



# Parents Hold the Key to Better Education

The Essential Role of Parents in the Educational Journey

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## Introduction

Education is a shared journey, and parents are critical partners in unlocking a child's potential. By actively engaging in their child's learning process, parents can ignite curiosity, foster resilience, and ensure that the wheels of their child's brain are well-oiled for effective learning. Parents bring a unique perspective that complements the teacher's role, offering a personalized touch that caters to the child's emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs.

## How Parents Contribute to Learning Success

Parents play an irreplaceable role in shaping a child's attitude toward education. Their involvement can:

- **Set the Tone for Lifelong Learning:** Encouraging exploration and curiosity at home nurtures a love for learning.
- **Collaborate with Educators:** Co-formative assessments, as facilitated by teachers, allow parents to understand and support their child's progress in meaningful ways.
- **Encourage Brain-Based Activities:** By focusing on activities that align with how the brain naturally learns—like physical play, open-ended problem-solving, and discussions—parents can help children build neural connections that reinforce classroom learning.

## Oiling the Wheels of the Brain

A child's brain is a fascinating and complex organ, continuously evolving and adapting to new information and experiences. Parents can play a pivotal role in ensuring that their child's brain remains active and engaged. Here are some strategies to help oil the wheels of the brain:

### Oiling the Brain with Thinking Tools

A well-equipped brain processes information smoothly with effective thinking strategies. Thinking Tools help learners organize, analyze, and deepen their understanding, essential for cognitive development. Parents can support their child's learning journey with these practical tools:

### Stimulating the Brain with Thinking Tools

- **Movement with Flow Maps:** Combine physical activity and cognitive tasks. For example, create a **Flow Map** while acting out making a sandwich.
- **Creativity with Bridge Maps:** Relate concepts imaginatively. Compare tree roots to internet cables or neurons to spark creative discussions.
- **Balance with Tree Maps:** Categorize ideas with structure and creativity. Plan potential vacation activities using a **Tree Map**.
- **Learning from Failure with Multi-Flow Maps:** Map causes and effects of failures. Analyze a project's outcomes and brainstorm improvements.

## **Incorporating Thinking Tools into Daily Life**

Use Thinking Tools daily to teach children critical and creative approaches to challenges. This equips them to apply these strategies in real-life situations, fostering independence, resilience, and innovation.

## **Stimulating Curiosity Through Play**

Play is a natural and enjoyable way for children to learn. Engaging in imaginative play, building with blocks, or exploring nature can stimulate curiosity and creativity. These activities help children develop problem-solving skills and understand the world around them.

## **Fostering a Growth Mindset**

Parents can instill a growth mindset in their children by praising effort rather than innate ability. Encouraging children to view challenges as opportunities for growth helps them develop resilience and a positive attitude toward learning. This mindset enables children to persist in the face of difficulties and to view failure as a stepping stone to success.

## **Creating a Structured Learning Environment**

A structured environment provides a sense of security and routine, which is essential for effective learning. Parents can create a conducive learning space at home by setting aside a specific area for study, establishing consistent study times, and minimizing distractions. This structure helps children develop self-discipline and time-management skills.

## **Engaging in Meaningful Conversations**

Regular conversations with children about their interests, experiences, and feelings can significantly enhance their cognitive and linguistic abilities. These discussions provide opportunities for parents to introduce new vocabulary, explain complex concepts, and encourage critical thinking. Moreover, meaningful conversations strengthen the parent-child bond, fostering a supportive and nurturing learning environment.

## **The Power of Parental Involvement**

Numerous studies have shown that parental involvement is a key predictor of a child's academic success. When parents are actively engaged in their child's education, the child is more likely to perform well in school, exhibit positive behavior, and develop a love for learning. Here are some ways parents can maximize their involvement:

### **Reading Together**

Reading with children is one of the most effective ways to support their literacy development. Shared reading experiences expose children to rich language, enhance their comprehension skills, and instill a love for books. Parents can make reading a daily habit by setting aside time for storytime, discussing the content, and encouraging children to ask questions and share their thoughts.

### **Participating in School Activities**

Parents can show their support by attending parent-teacher meetings, volunteering at school events, and participating in school boards or committees. This involvement demonstrates to children that their education is important and valued. It also allows parents to stay informed about their child's progress and to collaborate with educators to address any concerns.

### **Supporting Homework and Projects**

Homework and projects provide opportunities for children to practice and apply what they have learned in school. Parents can support their child's efforts by providing guidance, resources, and encouragement. However, it is important to strike a balance between offering help and allowing the

child to take responsibility for their work. This balance fosters independence and problem-solving skills.

## Encouraging Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities, such as music, art, sports, and clubs, offer children opportunities to explore their interests and develop new skills. Parents can encourage their children to participate in these activities, providing emotional and logistical support. Extracurricular involvement helps children build confidence, social connections, and a well-rounded education.

## Conclusion

Parents hold the key to better education by actively engaging in their child's learning journey. Their unique perspective and involvement complement the efforts of educators, creating a holistic and enriching educational experience. By promoting a love for learning, providing real-world contexts, collaborating with educators, and encouraging brain-based activities, parents can unlock their child's full potential. The shared journey of education, supported by strong parental involvement, paves the way for lifelong success and fulfillment for every child.

# The Need for Igniting Young Minds

## Today's Education Needs a Fresh Perspective

Today's education needs a fresh perspective—a complete shift in how we approach teaching and learning. Traditional methods that focus on memorizing facts don't prepare children for a world that demands creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability. Here's the key idea: real learning isn't about filling young minds with information; it's about helping children think critically, solve problems, and handle life's unexpected challenges.

## Why a New Approach is Necessary

Children learn best when they're engaged in a way that mirrors how their brains naturally work. The brain is wired to think critically and adapt, not just to store facts. To prepare children for the future:

- We must move from memorizing facts to creating practical skills.
- Shift from teacher-led lessons to student-driven exploration.
- Move from rigid methods to flexible, brain-based approaches.

This change isn't just about better grades; it's about transforming education into a lifelong journey of curiosity, adaptability, and growth.

## Learning as a Lifelong Adventure

Thinkers like John Dewey remind us: "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." Albert Einstein said it well: "Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think." And Plutarch gave us a beautiful metaphor: "The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled." These ideas show that education should spark curiosity and help children become confident, independent learners.

# What Sets the Thinking Tools Approach Apart

The Thinking Tools approach bridges gaps in learning by building foundational thinking skills first. For example:

1. Start with simple skills (like organizing ideas with a tree map).
2. Progress to deeper thinking (like making connections with a bridge map).
3. End with comparing ideas effectively (using a double bubble map).

## Emphasizing Real-World Applications

To truly ignite young minds, education must emphasize real-world applications of knowledge. Classrooms should be dynamic environments where students can experiment, inquire, and apply what they learn to solve real-life problems. This hands-on approach not only makes learning more engaging but also more relevant and meaningful.

## Fostering Creativity and Innovation

Creativity and innovation are essential skills for the future. Education systems should encourage students to think outside the box, explore new ideas, and take risks. This can be achieved through project-based learning, where students work on extended projects that require creative thinking and problem-solving.

## Promoting Emotional and Social Development

Education isn't just about intellectual growth; it also encompasses emotional and social development. Schools should provide environments that nurture empathy, collaboration, and emotional intelligence. Programs that focus on social-emotional learning help students develop the skills needed to navigate complex social landscapes and build healthy relationships.

## Encouraging Lifelong Learning

A key goal of modern education should be to instill a love for lifelong learning. This involves teaching students how to learn, adapt, and continuously seek knowledge throughout their lives. Lifelong learners are better equipped to handle the rapid changes and challenges of the modern world.

## Integrating Technology in Education

Technology plays a crucial role in modern education. It offers new opportunities for personalized learning, access to vast resources, and the ability to connect with experts and peers worldwide. Educators should leverage technology to enhance learning experiences and prepare students for the digital age.

## Conclusion

Igniting young minds requires a shift from traditional, fact-based education to a more holistic, student-centered approach. By focusing on critical thinking, creativity, real-world applications, and emotional development, we can prepare children for a future that values adaptability and lifelong learning. This new perspective on education will help children not only succeed academically but also thrive in all aspects of their lives.

Currently, the United States and other countries using STEM (**S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, and **M**athematics) curricula are taking note of the brain-based learning insights emerging from South Africa. You can read more in this article from STEM Magazine: [STEM Magazine January 2025 Edition](#).