

# PARENT CONNECT

*The Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC), federally funded under Title V of No Child Left Behind, is the official Parent Information Technical Assistance Center for the state of Kansas. KPIRC promotes meaningful parent involvement at all levels of education and provides information and resources to help parents, educators and other organizations promote the educational success of every Kansas child.*

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### Upcoming Events:

Parent Leadership Conference  
October 2 - 3, 2009

*This conference is a free conference to all parents. For more information please visit [www.kpirc.org](http://www.kpirc.org) or call 1-866-711-6711.*

## A Note from the Director



Welcome to the first issue of *Parent Connect*! The KS Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC) is excited to produce a new quarterly newsletter written just for families. Our desire is to connect with families to encourage and support them as they support their children’s learning, thus the title of the newsletter, *Parent Connect*. We desire

to provide information that equips families as they seek to engage in their children’s learning from birth to grade 12, as well as, information on parent rights, public school choice, supplemental educational services and state accountability systems. We will also provide practical educational tips and tools for families to further promote family involvement.

This first issue of *Parent Connect* focuses on getting your children ready to go Back to School! Whether you are sad to see summer end or are ready for school to get started, this issue offers some ideas to help you transition into the 2009-10 school year and keep it running smoothly. We also begin with reminding you of the value of family engagement. If you weren’t aware of how important your participation in your child’s learning is, you will be, after reading this article! As always, please contact us if you desire more information on family involvement in education. Please visit our new website at [www.kpirc.org](http://www.kpirc.org) for more information or resources. We hope you enjoy the *Parent Connect*!

P.S. Please note our upcoming Parent Leadership Conference in the blue panel. We’d like to see you there.

Jane Groff  
KPIRC Director

*If you would like to receive an electronic copy of our newsletter please email your information to: [nschweda@kpirc.org](mailto:nschweda@kpirc.org)*

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# Ready, Set, Back to School!

School Family ([www.schoolfamily.com](http://www.schoolfamily.com)) offers some great tips for getting ready for the new school year. Follow these guidelines to make sure you've covered all of your bases!

## Get Organized

### *Visit the pediatrician*

Find out whether your child needs immunizations or a physical exam to participate in school activities. Make an appointment with a pediatrician, if necessary.

### *Plan Transportation and child care*

Arrange a carpool and/or after-school care for your child. Even if you don't plan to carpool, gather contact information for neighbors and other parents who may be able to help when needed.

### *Mark school events on the calendar*

Create a master family schedule and add each person's appointments and activities. If you have children at more than one school, plan ahead to make sure a parent is available to attend each open house and family night.

### *Stock up on school supplies*

Besides buying the supplies on the list provided by your child's teacher, get extras of items your child is likely to misplace such as glue sticks or scissors. Think about the items your child may need while doing homework and keep them in a central location.

## Talk it Over

### *Review the rules*

Get a copy of the school's guidelines and go over them with your child. Make sure he understands all the rules he'll be expected to follow.

### *Check in regularly*

Ask your child how she feels about starting school. If she's nervous about making new friends, consider arranging a play date with classmates. Talk over any issues she's concerned about such as bullies or cliques.

### *Evaluate extracurricular activities*

Talk with your child about extracurricular activities. Select fun activities that teach new skills, but avoid over scheduling your family or your child. Taking too many activities can cause anxiety and distract children from schoolwork.

## Meet Teachers and Staff

### *Visit the school before classes start*

Call the school to arrange a time for you and your child to meet his new teacher. Take your child on a tour of the school so he knows how to find his classrooms, his locker and the cafeteria.

### *Talk with the teacher*

Find out whether the teacher prefers to communicate by phone, e-mail, or written notes. Let the teacher know about things in your child's life that may affect her performance, such as health problems, a recent move, or family changes. You might also mention your child's hobbies or special interests.

### *Learn about school resources*

Find out which professionals the school has on staff and what services they provide. Ask about the best way to get in touch with the principal, school counselor, or other staff members you may need to contact.

### *Make contact with the parent group*

The PTO or PTA will have lots of information about the school, including nuances and tips that aren't written down anywhere else.

## Review the routine

### *Discuss travel routes*

Make sure your child knows how to get to and from school safely. If your child walks or rides a bike to school, review the route with her until she knows it. If she rides a bus, remind her where the bus stops and where to get on the bus after school. No matter how your child gets to school, remind her of safety issues she is likely to face, such as how to cross the street.

### *Go over after-school plans*

Remind your child where he will go after school, whether it's home, to an extracurricular activity, or to an after-school program.

## Family Involvement is Important

When parents and families get personally involved in education, their children do better in school and grow up to be more successful in life.

Sounds like common sense, doesn't it?

Yet parental involvement is one of the most overlooked aspects of American education today. The fact is, many parents don't realize how important it is to get involved in their children's learning. As one dad said when he began to read to his daughter every day and discovered that it improved her learning, "I never realized how much it would mean to her to hear me read." Other parents would like to be involved, but have trouble finding the time.

All parents and family members should try to find the time and make the effort because research shows that when families get involved, their children:

- Get better grades and test scores;
- Graduate from high school at higher rates;
- Are more likely to go on to higher education; and
- Are better behaved and have more positive attitudes.

Family involvement is also one of the best investments a family can make. Students who graduate from high school earn, on average, \$200,000 more in their lifetime than students who drop out. A college graduate makes almost \$1 million more!

Most important, ALL parents and families can enjoy these benefits. It doesn't matter how much money you have. It doesn't matter how much formal education you've had yourself or how well you did in school. And family involvement works for children at all grade levels.

### What is "Family Involvement in Education"?

Family involvement includes a lot of different types of activities. Some parents and families have time to get involved in many ways; others may only have time for one or two activities. Whatever your level of involvement, remember: if you get involved and stay involved, you can make a world of difference.

### "Family Involvement in Education" can mean:

- Reading a bedtime story to your preschool child
- Checking homework every night
- Getting involved in PTA
- Discussing your child's progress with teachers
- Voting in school board elections
- Helping your school to set challenging academic standard

- Limiting TV viewing to no more than two hours on school nights
- Getting personally involved in governing your school
- Becoming an advocate for better education in your community and state
- Insisting on high standards of behavior for children

Or, family involvement can be as simple as asking your child, "How was school today?" But ask every day. That will send them the clear message that their schoolwork is important to you and you expect them to learn.

Many children and parents are yearning for this kind of togetherness these days. Among students aged 10 to 13, for example, 72 percent say they would like to talk to their parents more about their homework. Forty percent of parents across the country believe that they are not devoting enough time to their children's education. And teachers say that increasing parental involvement in education should be the number one priority for public education in the next few years.

### Steps You Can Take to Improve Your Child's Education

#### Read together

Children who read at home with their parents perform better in school. Show your kids how much you value reading by keeping good books, magazines, and newspapers in the house. Let them see you read. Take them on trips to the library and encourage them to get library cards. Let children read to you, and talk about the books. What was the book about? Why did a character act that way? What will he or she do next?

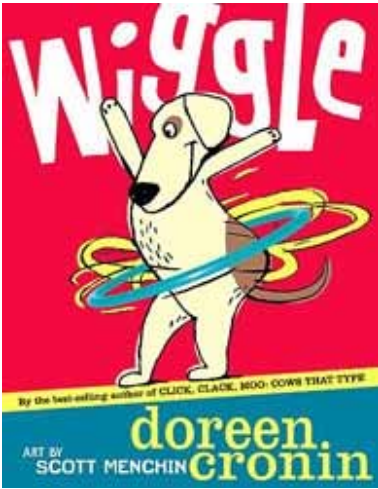
#### Use TV wisely

Academic achievement drops sharply for children who watch more than ten hours of television a week, or an average or more than two hours a day. Parents can limit the amount of viewing and help children select educational programs. Parents can also watch and discuss shows with their kids. This will help children understand how stories are structured.

#### Establish a daily family routine with scheduled homework time

Studies show that successful students have parents who create and maintain family routines. Make sure your child goes to school every day. Establish a regular time for homework each afternoon or evening, set aside a quiet, well lit place, and encourage children to study.

*This information was provided by the U.S. Department of Education.*



Do you **wiggle** when you read?

When you read with Preschoolers, do they wiggle in their seats?

The Kansas Reads to Preschoolers committee and the State Library staff working with the statewide one-book/one-state reading project for the very

young certainly hope so! During November 15-21, 2009, the Kansas Center for the Book at the State Library of Kansas will present the 2009 Kansas Reads to Preschoolers...About Fitness!, featuring Wiggle by Doreen Cronin in locations all across the state.

Plans are being laid for promotion leading up to and events during the Preschooler week. This year's theme is fitness, and a select committee of professionals in a variety of backgrounds and all parts of Kansas

narrowed a field of about three dozen titles down to four, which were submitted last spring to State Librarian Christie Brandau. From these four, Wiggle was selected. Work on 2009 Kansas Reads to Preschoolers has progressed since then.

Wiggle was written by New York author Doreen Cronin and illustrated by Scott Menchin. It was published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers in 2005. Since then, Cronin, Menchin and their publisher have produced a companion book, Bounce, and a new title in the same vein, Stretch, is expected in September 2009. All three books should work very well together in events with children ages 2-4.

Watch for the 2009 Kansas Reads to Preschoolers web page at [www.kcfb.info](http://www.kcfb.info) coming August 1. For more information or suggestions how you can participate, call 1-800-432-3919 or email [kcfb@kslib.info](mailto:kcfb@kslib.info). Join the Kansas Center for the Book as Kansans read Wiggle to preschoolers!

State Library of Kansas

## Parent/Child Activity

Just a few positive words a day can help build your child's confidence! Find the words listed below.

sponsored by:  **WORD SEARCH**

Instructions  
Find the hidden words listed below. Words are spelled forward and backward. Use your mouse to highlight the words in the word field.

O	G	I	V	E	M	E	F	I	V	E	R	G	G	W
I	B	R	Z	N	V	P	T	M	V	X	Q	U	R	M
O	U	T	E	R	R	I	F	I	C	S	G	W	E	I
I	U	P	Y	P	A	H	S	I	S	U	L	P	A	A
A	Q	T	O	Q	U	W	T	S	Y	O	Y	M	T	N
F	X	I	S	V	P	S	H	O	E	Y	P	X	J	I
S	N	O	I	T	A	L	U	T	A	R	G	N	O	C
J	A	D	I	T	A	R	O	P	O	O	P	E	B	E
W	P	N	N	G	O	N	B	U	C	F	M	M	U	W
G	D	A	T	C	M	P	D	T	D	D	K	O	I	O
R	F	C	K	C	M	O	R	I	G	O	F	S	Y	R
O	V	U	R	Z	F	L	Q	P	N	O	E	E	U	K
O	G	O	T	Y	A	W	P	E	N	G	Z	W	L	U
V	Y	Y	O	C	O	R	R	E	C	T	W	A	T	M
Y	O	U	J	W	T	N	M	K	L	K	U	Q	V	E

**Word List**

Wow	Groovy	Give me five
Terrific	Super	A plus
Fantastic	Correct	Keep it up
Outstanding	Way to go	Good for you
Impressive	You can do it	You rock
Bravo	Great job	I am proud of you
Awesome	Nice work	Congratulations

## 10 Questions To Ask Your Child About His/Her Day at School

Get a sense of your child's life at school by asking questions that elicit more than a one-word response. The trick is to ask about things that are specific, but still open ended. Let your child describe her world. It's also great to start the conversation with an anecdote from your own day. Try one of these conversation starters:

1. Tell me about the best part of your day.
2. What was the hardest thing you had to do today?
3. Did any of your classmates do anything funny?
4. Tell me about what you read in class.
5. Who did you play with today? What did you play?
6. Do you think math (or any subject) is too easy or too hard?
7. What's the biggest difference between this year and last year?
8. What rules are different at school than our rules at home?
9. Who did you sit with at lunch?
10. Can you show me something you learned (or did) today?

from Scholastic Parents ([www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com))