



# The TOOLBOX

TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS



## SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

**TOOL:** Prevention | Intervention

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** School-aged children in elementary and secondary school.

**TOOL INTENDED FOR:** Parents



# COMMUNICATION

**TOOL:** Prevention | Intervention

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– Details: Students' parents.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** School-aged children in elementary and secondary school

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## NEEDS AND BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATIONS

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- Motivation and school retention
- Parental involvement
- Parent-child relationships

## SPECIFIC GOALS

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- To introduce parental supervision practices that best support the development of students' full potential.
- To identify concrete behaviours associated with these supportive practices.
- To highlight parenting practices to be avoided.

## DESIGN

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## TOOL CONTENT

Parents are recognized as the primary educators of their children. They play a key role in their academic development by adopting a positive attitude towards school, acting as role models and being engaged in their children's academic monitoring. This guiding parental role is even more important in the current context of uncertainty, as it will enable children to deal confidently and safely with new or stressful situations.

Parents' school engagement can take various forms, both positive and negative. We are recommending some parenting practices for academic supervision that are essential for students' school retention and academic success.

### 1 – GET INVOLVED

**Get involved means:**

- Showing your children that they are important by showing affection and special attention;
- Supporting them by providing necessary resources.

**The attitude underlying parental engagement is affection. In practical terms, parents should:**

- Spend time with their children on a daily basis, for example, by doing activities with them, helping them with their schoolwork, asking them about their school day and friends;
- Encourage them when they have successes, failures and goals;
- Show them affection and appreciation for the person they are;
- Show interest in their studies, what they like, dislike and what they are doing in class;
- Be available when children convey the need by being on the lookout for mood changes and by listening to the problems and challenges they face.

Children with highly engaged parents are more successful.

### 2 – SUPPORT THEIR SENSE OF AUTONOMY

Children need to feel that they are acting voluntarily and that they are responsible for their behaviour. To support the development of children's innate tendency towards autonomy, parents are well advised to:

- Acknowledge and value their children's opinions and feelings;
- Clearly explain the reasons behind expectations;
- Provide opportunities for meaningful choices, such as activities, optional courses or time management;
- Avoid controlling children by reducing the use of rewards, punishments, threats or other forms of pressure.

Children who act autonomously will increasingly and more consistently internalize values (e.g. the importance of education) and routines (e.g. lessons are reviewed every evening) conveyed by their parents and social environment.

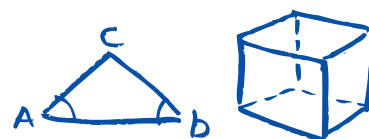
### 3 – PROVIDE A STRUCTURE

**At the beginning of the school year, communication with parents will play a key role in ensuring continuity and consistency between classroom and home activities.**

Children need to feel that their environment is predictable and that they can efficiently interact with it. This predictability, which provides a safe environment for children of all ages, is even more important during times of crisis. Parents respond to this need when they provide a clear, predictable structure for children. This involves:

- Clearly communicating, explaining and discussing with their children the meaning and relevance of rules and expectations;
- Specifying the consequences associated with respecting and disobeying these rules and expectations;
- Being consistent when applying rules and expectations;
- Enforcing rules and consequences in a predictable and systematic manner;
- Giving feedback to children about their efforts and progress in terms of compliance with rules and fulfillment of expectations;
- Maintaining supervision.

**Structure is an important asset for the development of students' competence and ability to regulate their own behaviour.**



### 4 – PRAISE EFFORTS AND STRATEGIES

Children interpret events that occur in their lives in different ways. At school, they may attribute their success or failure to various causes – called attributions. These attributions may be:

- (a) **functional** (e.g. children realize they passed a test due to their efforts), since they motivate students to persevere and to do the best they can next time;
- (b) **dysfunctional** (e.g. children believe they failed due to a lack of intelligence), since they cause students to avoid challenging situations and to give up.

How parents react to their children's school events (e.g. their success or failure) influences their attributions. In the current educational situation in which many children have experienced a prolonged school interruption, parents will help children develop a functional attribution style and attribute their success to causes that may be under their children's control by:

- Acknowledging and explicitly specifying their efforts (or lack thereof, if applicable);
- Praising the use of productive study strategies (or inadequate, if applicable);
- Modelling functional attributions for their own accomplishments, i.e. by demonstrating on a daily basis, in a family context, how effort and effective strategies can be win-win and ensure success, even in difficult circumstances;
- Supporting their autonomy (see above).

**As a result, children whose efforts and strategies are reinforced on a daily basis will be better prepared to cope with difficulties and will aim to develop their skills by persevering.**

## 5 – ENCOURAGE MASTERY GOALS

At school, children may have various educational goals or objectives and their quality is important in order for them to be motivated and succeed. There are two main types of achievement goals:

- **Performance goals**, whereby students aim to demonstrate their competence (e.g. being the best in the group)
  - point of comparison: others;
- **Mastery goals**, whereby students aim to develop their skills (e.g. being able to write an entire poem on their own)
  - point of comparison: themselves.

**One of the key determinants of students' goals is the type of goals encouraged by parents.**

- (1) Parents who tell their children that they must be better than others encourage them to adopt **performance goals**, i.e. wanting to learn in order to be better than others.
- (2) Parents who tell their children to try to develop and improve their knowledge encourage them to adopt **mastery goals**, i.e. wanting to learn in order to improve themselves and for the pleasure of developing knowledge and skills.

In pursuing mastery goals, children will interpret assessment situations as useful information for their development. They will view these assessments as opportunities to make progress and learn more and – even if they fail – they will be more inclined to persevere in difficulties.

### THINGS TO AVOID



Despite good intentions, sometimes parents adopt sub-optimal practices that have a negative impact on the development and functioning of their children in school. It is important to recognize these practices in order to change their behaviour and replace them with the above-mentioned practices.

In the current context in which families have to deal with various changes and many unforeseen problems, it is even more important to avoid certain behaviours in order to ensure a safe and supportive environment that will be conducive to children's success when they go back to school.

**The main behaviours to be avoided include:**

- Using controlling practices, such as using rewards and punishments to influence their decisions to participate in activities, imposing our own choices and opinions, using emotional blackmail by threatening or blaming children or telling children what to feel;
- Rejecting children by leaving them to their own devices with no support when they need it, ignoring or denigrating them;
- Creating confusion by setting unclear rules and expectations, constantly changing these rules and expectations or the consequences associated with respecting them, and failing to offer children an opportunity to meet our expectations;
- Attributing uncontrollable factors (e.g. luck, intelligence) to your children's success and failure;
- Encouraging them to adopt performance goals by comparing them to other students or children in their families or by reinforcing the achievement of standards of excellence (e.g. nothing less than A+).

In short, regardless of their backgrounds, parents are the individuals who best know their children. They therefore have all the tools to support and help them during difficult times with small daily actions and by being present and supportive.

## USEFUL RESOURCES



Advice for parents ("Parlons apprentissage" blog)

<https://passetemps.com/blogue/conseils-pour-favoriser-la-contribution-optimale-des-parents-aux-apprentissages-scolaires-de-leur-enfant-n4164>

Parental support for psychological needs of adolescents

<https://www.edcan.ca/articles/career-choices/>

Fédération des comités de parents du Québec

<https://www.fcpq.qc.ca/fr/english>

Parents' space (website of the Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec)

<https://www.orientation.qc.ca/espaceparents/>

Parents' section of the AlloProf website

<https://www.alloprof.qc.ca/en/parents>

Canada Research Chair on Parenting and Academic and Vocational Trajectories

<http://www.parents-education.chaire.ulaval.ca/en/>

