Find learning moments in everyday life; Ask thought-provoking questions

Children spend five times as much time outside the classroom as they do in school. With all this time away from teachers, it's important for parents to support their children's learning.

In fact, children whose parents are involved with them in family literacy activities score 10 points higher on standardized reading tests, according to the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL).

“Learning can happen anywhere and at any time,” advises Emily Kirkpatrick, Vice President of NCFL. “Go beyond homework — help and find learning moments in everyday life that fit in with your schedule.”

Here are some tips for how you can take a more active role in your child’s education:

• It all starts with you. With some preparation on your part, you can be a better resource for your child. Make sure that you, and those who spend time with your child, are well-equipped to support learning.

• Turn a household shopping trip into a fun chance to do math. Take a walk outside to discuss nature or the community. Make a lesson plan out of the world around you.

• Develop a partnership with your child's teachers. Talk with them about homework and be sure you understand what is expected.

• Some children need and want time to play when they get home, while others may want to get homework out of the way first thing. Set a schedule for your child that works for him or her, and make it a routine. Just be sure that your expectations are clear.

• Reinforce the idea that homework is not punishment, but a chance to practice new skills. You can help make it fun by rewarding progress.

• Ask your children thought-provoking questions, like what they might wonder about. For inspiration, you can turn to free online resources that emphasize fun in learning, such as www.Wonderopolis.org.

• Help set a timeline so that school assignments are not left until the last minute. Older children with assignments that will take several days or weeks to complete may need your help learning to manage their time.

• Checking to be sure assignments are complete is great, but don’t forget it is your child’s assignment, not yours. Do not do homework for your child.

• Read to your children or with them every night. Not only is this an enjoyable way to spend time together, it will benefit the child and help instill a love of learning.

—*StatePoint*