

10 Ways Parents Can Partner With Teachers

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At LearningRx, we're big fans of teachers. In fact, we've had teachers serve on our executive board and [scientific advisory board](#), work as personal brain trainers, and even purchase [LearningRx franchises](#). (Our founder, Dr. Ken Gibson, actually [started his own preschool](#)!) We also offer a [FREE online continuing education course](#) from the Professional Learning Board and regular recognitions for teachers, like the [Crystal Apple Award](#).

In addition, because almost all of us are parents, we're constantly creating articles to help parents and teachers better communicate (check out our piece on "[Red Flag Phrases for Parent-Teacher Conferences](#)") and work together (see "[Individualized Education Programs \(IEPs\): The Basics](#)"), for everyone's benefit.

There's no doubt that teachers and parents can make an incredibly strong pairing when everyone works toward realistic goals with mutual respect. So we've gathered some ideas from teachers and our staff mommies and are sharing their tips on some of the best ways make teachers feel supported. If you've got other ideas, please share them in the comments below!

1. Offer to help at home. Not everyone can volunteer in the classroom. Parents work, stay home with younger children, take care of sick or elderly family members, or live too far away to make multiple trips to school. But many teachers have things that can be done at home instead. "I have sorted and stapled piles of papers, cut out materials, done online research and sorted art materials into plastic baggies for a craft project," says one mother of two. "I was surprised at how much I could help from home, and found it to be incredibly relaxing! There's just something about cutting colored construction paper that takes you back to simpler times." If you can spare even an hour a week, ask your child's teachers what you can do at home to help with materials for the classroom.

2. Share good deals. Even if you can't afford to buy a ton of extra school supplies for the classroom, you can share extra-special deals that you run across. "I make a list of businesses that are offering freebies during [Teacher Appreciation Week](#) and give them to my kids' teachers," says one mom. "It doesn't cost me anything and they love knowing about places like [Chipotle](#) and [Chick-fil-A](#) that offer freebies or BOGO deals." Sites like [Donors Choose](#) and [Fund My Classroom](#) let teachers in high-needs communities post requests for financial assistance for specific projects, equipment, field trips and events. "I couldn't always afford to donate a lot of money, but I would donate \$25 and then use a promo code I'd find online to get a matching the donation from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), so the teacher would instead get \$50 toward her project," says another mom. "Then I'd share the code with the teacher and other parents, so any parent in the class who donated funds could double their money."

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3. Volunteer as a chaperone. Most schools have at least one outing, a field day or school dance that needs chaperones. If you plan in advance, you should be able to help out at least once. “We did a field trip to [Rock Ledge Ranch](#), a living-history farm and museum which is spread out over 24 acres,” one fourth-grade teacher recalls. “We hardly had any parent volunteers, so we had to watch close to 20 kids each. It was a very long day. They lost our lunches, one of the kids got sick and, of course, no one had to go to the bathroom at the same time.” Even if you can only go for part of the day, offer to help out at off-campus events. Every set of chaperone eyes helps keep things under control and more enjoyable for everyone.

4. Offer your services. You don’t have to wait for career day to share your professional talents. If you’re a copywriter, offer to help with the class newsletter. Web designer? Offer to create a free page for the teacher to keep parents updated on everything. Dietician? Ask if the teacher would like you to give a short talk on nutrition during health class. Ask your spouse if they’d be willing to offer their time. “I’m an electric lineman, so I volunteered to do a presentation on electricity for my son’s first-grade class,” says one dad. “I was so worried it would be too boring for young kids, but they loved it! The school invited me back the following year.”

5. Keep your kids’ learning skills strong. Cognitive skills are the core skills our brains use to think, read, learn, remember, reason and pay attention. When even one of these skills is weak, learning can be a real struggle and even the best teacher can’t make new information “stick.” Enrolling your child in one-on-one brain training to target weak brain skills can create lasting improvements in your child’s ability to learn anything, which makes your teacher’s job easier and more rewarding. “When a child, teen or adult comes to [LearningRx](#), we administer a [cognitive skills assessment](#),” says mother of four and LearningRx Vice President of Research & Development Tanya Mitchell. “The test takes about an hour and allows us to identify which cognitive skills are weak. Once we know which skills to target, we can create a [customized program](#) for the student that uses intense but fun training to work on those brain skills that need the most improvement. We’ve had program graduates tell us that their teachers couldn’t believe [the results](#), and what strong, confident learners their students became thanks to personal brain training.”

6. Head up a party. Teachers sometimes throw parties for holidays, big achievements or the end of a semester. In addition to needing help providing food and drinks, it’s nice for teachers to have a party organizer—someone that coordinates who will bring plates, drinks, food and do set up and clean up. You can also organize a teacher appreciation week. “At our school, the parents host a week-long teacher appreciation luncheon,” says one elementary school teacher. “Each grade provides the meal for a day and they do themes. So first-grade parents provide a buffet of Mexican on Monday, second-grade parents provide a soup and salad day on Tuesday, third-grade parents provide Italian food on Wednesday, and so on. It makes us feel really appreciated and we all agree that it’s one of our favorite weeks of the schoolyear.”

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7. Donate supplies. [Time magazine reports](#) that teachers spent, on average, \$500 of their own money on classroom supplies. If you have contacts at stores or large companies, ask if they can donate supplies. (Some schools will even supply you with their tax ID number in order for the company to get a write-off.) You can also check yard sales and thrift shops to pick up cheap deals, or ask the teacher to create a list of classroom “needs” and “wants” that you can offer to copy and share with other parents.

8. Review your kids’ papers nightly. Your kids’ teachers don’t send home papers to waste trees. Read their notes, sign and return papers promptly, and mark your calendar for important dates. Teachers need to focus their attention on educating kids, not making calls to parents who ignore requests for permission form signatures or parent-teacher meetings. “Sometimes, the classes get rewarded for getting all their forms in by a certain day,” explains one teacher. “If there are a couple stragglers who don’t turn in their signed papers, the whole class loses out.”

9. Show your appreciation. A tiny box of chocolates, a tall mochaccino, a \$5 [Starbucks](#) gift card for the drive home—it’s the little things (accompanied by a note of appreciation) that show you care and value your teachers. “We had one mom who would bring us little gifts throughout the year,” says one assistant teacher. “A bottle of our favorite [Snapple](#) peach iced tea, some homemade soup or a container of raspberries with a nice note of encouragement. We get quite a few gifts around the holidays, but this mom would just bring us little tokens of appreciation randomly. She was so thoughtful that we actually gave HER flowers on the last day of school!” All of the teachers we spoke to said that gifts aren’t necessary, but even a nice note (from the child or parent) can make their day.

10. Keep teachers in the loop. If your cat died, your ex is getting remarried or your child is having a hard time coping with a new school, let the teachers know. In addition to being able to involve a school counselor, if needed, it allows teachers to consider the role of [situational sadness](#), anger or anxiety on the child’s performance. “When my husband deployed, I spoke to my daughter’s teacher to fill her in,” says the mother of an 8-year-old. “When my husband came back on his two-week leave, the teacher gave my daughter a much lighter homework load in order to maximize the time she could spend with her father.”

If you’re not sure how you can best support your teachers, just ask! Also, be sure to check out [“6 Things Teachers Wish You Would Do”](#) to get direct insight from surveyed teachers.

About LearningRx

LearningRx, headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colorado, is the largest one-on-one brain training organization in the world. With 80 Centers in the U.S., and locations in 40 countries around the globe, LearningRx has helped more than 95,000 individuals and families sharpen their cognitive skills to help them think faster, learn easier, and perform better. Their on-site programs partner every client with a personal brain trainer to keep clients engaged, accountable, and on-task—a key advantage over online-only brain exercises. Their pioneering methods have been used in clinical settings for 35 years and have been verified as beneficial in peer-reviewed research papers and journals. To learn more about LearningRx [research results](#), [programs](#), and their [9.6 out of 10 client satisfaction rating](#) visit <http://www.learningrx.com/>.

