

Eastwood PTA Extra



Eastwood Elementary PTA

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Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?

As parents we try our hardest to be a big part of our children's learning. However, if you're like me and don't know a lot of the answers from "Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?" you may find yourself second-guessing your ability to guide your child through schoolwork.

To help parents feel more comfortable about how we can help our children, teachers and other educational staff from our school will be guest speakers at each meeting. Our PTA meetings are in the school library at 6:30pm the first Monday of each month and we will announce each teacher's topic prior to the meeting to ensure parents who want to learn more about that subject have advance notice.

Meetings are open to all PTA and non-PTA members, so we encourage you to come even if you are not yet a member. (NOTE: We welcome everyone to share in discussion, however only a paid member is allowed to vote.)

As always, our goal with this newsletter is give you a little extra information about the PTA and how your membership and volunteerism is vital for a successful school year. If you would like to see specific information published in this monthly newsletter or would like someone to speak on a specific topic during a PTA meeting please email karen.burke@ubs.com with your requests.

Karen Burke, PR Director

Survey Says...

We would appreciate your feedback on how to improve our school, our student's education, and the activities the PTA sponsors. Page four of this newsletter is a quick survey we would like parents to complete and have their students turn in to their teacher during conferences. Your answers and input will help us better facilitate our PTA meetings and determine our goals for next year.

Getting Ready for School Conferences

Conferences are not only a great way to see your child's progress in school, but also a time for you and the teacher to work together as a team to discuss ways you both can help your son(s) or daughter(s).

Before the meeting with your child's teacher please consider the following:

Talk to your child—Find out which subjects your child likes the best and the least. Ask why. Also, ask if there is anything your child would like you to talk about with the teacher. Help the child understand that you and the teacher are meeting to help him or her.

Make a list—Before you go to the meeting, make a list of topics to discuss with the teacher. Along with questions about academics and behavior, you may want to talk to the teacher about the child's home life, personality, concerns, habits and hobbies, and other topics that may help the teacher in working with the child (e.g., religious holidays, music lessons, part-time jobs, a sick relative).

During the conference consider the following:

Establish rapport—As an icebreaker, take notice of something that reflects well upon the teacher. For example, thank the teacher for having made thoughtful notes on your child's homework or for the special attention in helping your child learn to multiply.

Ask questions—Questions you ask during the conference can help you express your hopes for the student's success in class and for the teacher. It's a good idea to ask the important questions first, in case time runs out. The teacher's answers should help you both work together to help your child.

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2010-2011 PTA Board Members

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PTA Mission: The overall purpose of PTA

- A powerful voice for all children,
- A relevant resource for families and communities, and
- A strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child

Learn more at the national PTA website: www.pta.org

Eastwood Elementary PTA Minutes are located at: www.west-fargo.k12.nd.us/schools/eastwood/pta/

Now's Your Chance to Make a Difference

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Getting Ready for School Conferences

If your child receives special services (e.g., gifted and talented programs, speech or occupational therapy), be sure to ask about the frequency of services and your child's progress.

Addressing problems—Parent-teacher conferences are a good time to discuss any difficulties (either academic or behavioral) a child might be having at school. When problems arise, parents will want to:

- Avoid angry or apologetic reactions. Instead, ask for examples.
- Ask what is being done about the problem and what strategies seem to help at school.
- Develop an action plan that may include steps that parents can take at home and steps the teacher will take when the problem comes up at school.
- Schedule a follow-up conference and decide on the best way to stay in touch (phone, e-mail, or letters sent to the home).

Develop an action plan—If the student needs help with a behavioral or an academic issue, you and the teacher should agree on specific plans—that you both will work on—to help your child do better. Be sure you understand what the teacher suggests. If it's not clear, ask him or her to explain. Set up a way to check on your child's progress. You and the teacher can decide how best to stay in touch, such as through phone calls, notes, or additional meetings.

Ending the conference—End the conference by reviewing what you discussed and restating your action plan. This is also a good time to set up your next meeting.

After the Conference

When discussing the conference with the child afterward, stress the good things that were covered and be direct about problems that were identified. If an action plan is in place, explain to the child what was arranged. When an action plan is in place, consider the following: Watch your child's behavior and check on classwork and homework. Ask how the student feels about schoolwork. Stay in touch with the teacher to discuss your child's progress. Express appreciation as progress is made. A good way to promote a continuing relationship with the teacher is to say "thank-you" with a note or a telephone call. Continuing to keep in touch with the teacher, even if things are going well, can play an important role in helping the child do better in school. When a child knows parents and teachers are regularly working together, the child will see that education is a high priority requiring commitment and effort.

The above article and more information like this can be found on the national website: www.pta.org and www.education.com

Eastwood PTA has many leadership opportunities for its members. On **Monday, April 4th** Eastwood Elementary PTA members will nominate and elect officers for the 2011-2012 year at the end of the regularly scheduled meeting, which begins at 6:30pm in the school's library.

Please contact President Jenny Durbin or PR Director Karen Burke. We will be happy to discuss the opportunities and job description details. Jenny Durbin: ptaeastwood@hotmail.com, 281-0581 / Karen Burke: karen.burke@ubs.com, 367-4100.



Family BINGO night is May 6th from 6:00-8:00 pm. Please email Jenny Durbin if you can help with this event, (ptaeastwood@hotmail.com):

- Donations/prizes for BINGO winners are needed. A copy of the donation request letter can be requested by emailing Jenny at ptaeastwood@hotmail.com.
- Volunteers are also needed the night of the event to help set up, call BINGO, and to hand out cards and prizes, etc.

Cashwise Labels for Learning Program

Eastwood Elementary does participate in the Cashwise Foods Labels for Learning Program. If you shop at Cashwise or have relatives and friends that live in a community with a Cashwise store please let them know we are part of the *Cashwise Labels for Learning* program and ask if they can send the point receipts they get to you. Cashwise is located in: Wilmar MN, New Ulm MN, Bismarck ND, White Park MN, Owatonna MN, St. Cloud MN, Hutchinson MN, Moorhead MN, and Fargo ND.

Your Child Benefits From Your PTA Membership

Are you aware parent involvement directly impacts your child's success in school? When PTA gets involved, children benefit; when you get involved in PTA, the child who benefits most is your own.

Decades of research shows when parents are involved, students perform better in school. They receive higher grades and test scores, have better school attendance and lower rates of suspension, are more likely to graduate high school, and are more likely to pursue postsecondary education.

Children of involved parents also exhibit increased motivation, better self-esteem, less drug and alcohol use, and fewer instances of violent behavior. Those great benefits come from parent involvement, a major focus of PTA.

As a PTA member you have the opportunity to...

- share your talents on projects of interest to you;
- vote on programs, events, and planned activities;
- take a leadership role;
- present ideas/activities would you like to see the PTA implement at the school;
- share your culture with others;
- meet people in your community



HOMework HEADACHES

The relationship between the home and the school is important. If you want your child to achieve academic success, you must become involved in the educational process. Here are some ways to develop a good attitude toward homework in your child and a high-quality relationship with your child's school:

- Talk to your child about school. Does your child understand why he goes to school? Discuss how school is one way that children discover who they are and who they may become. Talk to your child about what he likes and dislikes about school and why. Let him know that he can always come to you with problems.
- Communicate with your child's teacher. Plan to meet with the teacher at least three times a year to discuss your child's progress. Once a relationship is established, it is easier to examine difficult issues, if they arise.
- Learn about the curriculum at your child's school. The more you know about what will be taught in the classroom, the better you will be able to help your child with homework.
- Find out what the school or district homework policy is. It will take the guesswork out of determining whether or not your child has homework.

Homework challenges

Following are five challenges parents frequently face when working with their children to complete homework assignments.

- 1) "My daughter forgets her homework on purpose so she won't have to do it."
- 2) "My 5th-grader reads stories at home to prepare for reading tests, but he fails the tests every time."
- 3) "I work with my son on spelling words for at least an hour every Thursday night for the test on Friday. Yet he still fails his spelling tests! Our study sessions are tiring, tension producing, and obviously nonproductive."
- 4) "My child knows how to form letters correctly, yet his papers are still a mess. He refuses to slow down and write neatly."
- 5) "My daughter isn't in the highest reading group in her class, but she still has to use the same science book those students use. There is no way she can complete her assignments by herself; her reading skills aren't up to it."

Suggested responses for challenge 1): This is a fairly common problem. What you choose to do depends on the reason your daughter is "forgetting" her homework: Your daughter may not understand the importance of homework assignments. Quite often, children don't understand why homework is assigned or how doing it (or not doing it) affects their understanding of the material and their grades. Arrange for a meeting with your daughter, her teacher, and you. Ask the teacher to explain the purpose for homework in his or her class, how it is scored, and how it factors into the final grade.

The homework may be too difficult. Confer with the teacher to determine whether your daughter is capable of handling the assignments. If she isn't, try to find out why. Is she having trouble paying attention in class or grasping new concepts? Does she need extra help? Let the teacher make suggestions, and don't hesitate to contribute suggestions of your own.

She may be seeking attention. Even negative attention-including displeasure and scolding-qualifies as attention. Let her know that if she brings her homework home, you will work with her to complete it. If she doesn't bring her homework home, you will be forced to take away some of the privileges she enjoys.

Your daughter may be just plain lazy. It's not very flattering, but it may be true. Start by requiring your daughter to record all of her assignments on an assignment sheet. Ask the teacher to initial the sheet daily to show that an assignment has been given, and also to initial it whenever homework is handed in. Insist on seeing the sheet every evening.

Jeanne Shay Schumm, PhD, is the author of How to Help Your Child with Homework (Free Spirit, 2005), from which the content of this article was adapted. Yvonne Perry is an elementary school assistant principal in Miami, Florida.

NOTE: For responses to homework challenges 2-5 please go to <http://www.pta.org/2046.htm>.

2011 PTA Membership Survey

Name (optional) _____ E-mail(optional) _____

How many years have you been a PTA/PTO member? _____

Why did you join PTA? _____

What does the PTA do well? _____

What could the PTA do better? _____

Would you recruit a new member? ____Yes ____No

What is the biggest challenge you face as a parent? _____

What is the biggest challenge our school community faces? _____

What new program/activity would you most like to see implemented? _____

What current activity would you most like to see ended? _____

In what areas would you become active if given the opportunity? _____

Would you like the school to have a resource room with DVDs, brochures, etc., available to PTA members? ____Yes ____No

Overall, I feel the PTA is: ____ Very helpful ____ Helpful ____ Not helpful

Meetings and projects are: ____ Very helpful ____ Helpful ____ Not helpful

What do you believe is the purpose of our PTA? _____

Did you ever request assistance/information from the PTA? ____Yes ____No / If yes, did you receive a prompt response? _____

Do you believe the PTA has been working on behalf of all children and youth? ____Yes ____No

If no, what do you think should be addressed that the PTA has failed to address?

Please use this space for additional comments:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you're unable to turn in the survey at conferences, your student can bring the completed form to their teacher or the school office; you can bring it to the next PTA Meeting (1st Monday each month, 6:30pm in the Eastwood Elementary School Library); or put in bottom drawer of the Box Tops Collection bin located by the playground exit doors at the back of the cafeteria.