

Ways Families Include and Value Learning by Toby Karten

Learning opportunities exist beyond the classroom walls. Critical thinking skills, vocabulary development, math aptitude, reading and writing acumens, science discoveries, cultural connections, history knowledge, global awareness, self efficacy, collaboration, and communication are some of the knowledge and skills that are fostered when school and home environments collaborate. These domains plant seeds for learners to evolve into contributing and productive adults. When families connect with schools to value and nurture these same domains, all children prosper!

That does not translate to your child becoming a learning machine-24/7. Whether you and your child are cooking, shopping, traveling in a car, attending a sporting event, going to the beach, visiting an amusement park, or simply having a conversation at the dinner table, the mind is open to learn. Find out your child's motivators and connect those to his or her learning. As an example, in elementary school, my son had a less than desirable handwriting, with largely sized letters that repeatedly ignored the parameters of composition lined papers. However, he loved to enter sweepstakes contest, hence since he needed all letters to be legible on the forms and fit within the given spaces, *to be notified of the win*, his handwriting improved immensely. If a child likes to cook, connect that to estimation, measurement, sequencing, and other reading and math skills. In other words, find your child's recipe!

In addition, keep the line of communication always open with your child's teacher. Partner with your child's teacher to support the learning and definitely ask what you can do to support the learning beyond the classroom walls. If your daughter or son likes the computer, the following URLs in the table, *Learning Together: Connecting Education to the Home*, offers practical, yet fun online websites for you and your child to explore together. This one from Disney's Family Fun offers some *tangible recipes* to explore! <http://familyfun.go.com/recipes/cooking-with-kids/>

Learning Together: Connecting Education to the Home		
Site name	URL	Why? (aside form the fun aspect):-)
Eye Can Learn	http://www.eyecanlearn.com/	helps with learning and visual attention
Brain Pop	http://www.brainpop.com/ http://www.brainpopjr.com/ http://www.brainpopesl.com/	watch fun movies about many subjects from reading to math, science, history, and technology in English and other languages
Fun Brain	http://www.funbrain.com/	sharpen math and reading skills in a fun way, play games like baseball math, grammar gorillas, Sudoku, Mad Libs & more
Comic Life	http://plasq.com/products/comiclifemac	create comics and family/personal albums
Public Broadcasting Service	http://pbskids.org/	watch videos, play games and learn more about many subjects
Storyline Online	http://www.storylineonline.net/	hear free online books read by famous actors and actresses
Vocabulary	http://www.vocabulary.com/	learn new words, play games, and explore language
Cool Math for Kids	http://www.coolmath4kids.com/	play games to improve math skills
The Math Forum at Drexel	http://mathforum.org/dr.math/	find answers to tough math problems
Kid Sites	http://www.kidsites.com/sites-edu/art.htm http://www.kidsites.com/sites-edu/music.htm	explore art and music
Museum Computer Network	http://www.mcn.edu/museums-online	visit museums without stepping out of the door
Science News for Kids	http://www.sciencenewsforkids.org/	connect to science topics
Newseum	http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/	read the front pages of newspapers around the world
CAST: UDL Book Builder	http://bookbuilder.cast.org/	write interactive digital books
How Stuff Works	http://www.howstuffworks.com/	discover how the complex becomes simple
Discovery Education Puzzlemaker	http://www.discoveryeducation.com/puzzlemaker/	play with words to create crossword puzzles, word searches, mazes, and more
Compiled by Toby Karten: http://www.inclusionworkshops.com/		