PASS 3: Strategies that Enrich and Expand Student Learning

Strategy for Parents: Ideas to Support Student Learning in Reading, Writing and Mathematics

The PASS model refers to the term "parent" as any adult who plays an important role in a child's family life.

Academic subjects build on student abilities and skills learned in in previous grades, to help students move beyond a foundation of knowledge toward deeper understanding and a higher performance level. Students benefit most when parents partner with educators to ensure that their children are mastering one skill before progressing to the next. Teachers observe the level of student progress in the classroom and parents can provide feedback about the ways their child applies new knowledge and skills outside of school. Parents and teachers are strongly encouraged to use the information below as a productive foundation for PASS partnerships.

Parents can use the information below as a guide to support their children's development throughout their school careers. In addition, parents are encouraged to ask teachers for ideas, information and materials that will support student learning outside of school.

Parents can help their child develop a deeper understanding

- Parents can encourage their children to make connections between something they learned and mastered in the past with connections and decisions they are making now and will make in the future.
- Parents can also help their child recognize how to use past successes to help them solve new problems and meet new challenges.
- Parents can ask their child to consider questions such as:
  - What are you being asked to do?
  - What do you know about this topic?
  - Did you do something in the past to help you figure this out?
  - How can you get started?
  - How can you check that your solution is correct?

Parents can help expand their children's thinking

- Parents can emphasize to their child that they will learn more if they expand their thinking from the basic idea of finding the correct answer to understanding the processes that they use to find their answer.
- Parents can help their child understand how to solve problems so that they can successfully face new challenges.
- Parents can encourage their child to consider questions such as:
  - What decisions did you make to solve the problem?
  - What steps did you take to solve the problem?
  - Was this a successful strategy that you can use again; why or why not?
  - Are there other ways to solve the problem?
  - Can you show someone else how you solved the problem?

Parents can encourage precise communication

- Parents can provide frequent opportunities for their child to explain ideas, concepts, procedures, and strategies that they use to "figure things out" both in school and outside of school.

- Parents can encourage precise, detailed language. The ability to use precise communication plays a key role in helping students to understand the concept and to solve problems.
- Parents can ask their child to consider these questions:
    - What is the topic?
    - Can you explain it in more detail?
    - How could you describe it to someone who does not know anything about it?
    - When you use specific words to communicate clearly, would someone else be able to do the same thing, find the same answer, or use your explanation to take action?

Parents' influence and support of their child in school can be most effective when it grows with their child. While the description of some academic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics may sound similar, developmentally, the skills build upon the knowledge and abilities that prepare students' for the next grade level, graduation, and career choices after high school.

Many parents are taking note that the demands of an increasingly competitive and fast-paced world have changed how their children learn and are taught, as well as the how they can best support their children's education. Today's parents see a difference in students' academic expectations and learning methods. In PASS partnerships, parents can work with educators to help students meet the new expectations in classrooms. Below are some suggestions on how parents and educators can collaborate successfully.

Two important ways that standards will impact daily classroom instruction of reading and writing

1. **Instructional shifts:** Higher student learning standards introduced three major shifts in classroom instruction designed to guide readers through a range of grade-level skills or reading materials.

   Classroom instruction focuses on**:**

   - Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts: In addition to stories and literature, your child will read more informational texts and non-fiction that provide facts and knowledge in areas such as science and social studies.
   - Reading and writing grounded in evidence from text: Children will read more challenging texts and be asked more questions that will require them to refer back to what they have read to provide evidence that supports their answers.
   - Regular practice with complex texts and its vocabulary: Teachers will emphasize building a strong vocabulary so that students can read and understand challenging material.

2. **Fewer, clearer student learning standards that aim higher**.

   Teaching and learning focuses on five areas to prepare students to meet grade-level expectations in the following areas:

   - Literature
   - Informational Text
   - Writing
   - Speaking and Listening
   - Language

READING

Parents can help their child learn and build reading skills at all developmental levels

Parents can encourage their child to:

- Retell stories, passages, and books and show understanding of key details and the central message using quotes from the text.
- Ask and answer detailed questions about who, what, where, when, and how to demonstrate understanding.
- Draw, tell, write, or create something related to the topic (As they get older they will expand ideas, provide facts, research, evidence, and use text as inspiration for other knowledge applications, skills and activities.
- Determine the theme and central idea and explain how it is supported by key details in the text and how the theme or idea was developed throughout the text.
- Acknowledge differences in various points of view and form an opinion about the main ideas based on their own reasoning.
- Describe and interpret concepts and use critical thinking to connect them to real life.
- Identify connections of illustrations to text, and as they get older, explain how diagrams and illustrations contribute to the topic.
- Introduce the topic clearly and use reasoning to project what happens next.
- Provide a clear conclusion about what they read.
- Refer to details and examples when making inferences.
- Analyze concepts within the text using explicit details and conclusions.
- Make sense of the text by creating an organized structure of related ideas using linking words and phrases.
- Summarize objectively with accuracy and without personal opinions or judgments.
- Many other suggestions and strategies for use at home, designed with teachers, parents, and students.

Students face increased expectations in reading and literature as they move through grades 9-12

When academic standards for student reading go beyond the mechanics of learning to read, some parents may feel that their role to help their child learn to read is over. This level of development in their children's reading skills presents an ideal time for parents to help students meet these more sophisticated challenges, such as *how* they should use reading skills to fully comprehend what they are reading and writing.

Teachers apply the reading standards to the content and related reading materials for each course. For example: A Grade 7 science teacher may use the reading standards and apply the skills to specific lessons and activities.

- Reading - He may choose an article that describes how pollution affects the process of photosynthesis in a certain plant. Students may be asked to read the article, identifying important information and key details as outlined by the reading standards for science and technical subjects.
- Writing - Then the teacher may have the students organize their information into an argumentative essay for a newspaper article that outlines the harmful effects of pollution on local plant life and on the community. Students would be asked to do the assignment drawing from the writing standards.

Parents can discuss reading standards with teachers and exercise the important role they can play supporting their child in each set of reading standards beyond the school day.

Although the content of reading materials may vary, the standards outline expectations for complexity and serve as guidelines for each grade.

With increased emphasis being placed on reading skills, support at home is essential.

For example, in Grade 3, students focus on using evidence to support conclusions regarding a text and select the *best* evidence to support their understanding of the information that they read. Students learn to recognize how the main themes and ideas are related to other elements of the writing, including key details and descriptions of ideas, and how those contribute to the development of the story.

> If parents and teachers see the student struggling with reading at any grade level they should work together and develop a plan to help the student keep on track for their grade and developmental level. However, if a student reaches high school and is continuing to struggle, a stronger response is needed. Teacher leaders, reading supervisors, a child study team, or specialized consultants are a few examples of the professional educators who are devoted to guide and support students with reading challenges.

At the secondary level, students look at the organization of several texts and reading passages and how that organization can impact style and influence what a reader understands. Students also make connections between different points of view in the information that they read.

When reading informational texts, students pay attention to the author's point of view and whether he or she acknowledges any information that may contradict the stated point of view. Students are expected to examine how reasonable ideas are presented.

Another common expectation also includes determining how closely a film, television program or play represents the original literature from which it was drawn. This is a perfect opportunity for parents to speak with their child about activities outside of school and ways that their "real life" connects to what they are learning in the classroom.

Grades 9-12 Reading Comprehension for Scientific and Technical Topics

As students move into grades 9-12, the classes they take in science and technical subjects become more challenging. They encounter reading material that is more complex and requires greater attention to precision and detail as they read and carry out procedures. However, parent support for reading does not stop in grades K-8. . English language arts teachers are excellent resources for parents who want to help their child become more confident and accurate in reading, listening, analyzing, writing, speaking, and other academic communication skills.

Teachers in classes other than reading are also very helpful members of a home/school or PASS team such as those who teach journalism, earth science, algebra, finance, engineering, web design, physics, world history, and many more. They have a different perspective on the functions of reading and can serve as a bridge into reading comprehension and analysis. Parents' will note that reading materials are different from five or ten years ago. However, even if the technical content of reading materials has been updated since they were in school, parents' awareness of the reading expectations for their child can be powerful reading support.

Parents can be aware and support the following reading skills that their child is learning

- Follow how something is described and developed with details over the course of a text.
- Examine how significant concepts are organized in writing and how important words are related.
- Along with determining the reasons why an author wrote certain information, identify the main question that was the author's reason for writing.
- Write a description of numerical or visual data in words and convert numerical data or written information into a visual display.
- Determine similarities and differences between various sources, along with identifying which sources are supported by other texts or experiments.
- Pay attention to the detail needed for reading texts in science and technical areas.
- Practice summarizing the necessary steps in complex procedures.
- Using some of the reading materials from school, parents can ask their child to explain the steps in his own words.

The relationship between reading and writing

For many years, reading and writing were taught separately. Research over the past decade has shown that a child's reading and writing skills are more interdependent than was once thought. Therefore, literacy development (reading skills) is dependent on the interconnection between reading and writing.

WRITING

Parents can create a supportive writing environment

- Parents can provide an environment to support their child's writing skills, practice, knowledge, and achievement by building the expectation and understanding that their child must *do it to learn it* and *practice it to master it*.
- Writing practice does not need to be a formal assignment or a project outside of school; in fact such a rigid requirement can appear directive rather than supportive. Out of school, directing students or insisting that they perform a learning task has the potential to cause resistance and a refusal to accept any learning support.
- Effective writing is deeply personal and thoughtful; students must be self-motivated to think and learn about what and how they write. Encouraging opportunities for students to write about any interest, activity, or for a specific purpose can not only serve the student's purpose, but can also provide additional time to write in preparation for real-life.
- Parents can encourage opportunities for writing about ideas and topics of interest to their child, encourage them to use technology to practice writing and related skills, and read - or have their children read to them - some of the things that they have written. Students can become effective writers through daily opportunities to learn and practice writing skill development, strategies to use technology and other techniques, and feedback on their work.

Students must

DO it to learn it

and

PRACTICE it to master it.

Parents can support writing skill development

Parents can ask questions that prompt students to think carefully about their purpose for writing, planning what to say and how to say it whether it is the physical formation of letters in a child's early years, development of ideas, or complex technical writing, writing skills are clearly ones that students attain in developmental stages. All writing is aimed at achieving a single goal: to help students learn and communicate their ideas in flexible and effective ways. When students learn to write, they learn by doing.

Writing well involves more than documenting ideas as they come to mind. One of the best ways that parents can support their children is to help them focus on four common themes about the concepts of writing: the type of writing, the writing process, the role of technology, and the role of assessment. The information below includes a brief background and some ideas to help parents understand writing expectations and engage in their child's learning outside of school.

- Types of writing: Writing is a process to communicate thoughts and ideas. It is a highly complex, thoughtful, self-directed activity, driven by the goals writers set for; 1) what they want to do and say, and 2) the audience(s) for whom they are writing. To meet these goals, students must skillfully and flexibly coordinate their writing process and determine the purpose of what they want to communicate. In the younger years, teachers will identify or assign a specific style to help students focus on the process and components.

To become a successful writer over time all students need to learn to use each of four styles:

1. Expository or Argumentative style - Expository writing style about a specific subject. The student must tell readers about the subject or topic without including his own opinion about that topic.
2. Descriptive style - In the descriptive writing style the student uses details to describe an event, a place, or a character. Sometimes, the descriptive writing style is poetic in nature in, where the author specifies an event, an object, or a thing using sensory details.
3. Persuasive style - The persuasive style of writing is a category of writing where the student gives reasons and justification to make readers believe his point of view. The persuasive style is used when he student wants to make a point and convince the reader to accept that position.
4. Narrative style - The narrative writing style is a type of writing where the author tells the reader a story. Examples of the narrative style include short stories, novels, biographies, and poetry.

- <u>The writing process</u>: Writing includes planning; drafting; sharing; revising; editing; and evaluating. Parents can ask their child to consider these questions about the writing process:

    1. Clarifying the style
        - What is my goal and how do I want to communicate my idea?
    2. Planning
        - What do I want to do and say**?**
        - Who is the audience?
        - What do I need to get started?
        - What do I need to brainstorm some ideas?
        - How do I make notes and specific points (an outline) to help me organize my ideas?
    3. Drafting
        - Is there a clear introduction?
        - Did I provide enough - but not too much - background information so that the reader understands my idea?
        - Is it clear that I am informed on my topic?
        - Can I expand the points in my plan into paragraphs?
        - Was it hard to start the introduction?
        - Did I go to other paragraphs and fill in the introduction as I got into the writing "zone"?
        - Do my ideas move from general to specific?
        - Did I spend too much time fixing and changing things?
        - Was I able to remember that I can fix and change things when I edit my work?
    4. Sharing
        - Can I share this with someone who I trust, understands this type of writing, and will give me good feedback?
        - Who is it and when can I give it to them?
    5. Revising
        - After sharing my first draft did I consider the feedback and make changes? Why or why not?

The 21st century skills that are deemed to be essential to the future success of youth are precisely the same skills that are fostered through digital learning. Students who sit on the sidelines as *<u>content consumers</u>*—or in other words, those who interact with digital media only in the context of watching videos or using social media sites—will be left behind as they enter higher education and, eventually, the workplace.

When they create digital content (such as blogs, vlogs, zines, vines, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, YouTube channels, Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, digital art, and many more), students are *<u>content producers. By creating digital content, they are</u>* learning to read and write, problem-solve, research, and communicate in a variety of ways. It may appear that the informal use of technology shouldn't be considered a serious learning tool but, other than direct instruction from teachers, technology is arguably the most powerful teaching and learning tool at the present time. Students using technology in a guided formal learning environment will acquire a number of key global and interpersonal skills and competencies, including a comprehensive understanding of intellectual property, opportunities for cultural (expression, and the importance of active citizenship.

6. Editing
    - Did I proofread? Did I check for the best word choice, spelling and grammar? Am I sure the margins, font, spacing, and formatting are correct?
7. Evaluating
    - Did I use a clear writing style that matches my purpose and audience?
    - Are my ideas organized and clear?
    - Did I keep to the point?
    - Did I use other input to support my ideas?
    - Will the reader benefit from my work?

- The role of technology: Increasingly, the ability to use technology is vital for success in school and contemporary life. This requires that students learn to type and use a word processor, use the Internet to collect and analyze the quality of information, navigate computer- and web-based tools, and understand how different writing techniques apply to different media. Integrating technology into writing instruction is vitally important for a student's future.

  Word processing can make it easier for many students to carry out the writing process. For instance, text can be added, moved, deleted, or rewritten easily, encouraging students to move flexibly between components of the writing process. Some software programs help students organize their ideas for writing, provide feedback on what they write, and allow students to publish their writing in a variety of forms and formats.

  With appropriate safeguards and permission, teachers create class blogs for students to post their work online or encourage them to submit their work to online sites that publish student writing. Teachers can advise parents on appropriate sites for learning. Parents are strongly advised to use their judgment, monitor online activities, and select opportunities based on the parent ratings for online content and games.

  Parents can ask their child to consider:
    - Am I a technology producer or consumer?
    - How do I spend my time using technology?
    - What do I learn and does it connect to anything I learn in school?
    - Will those skills help me find and keep a job after I graduate?

A challenge for teachers and parents alike is identifying what constitutes good writing. Good writing in one context is not always good writing in another. In their PASS partnership, parents and teachers should discuss the issue of "good" or successful writing and develop strategies that parents can use at home. Teachers can help students in their classroom when they listen to parent feedback about the challenges, ease, or comfort level that students have when they write outside of school. In that way, they can use strategies to support the student in school.

- The role of assessing writing: In any subject area, good instruction by teachers and meaningful support from parents provide continual monitoring and determine when students are ready to move on to more challenging instruction. When in school, teachers use many methods to assess the needs and skills of their students and modify their instruction to suit those needs. Parents can use the information below to provide teachers with meaningful feedback that they can use in the classroom.

  Parents can consider the following seven general categories when they observe and monitor what their children write:
  1. Overall writing quality - This element is difficult to "judge" but by using the information provided earlier in the section on the writing process, key strengths and weaknesses can be identified. Parent observations and opinions are very important to teachers. When parents communicate with teachers using examples from the writing process, teachers turn the information into data that helps to inform their instruction.
  2. Writing output - The number or words, sentences, ideas, etc and the frequency of writing activities.
  3. Mechanics - Handwriting, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
  4. Organization - The connection between ideas in the text, as well as how well individual ideas are organized or connected to meet a writer's purpose.

5. Sentence structure - Sentence correctness or sentence complexity.
6. Vocabulary - Word choice, appropriate use, simple or complex types of words.
7. Voice - How well the student establishes the mood, style, or individual personality in writing.

Note: *Learning to write can be particularly complicated for students who experience challenges speaking or understanding the English language; students with learning disabilities; those who find it difficult to focus or regulate their behavior when they become frustrated; or students who struggle with related skills such as spelling, handwriting, using a computer, or calculator. If a child experiences challenges, teachers can give parents specific and individualized guidance and resources to support learning progress and achievement of writing, reading, and mathematic goals.*

While the ideas about parents' support for their child's learning in mathematics in this document makes reference to parent and student conversations about class work and homework, parents should also ask their child to explain the quiz and test results that they bring home. Parents who see the challenges and successes that their child experiences in the classroom can better communicate with educators.

MATHEMATICS

Just like they are for reading and writing, the standards for mathematics ask students to spend more time on fewer concepts. Through intensive practice, they will learn to carry out math procedures quickly and accurately. At the same time, they will be challenged to develop a deep understanding of underlying mathematical concepts. Students should work to get the correct answer and they should know *why* an answer is correct.

Supporting students in key concepts of mathematics

High quality academic standards for mathematics require students to spend more time on fewer concepts. Through intensive practice, they will learn to carry out mathematical procedures quickly and accurately. At the same time, they will be challenged to develop a deep understanding of underlying mathematical concepts.

Students should work to find the correct answer *and* they should know why an answer is correct.

Academic Standards for Mathematical Practice

In addition to what students need to learn and do at each grade level, the academic standards for mathematics describe how students should approach their work and what kinds of tasks and challenges that teachers should present to students.

Parents can use this list of the eight student learning standards for math practices to speak with teachers about their child's math performance:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Reason in theoretic and measurable ways.
- Construct practical statements and consider the reasoning of others.
- Make models to explain math problems and answers.
- Use math tools correctly.
- Learn to be precise.
- Look for and make use of organized structure.
- Look for and express patterns.

Parents may also notice that these eight mathematical practices may be reinforced in non-math subject areas when viewed as a list of critical thinking skills versus simply "math rules." Many teachers post the practices and refer to them in non-math classes and parents can do the same thing at home. The more often students see and discuss the math practices, the deeper the understanding that math is more than computation; it is real-world reasoning.

Parents can ask their child important questions at homework time

It is important for parents to observe and monitor their child's progress and their ability to complete homework assignments. Homework assignments that ask students to think in new ways can be confusing or even intimidating. When something comes home that looks unfamiliar, there is no reason to be concerned. Homework is just a way of giving students additional time to think about the things that they are learning — what teachers call *time on task.* Parents and teachers can work together to be sure that each student gets extra support to develop and enrich math skills at their own pace.

How and why

Since students must spend time practicing many problems in the same area to develop speed and accuracy, parents can help by providing the time and encouragement needed to master math facts and operations. Parent support for math does not include doing homework or re-teaching classroom assignments.

Parents can help their child develop a deeper understanding of key math topics.

- Ask their child to explain homework problems and to explain that day's lesson from class.
- Listen to their child talk about math.
- Ask for an explanation about how a problem was solved.
- Make sure their child always checks homework.
- Consider mistakes a part of learning.
- Encourage their children to get into the habit of asking themselves: Does this answer make sense? Is it reasonable? Why or why not?
- Be open to a variety of ways to solve a problem.
- Encourage enrollment in challenging courses.
- Talk about the link between what their child is learning in school and how that knowledge might be used in real life.

Real-world problem solving

Students must be able to apply math in real-world situations. This means knowing what mathematical concept to use to solve a particular problem. Parents can use real world situations such as these to give their children extra practice:

- Find patterns.
- Work on "brain teaser puzzles."
- Ask the child why a math problem is necessary in the real world.
- Ask the child to compare the value of products in a store.
- Say that you expect the child to estimate the tax on a purchase.
- Allow the child to calculate the tip at a restaurant.
- Encourage your child to use computers and calculators, as well as pencil and paper, to solve math problems.
- Ask the child for estimates and precise answers.
- Ask the child to calculate how much gasoline to purchase before driving a specific number of miles.
- Use common situations to discuss the mathematics found in sports statistics and other real-world applications of mathematics.

By teaching and learning the standards, students how useful math can be in a range of real-world situations, know the value of perseverance in solving a problem, and develop confidence in their ability to arrive at the right solution. Parents do not need to know how to re-teach math, but rather how to support their child in learning it.

Parents should share honest ideas about the importance of math with their child

Parents should be aware of what their child may have struggled with, or excelled in, and how that could affect learning this year. This is important because learning expectations in math more than all others, ask students to build on their knowledge year after year.

Parents should work together with educators and students to develop strategies and challenges that meet appropriate math goals. Math provides some of the best opportunities for parents and educators to use PASS partnerships to support student learning.

Additional Support - National PTA Parent Guides to Student Success Based on the Common Core Standards

National PTA has developed guides to help parents understand academic standards and ways to support their child's learning outside of school. The guides include:

- An overview of some key things students will learn in English/Literacy and Math in Kindergarten through High School.
- Consistent expectations for what students should be learning at each grade level in order to be prepared for college and career.
- Ideas for activities to help students learn at home.
- Methods for helping parents build stronger relationships with their child's teacher.
- Topics for partnership discussions about academic progress.
- Tips for planning for college and career (high school only).

The links below are provided for the convenience of parents and teachers engaged in PASS partnerships. The content is solely that of the National PTA and does not necessarily reflect the position of the New Jersey Department of Education. Parents and educators are strongly encouraged to seek, analyze, and use the most appropriate resources that meet the needs of their individual education community.

National PTA Parent Guides

- Parents' Guide to Success Booklet http://www.pta.org/files/Common%20Core%20State%20Standards%20Resources/2013%20Guide%20Bundle_082213.pdf
- Parents' Guides by Student's Grade Level http://www.pta.org/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2909