

BACK-TO-SCHOOL GUIDE

FOR SOUTH CAROLINA PARENTS AND FAMILIES
2007-2008



Dear South Carolina Families:

The warm, sunny days of summer remain but it's time to start thinking about the beginning of a new school year. The weeks leading up to the start of school involve a great deal of activities like stocking up on all of the necessary school supplies. But once your child goes to school prepared, your job has only just begun.

Involvement in your child's education throughout the school year ensures that your child is getting the best education possible. When parents and families take an active role in the education of their children, students are more likely to do better in school. They enjoy school and learn more, which adds to their confidence in their abilities. You, too, will benefit by helping your children become the best they can be!

As Richard W. Riley, former South Carolina Governor and U.S. Secretary of Education, has said, "the American family is the rock on which a solid education can be built. I have seen examples all over this nation where two-parent families, single parents, stepparents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles are providing strong family support for their children to learn. If families teach the love of learning, it can make all the difference in the world to their children."

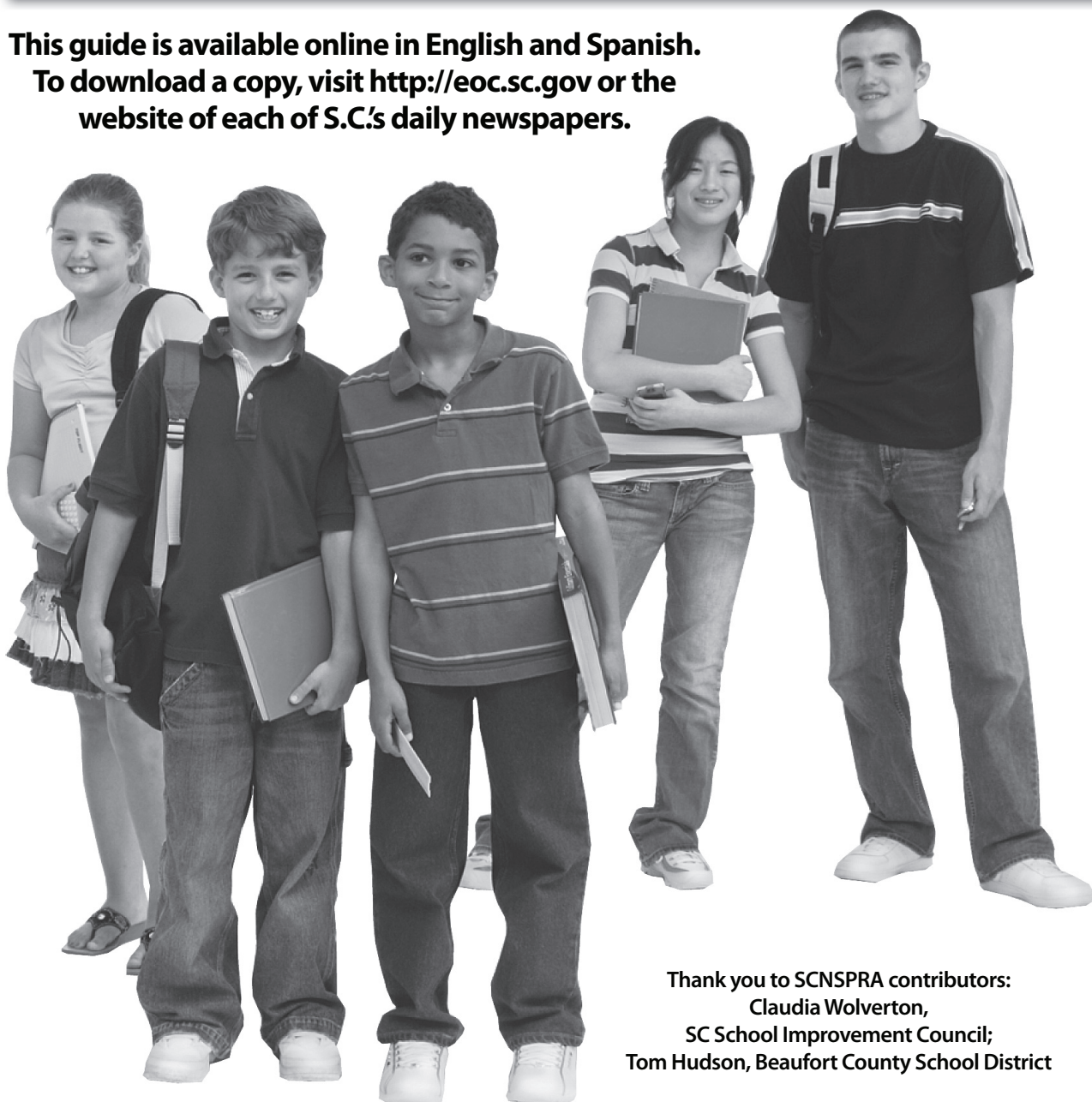
Ensuring that each of our children receives a quality education is a team effort. The most important members of the team are educators and parents. Together, educators and parents can support our children through life's challenges and celebrate their successes.

This guide is offered to provide parents and families tools and resources to support their children in the upcoming school year. Being a partner in your child's education means making your home a good place to learn and study, getting to know your child's teachers and whenever possible, being involved in school activities.

We hope you find this guide useful this school year. There is a Parent Homework section located in the centerspread. Fill this section out and keep it handy throughout the school year. Your child's school and district office are more than willing to address any questions you have as well. Best wishes for a successful year!

- SC Education Oversight Committee
- SC Commission for Minority Affairs
- New Carolina - SC's Council on Competitiveness
- Doctor's Care
- SC Department of Education
- SC Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association
- Total Comfort
- SC Press Association

**This guide is available online in English and Spanish.
To download a copy, visit <http://eoc.sc.gov> or the
website of each of S.C.'s daily newspapers.**



**Thank you to SCNSPRA contributors:
Claudia Wolverton,
SC School Improvement Council;
Tom Hudson, Beaufort County School District**

Parent Responsibilities

The following expectations are outlined in the South Carolina law called the "Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act."

Parent involvement influences student learning and academic performance; therefore, parents are expected to:

- uphold high expectations for academic achievement;
- expect and communicate expectations for success;
- recognize that parental involvement in middle and high school is equally as critical as in elementary school;
- ensure attendance and punctuality;
- attend parent teacher conferences;
- monitor and check homework;
- communicate with the school and teachers;
- build partnerships with teachers to promote successful school experiences;
- attend, when possible, school events;
- model desirable behaviors;
- use encouraging words;
- stimulate thought and curiosity; and
- show support for school expectations and efforts to increase student learning.

SECTION 59 28 180. SC Code of Laws, 1976, as amended.

Importance of strong parents and strong home-school partnerships

The facts are in! Schools with strong parent involvement produce students who perform better. Years of research conclude that parent involvement has a measurable positive effect on student achievement, regardless of students' socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or their parents' education level.

Communication is an essential ingredient in dealing with all children – from preschoolers

to high schoolers. Spend time with your child, ask them questions, encourage talk, and listen and learn from them.

Teachers often say they don't receive information about problems at home. On the flip side, parents say that they don't know what their child's school and teachers expect from their children -- or them as parents. Communication is key! It is essential that parents

and teachers are cooperatively focused on the success of students. Active parental involvement improves student morale, attitudes and academic achievement. By taking an active role, parents reduce their child's risk of failure academically and reduce the chances of dropping out before graduation. When parents play a more active role, student academic success increases.



Recommended Questions to Ask at Parent-Teacher Conferences

Talk to your child's teachers regularly. Parents and teachers are partners in seeing to it that children succeed throughout their school careers. Parent-teacher conferences are excellent opportunities for face-to-face communication with your child's teacher. Make the most of these meetings by arriving with a list of questions. Keep an open mind as you listen to comments and constructive criticism. Share your ideas but remember that the conversation is focused on one person: your child. Here are some suggested questions:

- How has my child performed in your class so far this year?
- In what areas does my child need some extra support?

- What skills and knowledge should my child be learning in your class?
- Will my child be expected to complete any major projects or term papers this year?
- What is the grading policy for the class?
- What things can I do at home to support my child's learning?
- How much time should my child spend on homework each night?
- What resources (books, etc.) would help my child do his work better?
- Are there ways I can be of help to you in the classroom?
- How can I best communicate with you – by written note, email or phone?

How Parents Can Support School Success at Home

Parents and other family members are children's first teachers. We teach our children that the grass is green and that the sky is blue – and the list goes on and on! Life is full of teachable moments. Once a child starts school, families should work with teachers and school staff to help their child reach their fullest potential. Family support for educational achievement is necessary from pre-kindergarten to high school graduation.

How Parents Can Support School Success at School

- Visit your child's classroom at least once a year.
- Attend school events.
- Become involved in the School Improvement Council and parent organizations like PTA, pto and school booster clubs.
- Communicate regularly with your child's teacher by e-mail, telephone, or writing. Take the first step!

Do you ever wonder what your child should be learning in school?

The Education Oversight Committee, in conjunction with the State Department of Education, publishes guides for parents and families on the SC Academic Standards. The guides provide information about the academic standards for mathematics, English Language Arts, science, and social studies for grades K-12.

The guides not only help you become familiar

with what your child is learning in school, they include activities to reinforce and support your child's learning, select book titles for additional reading, and website addresses for extended learning.

To access the publications, available by grade level in English and Spanish, go to <http://eoc.sc.gov> (click the link "Information for Families").

Practice the Three Rs At Home Each Day

Read! Read! Read!

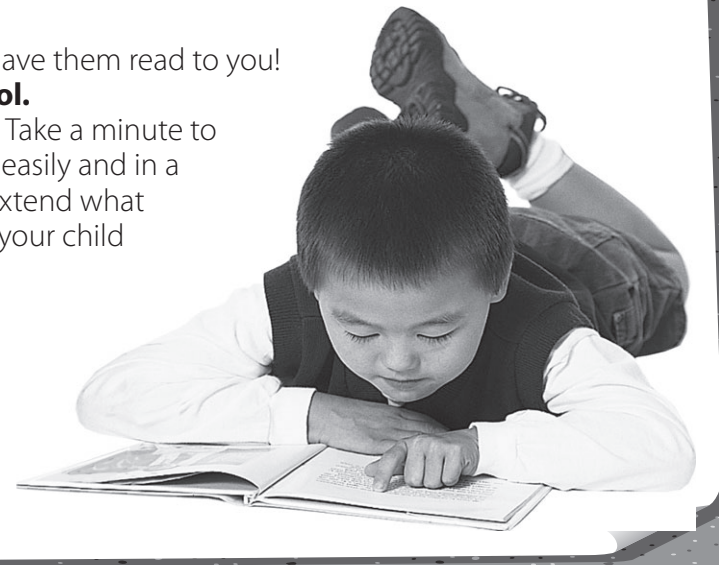
Read with your child every day and have them read to you!

Reinforce what is learned in school.

Parents and families are busy people. Take a minute to ask yourself: "What can I do at home, easily and in a few minutes a day, to reinforce and extend what the school is doing?" For starters, ask your child about school each day.

Reach for the stars!!

Set high expectations for academic performance and behavior. Let your child know that you believe he or she CAN succeed and be generous with sincere praise and pride in your child's accomplishments.



The School Year at a Glance

Individual school districts set dates for winter/spring breaks, professional development work days, testing, and report cards. Make sure you are familiar with those dates for the school district your child attends.



Parent Homework

To start the school year off on the right track, make sure you have this important information.

Regular communication with your child's school will keep you informed and can help you support your child's learning.

My child's school:

The school address:

The main office phone number:

The school's website:

The principal:

The principal's phone number:

The principal's e-mail address:

The best way of contacting the principal:

My child's teachers:

• Name:

Phone number:

E-mail address:

• Name:

Phone number:

E-mail address:

• Name:

Phone number:

E-mail address:

My child's guidance counselor:

Name:

Phone number:

E-mail address:

The School Resource Officer at my child's school:

Contact information:

District Office Number:

District Office website:

Transportation contact:

Other Names and Contacts:

• Name:

Contact:

• Name:

Contact:

• Name:

Contact:

Additional Resources to Support School Success

Tips for Helping Your Child Succeed in School

(English): <http://eoc.sc.gov>

(click the link "Information for Families").

(Spanish): <http://eoc.sc.gov>

(click the link "Information for Families").

The National Parenting Center:

www.tnpc.com

National PTA:

www.pta.org/parent_resources.html

SC PTA: www.scpta.org

New Carolina Parent

Involvement Network:

www.newcarolina.org/parents-in-education

AARP Resources for

Grandparents Raising Children:

www.giclocalsupport.org/pages/gic_db_home.cfm

Resources for Families with Children with Disabilities

Family Connections:

www.familyconnectionssc.org

State Dept. of Education Office of

Exceptional Children: www.ed.sc.gov

Report Card Resources:

2006 School and District Report

Cards: <http://ed.sc.gov/topics/researchandstats/schoolreportcard/>

Resources to Understand the School

and District Report Cards: <http://eoc.sc.gov>

(click the link "Information for Families").

Out-of-School Time Resources

SC Afterschool Alliance: 803-254-5454,
www.scafterschool.com

Parents and Adults Inspiring Reading

Success: 803-734-6164,

www.SCPAIRS.org

Tips for Making the Newspapers a Fun Learning Tool



Newspapers are a great way to keep informed on current events and things that interest you. They can also be an excellent learning tool for parents and children during the school year. Here are some activities for parents and families to try:

- Play “Stump the Grown-up.”

Have your child search the newspaper for new words they do not know and they think you don’t know either. If they stump you, they get a point or a prize. Ask your child to define the word and use it in a sentence.

- Go on a newspaper scavenger hunt. Ask your

child to find a list of items (sports teams named for an animal, a comic featuring a child, ads offering “buy one get one free” item, any number bigger than 1,000). Time the hunt and award points or prizes.

- Encourage your child to keep a “clipping file” of interesting stories he or she reads. The next time your child is stuck for a topic or an idea for a project, he or she can go back to the clips.

- Allow free reading time. Whenever possible, allow your child the opportunity to read the newspaper for no other reason than pure enjoyment. This “no-strings attached” approach to reading can often develop a life-long love of reading.

- The newspaper can often be a good conversation starter about sensitive subjects like underage drinking. Use it as tool to talk about tough issues.

How to Get Help When Your Child Struggles Academically

Even the most successful student can find school work difficult. Parents are often the first to notice a change in attitude or confidence. Step in before your child gives up on his or her ability to master a new skill or understand new material. Many subjects in school are taught in a different way today from the way you were taught, so remember that your attitude influences your child’s attitudes and work habits. For example, if your child is struggling with math, don’t say, “Don’t worry about it; I wasn’t good at math either.” Encourage your child to do his/her best work and if you can’t figure it out together, work together to find additional help. Contact your child’s teacher if you suspect that your child is having a problem with schoolwork. Ask if there is a homework center or after school program that could help you child. Try and work together to solve a problem in its early stages!



Books on Internet Safety

*Coping with Dangers on the Internet:
Staying Safe Online*

by Kevin F. Rothman

Cybersafety: Surfing Safely Online

by Joan Vos MacDonald

*The Parent's Guide to Protecting
Your Children in Cyberspace*

by Parry Aftab

HELPING YOUR CHILD USE THE INTERNET WISELY

The Internet is an amazing resource and has opened up a wide variety of helpful information and opportunities for today’s students. However, new technology can open up a world of potentially harmful situations for children. It’s important for you as a parent to discuss Internet safety with your child. Here are some helpful tips:



- Keep the computer your child uses in a high traffic area of your home, a place where you can easily guide your child as he or she uses the Internet. Set ground rules for use of the Internet. Make sure everyone in the family understands them and agrees to follow them. You may even insist that an adult be home when a child is on the Internet.
- Visit the Internet with your child to find and bookmark appropriate sites.
- Remind your child not to share personal information or digital pictures of themselves online without your permission.
- Help your child select user-ID names that are appropriate and do not reveal personal information. Know your child’s passwords and let your child know that you will be monitoring websites and e-mails.
- Become familiar with the parental controls (such as blocking and filtering) available through your Internet service provider.
- Remind your child that not all information found on the Internet is reliable. Children should be careful in trusting information they read online.
- Make sure your child knows that people may pretend to be different than they really are in the anonymous online world. Take every precaution if your child has contact with others online.
- Get to you know your child’s online buddies.

-- Source: Richland County Library

Empowering all students to shape our future

Recognizing the need for a better trained workforce to remain globally competitive, the General Assembly passed the Education and Economic Development Act in May 2005. The legislation created Personal Pathways to Success, an innovative initiative designed to better prepare students for the workforce by making their education more relevant to their future careers. Personal Pathways programs provide all public school students the resources they need to identify and then achieve their career goals. Better-prepared students will have the knowledge, skills, and character traits necessary to improve South Carolina's economy and sustain its great quality of life.

Personal Pathways provides students with:

- Exposure to all professional fields.
- The understanding that there is no one correct path for everyone. All post-high school paths – the workforce, higher education, the military – are equally important.
- Programs to help them choose classroom courses relevant to their aspirations and abilities.
- Ongoing guidance and support from educators, counselors, and parents or parental designees.
- Agreements that will allow for the smooth transfer of credits from high schools to post-secondary institutions.
- Programs to address the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school.
- Experiential interaction with professionals in their chosen fields to understand job requirements and employer expectations.



In elementary school...

Students will learn about a variety of professions through career awareness activities.

In middle school...

Students will explore careers to identify clusters of study relevant to their aspirations and abilities. Clusters of study provide focus and direction as students plan their coursework.

Beginning in the 8th grade, students will write and annually update a flexible Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) with help from guidance counselors or career specialists and parents or parental designees. These IGP's encourage students to begin planning for their futures now, making them more aware of what it takes to achieve their goals.

In high school...

Students will experience a variety of professional opportunities through job shadowing, apprenticeships or internships. Regional Education Centers are being established across South Carolina to help students connect with local employers. Each of the 12 online centers will create a network of service providers in their region to help students and adults access the guidance and opportunities they need to succeed post-graduation. In the 10th grade, students will declare a major based on their chosen cluster of study. School Districts will offer courses organized around these clusters of study. Each district must offer a minimum of three clusters. The clusters include majors; four required courses are in each major.

Parents and parental designees are an important part of Personal Pathways. Along with school counselors, parents or parental designees are expected to:

- Help students choose a cluster of study.
- Offer input when students write their Individual Graduation Plans (IGP).
- Help students prepare for post-secondary study, specialized training or employment after graduation.
- Provide encouragement and support for students as they work toward attaining their goals.
- Encourage their employers or businesses to get involved by offering internships, in-class lecturers and other services to local schools and the community.



Clusters of Study

- Art, Humanities, A/V Technology and Communications
- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
- Architecture and Construction
- Business, Management and Administration
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Government and Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Marketing, Sales and Service
- Public Safety and Security
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics

**Personal
Pathways**



to success™

Empowering all students to shape our future.™



What are School Improvement Councils?

- School Improvement Councils (SICs) serve as advisory committees to a school's principal and faculty.
- SICs work collaboratively with the school to develop and implement a five-year school improvement plan (school renewal plan), monitor and evaluate success in reaching the plan's goals and objectives, and write an annual report to parents about the progress of the plan.
- SICs are mandated by law to exist in every public school in South Carolina. School boards have been required to establish SICs since 1977.
- More than 16,000 people serve on SICs in South Carolina.
- Almost anyone is eligible to serve on a SIC - parents, teachers, business partners, community leaders and students in grade nine and above.
- The average council has about twelve members; two thirds of the members must be elected parents, students and teachers. The principal appoints the remaining third of the council and serves as an ex-officio (non-voting) member of the council as do a variety of other people by virtue of their position at the school.
- Anyone can attend an SIC meeting – they are public meetings.



Did you Know?

In a typical school year, students spend 12 percent of their time in school. We must invest in the other 88 percent of their lives -- when they are out of school – doing whatever it takes to make sure they are successful!

Source: The SC School Improvement Council

There's not just one right way to raise children. And there's no such thing as a perfect parent – or a perfect child. But here are some guidelines to help your children grow up healthy and happy:

- Show your love. Every day, tell your children.
- Listen when your children talk. Listening to your children tells them that you think they're important and you're interested in what they have to say.
- Make your children feel safe. Comfort them when they're scared. Show them you've taken steps to protect them.
- Provide order in their lives. Keep a regular schedule of meals, naps and bedtimes. If you have to change the schedule, tell them about the changes ahead of time.
- Praise your children. When your children learn something new or behave well, tell them you're proud of them.
- Criticize the behavior, not the child. When your child makes a mistake, don't say, "You were bad." Instead, explain what the child did wrong. For example, say: "Running into the street without looking isn't safe." Then tell the child what to do instead: "First, look both ways for cars."
- Be consistent. Your rules don't have to be the same ones other parents have, but they do need to be clear and consistent. (Consistent means the rules are the same all the time.) If two parents are raising a child, both need to use the same rules. Also, make sure baby sitters and relatives know - and follow - your family rules.
- Spend time with your children. Do things together like reading, walking, playing and cleaning house. What children want most is your attention. Bad behavior is usually their way of getting your attention.

-- Source: American Academy of Family Physicians

