



## Overview of TIPS Interactive Homework

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Educators are increasingly aware of the importance of involving parents in the education of their children. Research shows that parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved, children do better in school. Parental encouragement and assistance contribute to students' higher achievement, report card grades, better attitudes, and higher aspirations.

Some families already are partners with their children's schools and encourage their children to work hard as students. However, most families say that they need more information and guidance from schools in order to know how to help their children at home. As children move from one grade to the next, families need information and assistance to understand the schools and to know how to talk with, monitor, encourage, and guide their children as students.

Teachers play a critical role in whether families are involved in their children's education each year. By providing useful information and skills on how to help at home, teachers can encourage parents to talk with and work with their children. When parents are assisted in this way, they become more aware of their children's school program, interact with their children more, and reinforce the teacher's goals for better schoolwork. When parents are knowledgeable partners, students see that their teachers and parents are communicating about schoolwork, and they become more aware of their parents' abilities to talk about schoolwork and school decisions at home.

## **Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork<sup>1</sup>**

Teachers have helped design, implement, and test a teacher-parent partnership process called Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Interactive Homework. With TIPS, any teacher can regularly, and relatively easily, help all families stay informed and involved in their children's learning activities at home, and help all students complete homework that should promote greater success in school.

TIPS features homework assignments that require students to talk to someone at home about something interesting that they are learning in class. TIPS helps solve some important problems with homework:

- It helps all families become involved, not just the few who know how to discuss math or science or other subjects.
- It makes homework the student's responsibility and does not ask parents to "teach" subjects or skills that they are not prepared to teach.
- It asks students to share and enjoy their work, ideas, and progress with their families.
- It allows families to comment and request other information from teachers in a section for home-to-school communication.

With TIPS, homework becomes a three-way partnership involving students, families, and teachers at the elementary, middle, or high school levels. Families immediately recognize and appreciate the efforts of teachers to keep them informed and involved. The TIPS activities keep school on the agenda at home so that children know that their families believe schoolwork is important and worth talking about. Students need as much guidance as parents about how to keep their families aware of and involved in the work they do in school. Over time, as TIPS activities are used each year, students get the idea that their teachers want their families to know about what they are learning and participate in homework.

## **Goals for TIPS Interactive Homework<sup>2</sup>**

- Build students' confidence by requiring them to show their work, share ideas, gather reactions, interview parents, or conduct other interactions with a family partner.
- Link schoolwork with real-life situations.
- Help parents understand more about what their children are learning in school.
- Encourage parents and children to talk regularly about schoolwork and

- progress.
- Enable parents and teachers to frequently communicate about children's work, progress, or problems.

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### **Why Does the TIPS Process Work?**

- Can be used with any text or curriculum.
- Helps teachers organize homework into manageable, focused segments.
- Emphasizes connections between school and home.
- Involves the child as an active learner and guides students to share and demonstrate their skills to show parents what they are learning.
- Offers opportunities to link homework to the real world experiences of children and families.
- Provides families with the information they ask for on how to help at home each year.
- Emphasizes mastery of basic and advanced skills.

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### **How to Implement a TIPS Program?**

There are a few key steps to develop a TIPS Interactive Homework program.

1. Teachers should examine existing [TIPS manuals and prototype activities](#) to see how the program works. Teachers must decide which of the available assignments are useful to them, or whether to design new interactive homework to match their own curriculum.
2. Teachers must explain the TIPS process and purposes to students and to their parents (family partners). This may be done in letters to the home, discussions with students in class, presentations at parent meetings, and in other ways. Special attention is needed to inform and involve parents with limited English or reading proficiency.
3. Teachers assign the activities to students weekly or every other week. Students follow directions in sharing their skills and activities with their parents or another family partner.
4. Family partners provide feedback to their children's teachers in a section for "home-to-school communication" that is included in every TIPS activity. (See the [Sample TIPS prototypes](#) (Link to Sample TIPS activities) for an example of a home-to-school communication section).

5. Teachers evaluate their students' work and family comments, and design new or adapt and improve existing activities as needed.

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1. Epstein, J. L., Salinas, K. C., Jackson, V. E., and educators in Baltimore City Public School System, (1995). TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) manual for teachers: Language arts, science/health, and math interactive homework in the middle grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University.
2. Epstein, J. L., Van Voorhis, F. E., & Salinas, K. C. (2000). TIPS Development Guidelines. Baltimore: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University.

## Framework of SIX Types of Involvement

**A framework of six major types of involvement has evolved from many studies and from many years of work by educators and families in elementary, middle, and high schools. The framework helps educators develop more comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships and also helps researchers locate their questions and results in ways that inform and improve practice.<sup>1</sup>**

TIPS Interactive Homework is an example of a Type 4 (Learning at Home) activity.

Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6
Parenting	Communicating	Volunteering	<b>Learning at Home</b>	Decision Making	Collaborating with the Community
Help all families establish home environments to support children as	Design effective forms of school-to-home communications about school programs and children's	Recruit and organize parent help and support.	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at	Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school

students.	progress.		home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.		programs, family practices, and student learning and development.
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For more information about developing a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships, visit the [National Network of Partnership Schools](#).

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Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*. (May), 701-712.

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