



Do you know about your child's homework?

Do you have homework? It's a simple question — one that parents of school-age children should be asking every day.

Neila A. Connors, Ph.D., recently presented a parents workshop at the Yankton Middle School entitled "Our Dog Does Not Eat Homework!" The hour-long session provided parents of children K-12 with tips and research related to homework.

Connors said research shows family participation in schoolwork and school activities promotes success.

"Children spend 70 percent of their waking hours outside of school," Connors said. "It makes sense that parents provide a vital role in their children's education because (the parents are) really spending the most time with the kids."

Connors said parents should ask their kids if they have homework, go over what they have to do and then help them if they have questions. They should also provide the tools, space and materials to accomplish the work and help them organize their day to provide enough time for homework.

Oftentimes parents find that there are certain subjects they can't help with because they don't understand it themselves, Connors said.

"In that case, contact the teacher and ask for resources so that you and your child can explore the subject and figure it out together," she said. "Teachers want to help and most will bend over backwards to see your kids succeed."

If you think your child has too much homework, Connors said it's important to

talk to the teachers. Sometimes there is a miscommunication between teachers and they don't realize how much each child is actually taking home.

"If you have a child who has a science test, a history test and a math test on the same day, it's because the teachers aren't talking to each other," she said.

Another way for parents to positively reinforce what their children learn in school is to ask the right questions.

"Once I saw a Nobel Prize winner speak at an event, later the media was interviewing him and they asked what influenced him most to focus on science as a career. He said he came from a large family of 14 children. Each night they would sit at the table and his parents would ask 'What questions did you ask today in school?,' Connors said. "They didn't ask 'What did you do at school?' Because his parents encouraged him to ask more questions, he learned more."

Communication is truly the key to homework success, Connors said.

"You have to be talking to your kids, to your kids' teachers and the teachers have to be talking to you and to each other," she said. "If you have a question, ask. You really won't know unless you ask. You can't over-communicate. Get on the Web site, e-mail teachers, give them a call, write a note, whatever it takes."

■ by Tera Schmidt

For helpful tips to help with your child's homework, see page 23.



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