



Safe Schools  
Healthy Students

# Parent Resource Guide

- Introduction
- The Power of Parents
  - Online Resources
- Discussion Questions
- Facts and Tips for Parents



Connect with Kids

*This guide is designed to help empower parents and families  
to use print and video resources available at*

[www.connectwithkids.com/newarkpublicschools](http://www.connectwithkids.com/newarkpublicschools)

***Changing Hearts and Minds to Value Education***



Dream Leaders. They follow their passions; they pursue their dreams; they are catalysts for change. In Newark Public Schools, our student Dream Leaders use their positive peer leadership to promote a healthy, supportive and respectful educational environment. The resulting self-esteem, critical thinking and problem solving abilities impact life-long success.

The Newark Public Schools Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative, in partnership with Connect with Kids, is committed to providing programs and resources to help students find their passion and reach their potential. We believe in the strength of our community of Dream Leaders – and that community includes our parents. Ask parents who has the most influence over the decisions and behaviors of their teens, and most reply: their peers. Yet, research confirms that when teens are asked who has the most influence over their actions, they overwhelmingly reply: our parents. Who better can provide the guidance, direction, care, love and sacrifice to guide them to adulthood?

With a commitment to address *all* of the essentials to develop in our children the qualities that set in motion life-long success and resiliency, Newark Public School educators are committed to helping parents reach their parenting potential.

This guide, along with online resources, is designed to provide parents the tools to help support all of our Dream Leaders.

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## The Power of Parents

Helping our children to follow their passions and pursue their dreams requires a team approach: the involvement of parents, teachers, community groups and students themselves.

An important strategy to help children build resilience and learn to make the healthy decisions that keep them safe and successful – in and outside of school – is open, honest and ongoing communication between parents and their children. Harvard researchers at the Center on Media and Child Health report that watching Connect with Kids reality-based programming, at home and at school, improves communication and changes behavior.

Parenting provides great delights – and difficulties. Newark Public Schools, in partnership with Connect with Kids, provides many print and video resources to help get the conversation started in a non-accusatory, relaxed way. As you engage and guide your children to become resilient – to bounce back and recover from life's setbacks – to become self-sufficient, healthy decision-makers consider these guidelines:

### Be a Good Listener... and Talker

Take time to listen. Use every opportunity to talk with your kids about today's issues, before anyone else can confuse your child with incorrect information that can lack your sense of values. Go outside of your own comfort zone to initiate conversations and take advantage of the teachable moments and opportunities for discussion – while watching television, in the car or at the dinner table – that can occur when you least expect them. Research shows that children want and need moral guidance from their parents, so don't hesitate to make your beliefs clear.

### Be Open and Honest

Let your children know you are approachable and open to their questions, without fear of consequences. Be encouraging, supportive and positive – and be sure to respond, no matter how busy you are.

### Be Knowledgeable

What builds resilience? Why stay in school? What are your child's hopes and dreams for the future? Newark Public Schools online resources provide research-based statistics to help you understand the issues and the challenges students face.

### Be a Positive Role Model

Children are sharp observers. Talk with your children about your dreams, passions and demonstrate the work ethic and perseverance needed to accomplish goals. Demonstrate your problem-solving skills and responsible decision-making.

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## **The Power of Parents** *(cont.)*

### **Know Your Children's Friends and Their Parents**

Peer pressure can be an important influence in our children's lives – both positive and negative. Talk with your children about the real meaning of true friendship. Getting to know your children's friends – and their parents – will help you be a part of their world and form valuable connections.

### **Get Help if You Need It**

Sometimes despite the most vigilant efforts of parents, children have challenges that demand professional advice. School assistance coordinators, guidance counselors, social workers, clergy or your family physician can be an excellent source of help.

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## Online Resources @ [www.connectwithkids.com/newarkpublicschools](http://www.connectwithkids.com/newarkpublicschools)

The Newark Public Schools/Connect with Kids partnership includes a website that makes available the following video and print resources to help parents – and all adults who care about kids – get the conversation started and take action on issues and topics that build resilience, and academic and life-long success. Ultimately, this will result in safer schools and healthier students.

Use these resources to facilitate youth meetings and mentor sessions, or watch the programming at home. You will find suggested questions that can help support an ongoing family discussion. Online resources include:

- **Dream Leaders Training Video and Resource Guide** that outlines an action plan to provide students with opportunities to develop and practice leadership and social action skills to affect change in their schools and communities. The five-step process – understanding the problem; identifying solutions; using tools for change; planning for success; and measuring success – is a methodology that parents and children can apply to family situations, as well.
- **After the Bell** streaming video and print **Resource Guide** that outlines the importance and benefits of after-school programs.
- **Overcoming the Odds** streaming video and print **Resource Guide** that tells powerful true stories of students who have succeeded despite their physical, emotional and academic challenges.
- **Video Vignettes and Discussion Questions** on the safety, health and educational challenges our students face – from ways to stay safe on travels to and from school, homework help, the importance of a mentor, and staying fit to teen pregnancy realities during after-school hours.
- **Web links** that highlight Newark Public Schools' Dream Leaders, including information and photographs of activities and programs at various sites.

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# Overview: Dream Leaders



The Dream Leaders **Training Video** and accompanying **Resource Guide** offers ideas, materials and a step-by-step process to empower school student leadership teams, parents and community leaders to implement a change process and address issues of concern.

The video and guide offers a roadmap for taking five steps to forever alter the landscape of Newark Public Schools and help secure a safe and sound learning environment for all of the children and families of Newark Public Schools.

How can parents encourage their children to be dream leaders? Watch the first section of the Dream Leaders video. Discuss these questions – and offer solutions and resources to help him or her follow their passions and fulfill their goals.

- What does being a dream leader mean to you?
- What qualities does a dream leader possess?
- What are the challenges of being a dream leader?
- What are the benefits of being a dream leader?
- Do you think you possess the qualities to be dream leader? Why or why not?
- What are your dreams and goals for the future? How can we help you fulfill them? What action can you take to reach your goals?

Using the materials that outline the five-step process – understanding the problem; identifying solutions; using tools for change; planning for success; and measuring success – is a methodology that people of all ages can apply to family situations and personal goals, as well.

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# Overview: Overcoming the Odds



## About the Documentary

This thought-provoking program explores why some children succeed in spite of the tremendous odds against them. Watch this program with your children to witness real stories that show what resilient kids have in common and learn how parents, educators and kids themselves can impact success – despite the odds.

## Continue the Discussion

Families can talk about resiliency after viewing the show. Use these questions as a guide.

1. What does resilience mean to you?
2. What challenges did the kids in the video face? How did they overcome those challenges? How does this make them resilient?
3. What skills should a person learn to become more resilient?
4. What are the three “Ps” that make it hard to be resilient?
5. Discuss the Robert Louis Stevenson quote: “Life is not so much a matter of holding good cards, but of playing a poor hand well.” What does it mean to you? How does it relate to resilience?
6. Do you believe that “every child can succeed ... against all odds?” Explain your answer.
7. How is Melanie’s story a good illustration of resiliency?
8. What challenges do you face during school? At home? At work?
9. How have you overcome those challenges? Who have you – or can you – turn to for help?
10. What are your hopes and dreams for the future? Who and/or what can help you succeed?

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# Overview:

## After the Bell



### About the Documentary

Studies have shown that the hours of greatest risk for children are the afternoon hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Teen crime, drug and alcohol use, sex, and teen pregnancy – all of these get worse when kids are let out of school with no place to go. This program explores what can parents and schools can do to reduce the risks, how to find good alternatives and how after-school programs can help foster aspirations.

### Continue the Discussion

Families can talk about after school involvement, resiliency and safety after viewing the show. Use these questions as a guide.

1. Why are the hours immediately after school called “the most dangerous hours of the day?”
2. Have you had experiences like the kids in the opening? Do you know some people who have? How do you explain those behaviors?
3. How do you feel about after-school programs? Can you imagine ways in which such programs might be of benefit to you?
4. Have you found something positive to do after school? How do you feel about being without supervision after school? Do you use that time wisely?
5. Do you have a mentor? If so, does this person know you think of him or her as your mentor? How could you tell this person how you feel? If you do not have a mentor, do you think it would be to your benefit to have one? What are some ways you might go about finding a mentor?
6. Are there after-school programs in your neighborhood or community? Have you ever participated in them? Why or why not? What are the options for high school kids in your community? What are some of the reasons people don't take advantage of those options?
7. Do you think your parents trust you? If you don't think that they do, how does this make you feel? Is signing you up for an after-school program just an issue of trust, or do you believe it is about something more? Explain your answer.
8. Do you feel you have too much “free time?” What do you do with your “free time?” In considering how you spend your time, do you think there might be ways of making your “free time” more valuable to you and your future?
9. What would you do if you were the victim of an after-school crime? Would you know who to contact and how to reach that person?

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# Facts and Tips for Parents: Building and Maintaining Resilience



## WHAT WE KNOW

Experts say all children are born resilient, but it takes several environmental factors to ensure that they maintain that resiliency. These factors include:

**Caring and Support** – Children must know that their parents love them unconditionally and will always be there for them. In cases in which parents are not present, an adult mentor – such as a relative, teacher, coach or clergy leader – can provide genuine caring and support to help foster resiliency. Children with mentors show great resiliency as well. Find significant adults in your child's life that can offer caring and support.

**Clear and Consistent Expectations** – Be clear about your expectations and have high expectations for your child's behavior, academic effort, academic progress, and participation in family and outside activities. Make sure that school and teacher expectations are also clearly stated and understood. Set realistic goals with your children and help them adjust the goals if they cause frustration.

**Participation in Home and Community Life** – Assign chores and responsibilities at home. When children participate in and complete tasks, they feel worthy and capable of being an important member of the family. Even the youngest children can complete tasks that will benefit them individually and the family as a unit. In addition, find ways for your child to participate in school, as well as in activities and service opportunities in the community. As a parent, you can help build resiliency skills in your children by working on your *own* resiliency skills.

## WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

The Nemours Foundation suggests developing the following attitudes and behaviors:

- Start thinking of change as challenging, not as problematic.
- Learn to see problems as temporary: "This, too, shall pass." Problems are opportunities for finding solutions, not barriers that stop all progress.
- Learn how to set achievable goals and work toward them with optimism and persistence – believing in your future success.
- Solve problems as they come up, when they are manageable. Don't let small problems grow into bigger ones.
- Seek to improve relationships with family, friends, colleagues and neighbors. Keep your commitments.
- Know where to find the support you need, and learn how to ask for help.
- Find familiar and new ways to have fun and relax.

When we can identify a challenge, focus on the process of meeting it, get ourselves organized to face it, and be positive and flexible in our approach to the challenge, then we are truly resilient and ready to teach our children how to be resilient as well.

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# Facts and Tips for Parents: The Importance of After-School Programs



## WHAT WE KNOW

After-school activities and programs are very important not only for a child's safety but also for a child's development. In after-school programs, children of all ages develop social and academic skills and build crucial relationships with mentoring adults. Children who attend these programs are less likely to participate in risky behaviors such as skipping school, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, trying drugs and/or other detrimental or anti-social behaviors. Also noteworthy is that children who consistently participate in after-school activities are more likely to attend college, volunteer in community service and vote.

## WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

There are times when parents may not be able to find a quality after-school program available for their children, or it may be that such a program is not financially feasible. For those parents who must leave their children alone after school, experts offer the following suggestions:

- **Set up clear, fair ground rules.** Children should call to check in as soon as they arrive home and be available to talk to a parent whenever he/she calls. When the conversation occurs, be sure to check on what homework they have, which chores need to be completed and ask how they are feeling and/or how their day has been so far. Make it a caring call, not just a checklist.
- **Establish limitations on computer use, television viewing, phone calls and video games.** All recreational electronics really should be off limits until homework and chores are completed, and parents should consider setting up guidelines for times when these devices are in use. Moreover, parents need to review and establish which games, programs and sites are age-appropriate for their children.
- **Create guidelines for the phone.** Set up an important and/or emergency phone number list and make sure it is readily available and easy to read. Help young children practice making emergency calls, so they know what to say and who to call in different situations.
- **Create guidelines for answering the door.** Insist children do not open the door for anyone, even neighborhood friends, until a parent is home.
- **Set rules for neighborhood play/outdoor time.** Unless a neighbor or relative is there to supervise, it is wise to insist children stay indoors until a responsible adult is home.
- **Contact a neighbor, friend or relative as an emergency contact.** Make sure there is an adult everyone trusts that they can go to if you are suddenly unavailable or unreachable by phone.
- **For older teens with access to a car, establish driving rules.** Once an agenda is set, there are to be no unapproved changes. No cell phones, no texting, no unapproved teen passengers in the first six months of driving, and always wear seatbelts.

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