to emphasise the close connection between the emotional and the social experiences of individuals. It is based on the idea that a combination of factors are responsible for children's well-being, and these biological, spiritual, cultural, social, mental and material aspects cannot be separated from one another. A state of psychosocial well-being is when children have the competencies and capacities to deal with life's demands and manage relationships well, enabling them to understand their environment, engage with it, make choices, and have hope for the future. The purpose of providing psychosocial support to children is to optimize their social, spiritual and emotional well-being to enable them to cope with daily demands, including successful performance at school.

The DBE with other stakeholders offer programmes that include psychosocial screening, referral and support of learners as part of the school health services. These screening, referral and support services are provided by qualified professionals such as social workers, psychologists and counsellors. It is important for parents to follow up on referrals made during the screening, and ensure that learners receive the services they need. The school based psychosocial programmes include life-skills programmes that provide learners with skills to deal with challenges such as peer pressure and be able to say no to things such as substance abuse, unsafe sex practices and other behavioural challenges.

d. Sexual and Reproductive Health

Children need to be provided with age-appropriate information regarding sexual and reproductive health. This information should include information about sexuality, menstruation, contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including HIV/ Aids, male circumcision including Male Medical Circumcision (MMC), Teenage pregnancy, HIV Counselling and Testing. Some of this information is provided to learners through the life orientation period. More information is provided to learners as part of the school health programme, and this information is provided by professionals and is provided according to age.

Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about these issues. Furthermore, parents should also take their children or encourage their children to visit the clinic for advice, a check-up and guidance on the best protection against pregnancy, STIs including HIV. An unplanned pregnancy or infection with STIs (including HIV) can often negatively affect the learning of children.

Some of the most common challenges learners need parental support to deal with and the services that the state offers

Areas of Medical assistance	Grade	Indicators suggesting a problem	Service providers
Oral	Grade 1-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toothache • Abscess – serve toothache • Bad Breathe • Dry Mouth • Difficulty in eating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dental Health • Oral Screening at school • Visit a clinic • Hospital • Dentist
Visual	Grade 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head a book very close or very far • Difficult seeing things far away • Poor reading • Skips lines or words whilst reading • Blinks and squints eyes, tilts head • Cannot see in low levels of light • Favour one eye • Bumps into objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Nurse • Clinic • Hospital • Optometrist
Speech Problem	Grade 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language problems • Fluency • Stuttering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech therapist
Hearing	Grade 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks loudly or speech is unclear • Has a speech delay • Asks speaker to repeat instructions • Does not respond to instructions • Turns away from the speaker • Unable to detect where sounds are coming from • Has visible impacted wax • Does not react to loud sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audiologist • Speech Therapist • Clinic • Hospital
Tuberculosis	Grade 1-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cough for two weeks or more • Weight loss • Coughing up blood • Weakness or fatigue • Fever lasting for more than 7 days • Loss of appetite • Sweating at night 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the clinic • Must see a doctor at the hospital • Take four types of drug for six months • Required to stay at home for two weeks only
Alcohol and drug abuse	Grade 1-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either hyperactive or overly tired • Inaudible or confused speech • Change in physical appearance or in dress • Sudden aggressive or violent behaviour • Lack of motivation • Mood swings • Change in thought patterns • Dramatic drop in academic achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend support groups such as TADA (teenagers against drug abuse) • Avoid certain friends • Report drug users • Schools are alcohol and drug free zones
Mental health	Grade 6-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self-image • Cutting and self-mutilation • Either hyperactive or overly tired • Unable to sleep • Sudden aggressive or violent behaviour • Lack of motivation • Mood swings • Suicidal tendency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Councillor • School nurse • Clinic • Hospital • Psychiatrist

Areas of Medical assistance	Grade	Indicators suggesting a problem	Service providers
Bullying	Grade 1-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not wanting to go to school • Low self-image • Lack of motivation • Depression • Suicidal tendency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School councillor • District Councillor • School nurse • Clinic • Hospital • Psychiatrist • Monitor cell phone (cyber bullying)
Sexual Health 1. Sexuality		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with cultural and religious stigma • Sexually active • Testing for pregnancy • Contraception • Choice of termination of pregnancy • Testing for HIV/STD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling School • Nurse • Clinic
2. Reproduction health		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Health • Menstruation • Reproduction health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home • Life orientation class • School nurse • Clinic
3. HIV/STD		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with cultural and religious stigma • Being tested • Losing weight • Feeling unwell • Correct medication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Nurse • Clinic
4. Male Circumcision		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Practices • Religion • Medical Circumcision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home • Life orientation class • School nurse • Clinic

5. School-community Collaboration

The school could be a very significant vehicle for community development. Lack of community involvement in schools is evidenced by vandalism of all sorts, community members going through the school yard and grazing animals in the school yard during and after school hours. Parents are community members and are in a better position to see to it that other community members who do not have children in the school play a significant role in uplifting and protecting the school.

There are human resources as well as physical resources in the community that the school needs to partner with. Parents have knowledge of resources available in the community, such as community outreach programmes that provide information and services for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programmes. One way parents could support the school is to identify these individuals and organisations and provide information to the school to invite them for relevant learning programmes. These individuals could be pensioners from various fields, young successful professionals or technicians. This has to be structured so that the school derives maximum benefit from the community partnerships.

Community members can be mobilised by the SGB to participate in the SGB sub-committees based on the expertise they have. This kind of community involvement is possible in all kinds of areas because it is not dependent on education qualifications only. Parents with any education level can be able to contribute to the school. Additionally, community projects can be invited to operate from the school premises and pay rental in kind by providing services to the school (e.g. gardening projects, computer literacy programmes and sewing projects). All community participation need to be done in consultation with the school, and must at all be for the benefit of teaching and learning.

5.1. Volunteering at school

When parents get involved at school it can be a motivating factor to their children. From parents' volunteering, children learn that they (parents) regard the school as important. There is a variety of ways in which parents can volunteer at school. Examples are:

- Assist teachers in a particular field that is needed by the school e.g. supporting student performances in specific subjects, sports, prize giving or other school events;
- Avail themselves to participate in SGB elections;
- Participate in SGB sub-committees e.g. maintenance, fundraising, discipline, etc.; and
- Accompanying children in tours, excursions, matches, etc.

Parents can also take initiatives to support their children's school by:

- Marketing the school in community gatherings;
- Organising other parents to establish a network which is highly connected to the school and keeps parents informed about day to day school activities;
- Providing accommodation when a school needs extra classes (when hit by disasters or waiting for completion of a new school);
- Supervising after-school activities like tutoring, sports, cultural dancing programmes, extra classes for struggling learners, reading clubs, etc.;
- Providing venues for home study groups where this is possible;
- Donating resources needed by the school;
- Feeding learners during revision camps or any other school activities and events; and
- Mobilising ex-students who now hold high positions in various fields (doctors, lawyers, teachers, technicians, police, nurses, business owners, politicians, etc.) to participate in school activities and events.

Parents can ask themselves these questions to assess how much they know and respond to the needs of your child's school

Questions	Yes/No
a. Do you ever know what the school needs to improve your child's education?	
b. How do you respond when you become aware of such situations?	
c. Do you request positively when a request is made?	
d. If you do some work in school do you expect payment and from whom?	
e. Do you market your school on its achievements?	
f. What do you do to support the school when new ideas are introduced?	
g. How do you assist your school fund raise?	

6. Other important information to note

6.1. School fees

According to the South African Schools Act (SASA) SGBs of public schools may supplement government funding, by charging school fees and doing other reasonable forms of raising school funds. The school fund is a combination of school fees, the fundraising money and donations. The right not to charge school fees will be limited to the schools that have been declared 'no fee schools'. The names of the 'no fee schools' are published in a Provincial Gazette and the criteria to determine the 'no fee schools' is based on the economic level of the community around the school.

In fee paying schools, the school has the right to take legal action against a parent, who does not pay school fees, but only after the exemption criteria has been applied and the parent is still liable to pay such fees. A learner cannot be excluded from participation in any official school programmes or be discriminated in any way due to non-payment of school fees by the parent.

6.2. Exemptions from Payment of School Fees

The exemption from payment of school fees is a mechanism government has put in place to assist parents to access quality education for their children, irrespective of their background or financial constraints. Parents who cannot afford to pay school fees must apply to the SGB for conditional, partial or full exemption from paying school fees. Application forms can be obtained from the SGB through the principal of a school. Public schools must inform parents of the criteria and procedures and assist them in applying for exemption from paying school fees. A parent who, for whatever reason, needs assistance to apply for exemption or lodge an appeal, may request the school fees committee chairperson or any members of the School Fees Committee to assist him or her in making the application.

The School Fees Committee must respond in writing to the parents on the outcome of their application within 14 days of applying. Schools are not allowed to charge school fees for orphans. A parent whose application has been declined by the SGB has the right to lodge an appeal with the Head of Department of that province within 30 days after notification of that decision. The principal or School Fees Committee must offer a parent this opportunity and assistance by explaining the appeal form to the parent. It is the responsibility of every public school to assist the parents in lodging appeals.

6.3. School uniforms School

Uniforms may not be used as a barrier to children receiving education. As directed by the National Guidelines on School Uniforms (3 February 2006), School Governing Bodies should:

- In consultation with parents determine the school uniform; and.
- Ensure that the school uniform is affordable and easily available.

6.4. Voluntary Contributions to your child's school

Any parent, including those granted any type of exemption, can make voluntary contribution to the school fund. Contributions can be in the form of money, in kind or in the form of any service a parent may render to a school.

7. Key notes from this document

The following points are intended to show that your involvement in your child's educational life is connected to the improvement of your child's performance and therefore your child's success at school.

- It is only when parents and community members are active that teachers are freed from non-teaching tasks and focus on the core business.
- It is only when time on task is increased that teaching becomes effective and translates into learning.
- It is only when effective learning takes place that learner performance improves.
- It is only when parents afford learners study time and suitable environments for study that learner performance at school improves.
- It is only when parents are given opportunity to participate in school activities that they begin to appreciate their school.
- It only when we recognise that even parents with low literate levels can support their children's learning maybe differently from literate parents e.g. by working in groups rather than individually however there are responsibilities that need individual parents especially for the parent role and learning at home.
- It is only when teachers are trained on how to engage parents in school activities that parents will be motivated to participate. All parents send their children to school to succeed.
- It is only when the community is actively involved in school matters that vandalism disappears. The community protects the school property and sees the school as a centre of community development. This instils a sense of pride and ownership.

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Annexure A – Checklist for parents

General information

No	General checklist	Yes	No
1	I monitor the work of my child (study time table, homework etc.)		
2	I check his test marks		
3	I check his absenteeism record		
4	I motivate and encourage my child		
5	I ensure that my child wears the full school uniform		
6	I am aware of the whereabouts of my child after school		
7	I telephone the school when I need information		
8	I attend all parent meetings		
9	I have a copy of the school year plan (and use it)		
10	I have a copy of the grade (twelve)12 year plan (and use it)		
11	I am aware of when report cards are handed out		
12	I make sure school fees are paid on time		
13	I am aware of the importance of CASS marks		
14	I am aware of the subjects/learning areas of my child		
15	I do not overburden my child with household chores		
16	I budget for additional resources		
17	I give my full support to the school and its various activities		

Health information

No	Health and Medical	Yes	Yes
1	Is your child's immunization up to date?		
2	Are you aware of your child's allergies/ailments/disabilities and have these been communicated to the school?		
3	Is your child in good health?		
4	Has your child had their eyes, ears checked		
5	Is your child at the age where she/ he needs to visit the clinic for sexual counselling		

Annexure B– Child inoculation programme

Age	The Medical support provided by the sate	Benefit	Service providers
Birth	Tuberculosis (TB) and leprosy	Protect against Tuberculosis and Leprosy	Health Clinics
Birth	Oral Poliomyelitis Vaccine (polio)	Protect against polio	Health Clinics
6 weeks	Rotavirus vaccine for Diarrhoea (1)	Protect against Diarrhoea	Health Clinics
14 weeks	Rotavirus vaccine for Diarrhoea (2)		
6 weeks	Whooping Cough, Diphtheria (serious throat and nose infection) , Tetanus and Polio Haemophilus	Protect against Whooping Cough, Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio	Health Clinics
10 weeks	Repeat inoculation		
14 weeks	Repeat inoculation		
18 weeks	Repeat inoculation		
6 weeks	Hepatitis B vaccine	Protect against pneumonia	Health Clinics
10 weeks	Repeat inoculation		
14 weeks	Repeat inoculation		
6 weeks	Pneumococcal Conjugated Vaccine	Protect against pneumonia	Health Clinics
9 weeks	Repeat inoculation		
14 weeks	Repeat inoculation		
9 weeks	Measles	Protect against measles	Health Clinics
18 weeks	Repeat inoculation		
6 years	Tetanus	Protect against tetanus	Health Clinics
12 years	Repeat inoculation		
9 years	HPV Vaccine (for girls) Cervical Cancer	Protect against cervical cancer	School

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