

Encouraging Family Engagement

SUMMARY

Students learn more and have more fun when their families are involved. Here are some easy ways to help families be part of student learning.

AUDIENCE

All educators and parents with students in grades K-12. All subjects.

CREATE A NEWSLETTER TO SHARE IDEAS

A simple newsletter sent to families on a regular basis (once or twice a month works well) helps to let them know what the students are learning in class. Share some fun related activities that can be done at home that will reinforce the school lessons in creative ways. For example – if students are learning to estimate – they might practice estimating the total bill when the family goes grocery shopping.

BRAINSTORM WITH STUDENTS

When a new topic or skill is introduced, brainstorm with students about how the subject relates to their day-to-day life. Have students generate imaginative ways to utilize the skill at home.

CREATE A LENDING LIBRARY

Collect a number of inexpensive games, books, and activities that are related to the topics being covered in class. Encourage students to check items out to take home to share.

HAVE STUDENTS MAKE THEIR OWN GAMES ON CLASS TOPICS

Students enjoy creating games and sharing them with classmates, friends, and family. The process of creating and playing these games will strengthen student understanding & confidence.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ARE FUN TO SHARE

Have students write in journals, illustrate ideas and concepts, and compose stories. These are an interesting way for students to share what they have learned.

ENCOURAGE FAMILIES TO HOLD A FAMILY FUN NIGHT

1. Share “A Guide to Hosting a Family Fun Night” on the next page with families.
2. Hold a “Fun Night” or “Fun Day” at school to help model how it can work.
3. The Lending Library can help provide activities to use at home.
4. Have student share what they learned via in-class sharing, a written report, or class presentation.

RELATED RESOURCES

RAFT hands-on activities, ideas, and materials are useful tools for encouraging family engagement - <http://www.raft.net>

A Guide to Hosting a Family Fun Night

Skip the movie; turn off the TV and the computer! Slow down and take time doing hands-on activities together as a family!

WHY HAVE FAMILY FUN NIGHTS?

A family that plays together stays together! Engaging your family with hands-on family fun activities strengthens social skills, creates lasting memories, promotes communication and sharing, and creates strong bonds!

SELECT SOMETHING TO DO

1. Pick a topic that is **interesting and relevant** to everyone
 - Play a board game
 - Build something together
 - Prepare a meal or dessert together
 - Read a book together out loud (maybe take turns reading passages)

PREPARE FOR FUN!

1. **Collect an assortment of games** to spark interest in choosing a game to play
2. **Gather materials** that will help everyone complete the activity. For instance, provide tools for building a model airplane, or utensils for cooking a cake.
3. **Provide a comfortable setting** with ample space to lay out materials or to play a game; a comfy sitting area for reading together; prepare healthy snacks to eat; etc.

FACILITATE THE FAMILY NIGHT

1. **Set a night aside that works well with everyone's schedule** – perhaps make this a weekly or monthly event on an evening when there is no school the next day.
2. **Encourage collaboration and communication**-- talk together about what makes being a family so special. Use positive statements, and do not allow harsh criticism.
3. **Have fun!** Laugh and enjoy each other's company! Share stories that remind you of why you enjoy being together

GUIDED REFLECTION

1. Look back – Ask what worked or didn't work
2. Look forward – **Get everyone involved in brainstorming** what they would like to do for the next Family Fun Night; take turns choosing what to do for the next Family Fun Night.

RELATED RESOURCES

Many RAFT hands-on activities that can be used for a family fun night –here are just a few:

- Colors of Light** – <http://www.raft.net/ideas/Colors of Light.pdf>
Human Reaction Time – <http://www.raft.net/ideas/Human Reaction Time.pdf>
Estimating Jar – <http://www.raft.net/ideas/Estimating Jar.pdf>
Frack Jack – <http://www.raft.net/ideas/Frack Jack.pdf>
Tessellating Lizard – <http://www.raft.net/ideas/Tessellating Lizard.pdf>
Rollback Can – <http://www.raft.net/ideas/Rollback Can.pdf>
Leonardo's Arched Bridge – <http://www.raft.net/ideas/Leonardos Arched Bridge.pdf>