

# Parents Matter



## Parent engagement means

- *Making learning an important part of a child's day*
- *Supporting student learning at home and at school*
- *Participating in the life of the classroom, school and community*

### How parent engagement is building student success

When parents are involved in their children's education, everyone benefits – students, parents, teachers, schools and communities. Great schools can become even better places to teach and learn, and student achievement often improves.

What is parent engagement? Why is it important? What are the most effective ways for parents to get involved at home and at school? How can educators benefit from parent engagement and support? This material answers the questions most often asked about parent engagement.

The ministry website has a wide variety of materials for parents of preschool, elementary and secondary students. Learn about full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds at [ontario.ca/kindergarten](http://ontario.ca/kindergarten)

#### Parents of elementary students

Find tips on helping your child with reading, writing and math, as well as tips on homework, talking to teachers and more. Tips are available in multiple languages at [ontario.ca/abc123](http://ontario.ca/abc123)

#### Parents of secondary school students

Ontario schools are offering expanded programs to help meet students' individual learning styles and interests, which will better prepare them for graduation and beyond. Find out more about the Student Success program at [ontario.ca/studentsuccess](http://ontario.ca/studentsuccess)

### Learn more about parent engagement in Ontario schools

Visit [ontario.ca/EDUparents](http://ontario.ca/EDUparents) often to stay updated with new information and resources for parents, educators and community members. You will also learn about these and other parent engagement initiatives:

**Parents Reaching Out Grants for School Councils:** support parents in identifying barriers to parent engagement in their own school community, and finding local solutions to help more parents get involved. These barriers may include: newness to Ontario's education system, geography, language or poverty.

**Parents Reaching Out Grants for Regional / Provincial Projects:** support initiatives that will enhance parent engagement in public education in support of student achievement and well-being in a region of the province or at the provincial level. These grants help create a welcoming climate in schools and school boards and provide parents with opportunities to build their knowledge and skills in support of student success.

**Parent Engagement Office:** builds awareness of the positive results of a partnership between parents and schools and shared high expectations for our children and youth, and leads the development of tools and resources to support parent involvement in their children's learning.

***At home, at school and in the community...parents matter!***

[ontario.ca/EDUparents](http://ontario.ca/EDUparents)



# Parent engagement is building student success

## Benefits for Parents and Students

As a parent, you have a strong influence on your children's attitudes toward school learning and future success. When you are involved in your children's learning – from kindergarten to high school – you are giving them an important head start in school and in life. How do students and parents benefit?

- Improved student achievement
- More positive attitudes about school
- More success with homework
- Higher rates of high school graduation
- More consistent school attendance
- Fewer behavioural problems
- Opportunities for parents to become involved in the life of the school and the community
- A brighter future for students at school and later in life.

## Tips for parents

An engaged parent is an interested parent. Here are just a few of the ways you can become more involved in your children's education from the early years to Grade 12.

- **Demonstrate interest:** ask what happened at school today and create an ongoing dialogue. This helps set the stage for joint student-parent decision making as your children get older.

- **Create a place for studying:** encourage a regular homework time with limited distractions. Set appropriate times for phone calls and leisure time on computers and electronic games.
- **Help with homework:** talk to the teacher to learn more about how you can help your children outside of school. For older students, set priorities for after-school activities, job and chore hours, homework and leisure time.
- **Attend parent-teacher conferences:** develop a plan with the teacher on how to best support your children's learning needs.
- **Participate:** get involved in any way that is comfortable – whether it's parent information nights, volunteer activities, arts and sporting events or school council.
- **Stay informed:** find out what is happening in the classroom, the school and the school community.

*Not all of these tips will suit every parent. Get involved in a way that's right for you.*

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## Child Care in Ontario

### Finding the right child care for your family

Child care should be an enriching and satisfying experience for both you and your child. As a parent, you want to be confident that your child is in a healthy, safe and happy environment. You also want a child care program that meets your child's needs as he or she grows and learns.

It is important to be informed about your child care options. You may choose licensed child care offered through:

- a program at a licensed child care centre
- a home-based child care provider who is contracted by a licensed private-home day care agency

or you may choose:

- informal (unlicensed) child care.

There are a number of factors to consider when reviewing child care options, including: location; hours of operation; ages of children served; activities offered; staff training; availability and cost. It may take time to find the best child care option for your child. It is important to start looking into your options early.

### What is licensed child care?

In Ontario, a licence to operate a child care program is required if care is provided for more than five children under the age of 10. The ministry licenses child care centres and private-home day care agencies. Agencies contract with individual home-based child care providers who offer child care out of their own home. The agencies

screen, approve and monitor the home-based child care providers.

Licensed child care centres and private-home day care agencies must meet and maintain specific provincial standards that provide for the health, safety and developmental needs of children.

At least once a year, Ministry of Education staff conduct inspections of all licensed child care centres and private-home day care agencies, including a number of home-based providers in order to:

- make sure that provincial standards are being met
- issue and renew licences
- monitor operators who are having difficulty meeting licensing standards.

Ministry staff will also investigate complaints about licensed child care programs.

Licensing reports for all licensed child care centres and private-home day care agencies are available on Ontario's Licensed Child Care website at [ontario.ca/licensedchildcare](http://ontario.ca/licensedchildcare)



### What is informal (unlicensed) child care?

In Ontario, individuals may look after five or fewer children under 10 years of age without a licence, in addition to their own children, if in their own home. This applies regardless of the number of adults present at the location.

These child care arrangements are informal (unlicensed) and are made between the parents and the caregiver. Parents may choose informal child care arrangements for a number of reasons. For example, parents may have longstanding arrangements in their communities with neighbours and/or family friends.

Parents should be aware that in Ontario informal caregivers are not regulated. This means they are neither licensed nor inspected. As a result, they *are not* required to meet provincial standards. It is up to parents to research, choose and monitor their child care arrangements.





## What to do if you have concerns about your child's care

You should always feel confident that your child is in a healthy, safe and happy environment.

If you have concerns about your child's care, your first step should always be to talk to the staff or your caregiver.

## When to call the Ministry of Education

Staff at the Ministry of Education follow up on complaints about licensed child care programs, as well as complaints about a person who may be providing care to more than five children under 10 years of age, without a licence.

If you have concerns, please contact your local Ministry of Education - Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing regional office. To locate the regional office in your area, please visit [www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/offices.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/offices.html) or call 1-800-387-5514.

## Help with paying for child care

You may qualify for a child care fee subsidy to help you pay for licensed child care. Your municipal child care service system manager or First Nations band administrator can provide you with more information. For a list of system managers, visit [ontario.ca/childcare](http://ontario.ca/childcare) and click on "Paying for Child Care."

## Modernizing Ontario's child care system

On January 23, 2013, the government released the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework, which sets out a vision, guiding principles and strategic direction for early years programs and services for children age 0-6 and their families. The framework identifies the following priority areas for government action:

- continue with the implementation of full-day kindergarten by September 2014;

- create an effective approach to implementing Best Start Child and Family Centres by September 2014;
- improve the delivery of speech and language services;
- stabilize and transform the child care sector.

In June 2012, the government released the discussion paper, *Modernizing Child Care in Ontario: Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together*, to seek input on how to strengthen and transform the child care sector. Building on the feedback received, the government remains committed to working with partners to modernize the child care sector and provide children and families with access to safe, reliable, and high quality child care services. Find the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework and more information on how Ontario is modernizing child care, at [ontario.ca/childcare](http://ontario.ca/childcare)

## More information:

Visit [ontario.ca/childcare](http://ontario.ca/childcare) for more information on finding child care and how to prepare your child. Find licensed child care near you through [ontario.ca/licensedchildcare](http://ontario.ca/licensedchildcare)

Find your closest Ministry of Education – Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Regional Office. **1-800-387-5514** (TTY: **1-800-263-2892**) or [www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/offices.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/offices.html)

To find out more about other supports and resources for families with young children, such as **Parenting and Family Literacy Centres** and **Ontario Early Years Centres**, visit: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/choices.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/choices.html)

