FAMILY CONNECTIONS FOR SUCCESS:
How to help your children succeed in school

Hello,

I invite you to join with me, your children, and their teachers on the miraculous journey of education.

You are your child's first teacher – your attitudes toward learning and establishing good homework habits are vital to your child's success. By showing an interest in your children's schoolwork, you're demonstrating that educational achievement is important to you.

Children need to understand that it pays to study hard. In 1997, adults with a four-year college degree earned $14,000 more, on average per year, than those with a high school education. By the time your child goes on an initial job search, technology will demand higher learning skills and even more of our jobs will be linked with a global economy. This means your child will potentially compete with others from around the world for a job.

With the simple tips provided in this handout, you may find ways to stimulate your child's learning, avoid homework hassles, and guide your child on a lifetime path for successful learning. Schools, alone, cannot bring about the best education possible – a partnership between schools and families is essential. Get involved with your child's education – and stay involved.

Your child's future depends on it.

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from Nancy Keenan and the Montana Office of Public Instruction

MOTIVATION IS THE KEY

Ask your child what's going on at school and then take the time to listen, really listen, to the answer. Kids are eager to tell someone what they've learned – especially you. Let them know your expectations. Staying in touch not only shows you care, it's a powerful motivator. Plan a special outing or event for good grades.

READING IS CONTAGIOUS

Read to your young child for at least 20 minutes a day. If your child has begun reading, ask to be read to. Continue reading with your child as long as you both enjoy it. Go to the library and get each child a library card – make library visits a special time together. Limit TV watching to no more than 2 hours a day, including weekends. Focus on alternative enjoyable activities that exercise minds and bodies.

WALK THE TALK

Get to know your child's teacher and other school staff. Let the teacher know you appreciate feedback on your child's progress – both positive and negative. Become a volunteer in the classroom, work in the parent resource center, or join your local parent-teacher organization. There's something magical about helping kids learn!

AVOID HOMEWORK HASSLES

Agree on a time for studying every night. Provide a well-lighted and comfortable place to do homework, complete with pencils, sharpeners, and a dictionary. If your child insists that homework is always done elsewhere, make a plan to review it each night. There's no 'correct amount of homework,' but many school districts recommend 15 to 45 minutes a day in grades 3rd - 6th, 45 to 75 minutes in 7th -9th, and 75 to 120 minutes in 10th -12th grades. If your child has no homework day after day, you may want to talk with the teacher.

STAND UP TO BULLIES

Encourage your child to talk about inappropriate school conduct. Bullying, harassment, and teasing are unacceptable. Be your child's ally in terminating this behavior by modeling appropriate responses and, if necessary, talking with school staff. After all, words can hurt – even your child's education.

SET STANDARDS

Make it clear that school is the number-one priority. Be consistent about rules, such as "No television until the homework is finished." Review homework and let your child know what you think. If the job isn't neat or complete, review it with them and ask if they're satisfied with what they've done. Establish a daily routine for meals, homework, chores, and bedtime.

GET INVOLVED

What is the most important thing a school needs to succeed? Money? Computers? Improved facilities? While all these factors are important, none is more important than active parent involvement. Attend back-to-school nights and other student events.

One of the best gifts you can give your teenager is your time. Stay involved even when they don't seem to need you. High school students excel when their parents take an active interest in both their studies and school-related activities.

SMELL THE ROSES TOGETHER

Learning is a source of wonder and self-fulfillment. Enjoy each day by taking a few extra minutes to teach, and to learn about, your child. Your commitment to your child's education will carry you both on the miraculous journey of learning – to the destination of a rewarding future.

For copies of this brochure,visit the OPI Web site at www.metnet.state.mt.us or contact BJ Hoven at OPI (444-5643; bhoven@state.mt.us).