

# Parent & Teacher

RESOURCE GUIDE



# Nurture Creativity and Empathy

The arts play a pivotal role in education by fostering creativity, critical thinking, personal expression, empathy and tolerance.

Incorporating arts education and encouraging arts participation benefits students in numerous ways. The arts can include visual arts, music, theater and dance. The arts can cross all disciplines and help students lead richer and fuller lives no matter what career path they choose. They are also likely to make them more successful academically.

## VALUE OF ARTS EDUCATION

Arts education encourages creativity and imagination. It allows students to explore, experiment and express themselves in unique ways, fostering a sense of innovation that can benefit them across all areas of learning.

Engaging with the arts requires critical thinking skills. Analyzing visual art, understanding musical compositions and interpreting dramatic performances all involve complex cognitive processes that sharpen students' analytical abilities.

Participating in the arts helps students build confidence in their abilities. Performing in a play, displaying an art piece or mastering a musical instrument instills a sense of accom-



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plishment and self-assuredness. Arts provide a medium for emotional expression. Students can convey their feelings, thoughts and experiences through art forms, helping them process emotions and develop socio-emotional intelligence.

Both Walden University and the Americans for the Arts

emphasize that arts education benefits students by improving test scores and graduation rates. Specifically, students with high arts participation and low socioeconomic status have a 4% dropout rate, which is five times lower than their peers. Students who take four years of arts and music classes score an average of more than 150 points

higher on the SAT than students who take only one-half year or less. Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are twice as likely to graduate college than their peers with no arts education.

Other studies have shown that students who participate in theater are less likely than their peers to make racist comments

or engage in discriminatory behavior.

Many arts activities involve collaboration and teamwork. Students learn to work together, respect others' ideas and contribute to a collective creative endeavor. Arts education exposes students to different cultures, historical periods and artistic movements. It broadens their cultural awareness and appreciation for diverse perspectives.

Walden University highlights the role of arts in teaching empathy and promoting tolerance. Through artistic expression and exposure to diverse artistic forms, students learn to understand and appreciate different viewpoints, cultures and life experiences. This fosters empathy, tolerance and an inclusive worldview.

## PROMOTING ARTS

The Americans for the Arts suggests several ways to help your child get involved in the arts:

- Sing, play music, read a book, dance or draw with your child at home.
- Support their participation in the arts.
- Read with your child.
- Advocate for the arts at school board or PTA meetings.
- Take the lead and ask teachers and principals what you can do to support arts education.
- Take your child to local cultural events.
- Volunteer with local arts organizations.
- Join causes that support the arts and advocate for them in your community.

# Using AI Responsibly

While still very controversial, many educators are embracing AI as an important tool in education.

Forbes reported a survey of educators found that more than half believed artificial intelligence would change teaching for the better. They cited such benefits as students learning to understand AI models, teaching critical thinking and as a tool for students to edit their work. Meanwhile, according to the Washington Post, educators were using AI to write tests, generate case studies, prepare emails and rethink their teaching strategies.

And while many are still concerned about students using AI to cheat or to avoid work, they feel AI isn't going away and it is important to teach students responsible use of AI in ways that can enhance their learning. In the international survey cited by Forbes, 78% of educators had concerns about the negative effect of AI and 66% thought it would lessen student writing skills and creativity. Almost half reported their schools had already blocked or restricted the use of AI in the classroom.

Educators and parents can empower students to leverage this powerful technology to its full potential while instilling a sense of ethical awareness and digital citizenship. Responsible AI usage can enhance learning



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and prepare students for a future where AI plays an increasingly significant role in all aspects of life.

There are many ways for parents and teachers to guide students in using AI.

## TEACHING ABOUT AI

A first step is to encourage students to question the information they receive from AI-powered platforms. AI programs frequently provide false information, something known as “hallucinating.” Teach students how to distinguish

between reliable and unreliable sources as that is a critical thinking skill vital in the digital age.

Introduce students to AI-powered homework assistance tools like virtual tutors and math problem solvers. Emphasize that these tools should complement their learning, not replace it. Encourage students to use them as resources for clarifying doubts and learning independently.

AI-driven platforms can adapt to students' individual needs and pace. Guide students

in using these platforms to tailor their learning experiences, focusing on areas where they need improvement and challenging them where they excel.

Introduce students to AI-powered creative tools for art, music and writing and encourage them to explore and express their ideas through these platforms.

Promote coding skills by introducing students to AI programming languages and projects. Encourage them to create AI applications that align with their interests and

educational goals.

## WARNINGS AND ETHICS

Teach students about the importance of data privacy when using AI applications. Discuss the types of data collected, how it is used and the significance of protecting personal information online. Discuss with students how bias can show up in algorithms and encourage them to be aware of potential biases and to advocate for fairness in AI systems.

Teach students about the role of AI in social media platforms and the importance of responsible online behavior. Encourage them to be mindful of the impact of AI-generated content and their own digital footprint.

Warn them about the potentially addictive nature of AI-driven apps and games. Encourage them to practice digital well-being by setting limits on screen time and maintaining a balance between online and offline activities.

AI is a rapidly evolving field. Encourage students to stay informed about the latest AI developments and their effect on various industries. For older students, introduce them to AI ethics research. Encourage them to explore the ethical dilemmas and challenges associated with AI and its applications.

Foster a growth mindset where students see AI as a tool to enhance their learning rather than a threat. Encourage them to embrace AI as a means to develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

# Build Safe Spaces in Schools

Bullying is a pervasive issue that affects students in schools and communities worldwide.

Recognizing, addressing and preventing bullying is crucial to creating safe and inclusive environments where children can thrive.

DoSomething.org reports that one in five students between the ages of 12 to 18 have been bullied during a school year. It leads to about 160,000 teens skipping school and missing out on learning opportunities. Research shows that students who have been frequently bullied score lower in reading, math, and science than their peers who report they are rarely or never bullied.

Bullying prevention requires a collaborative effort from parents, teachers, schools and communities. Recognizing the signs of bullying, addressing incidents promptly and actively working to prevent future occurrences are essential steps toward creating safe and nurturing environments.

## RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING BULLYING

The 2019 Youth Survey found that the most commonly reported type of bullying is verbal harassment (79%). The next most common are social harassment (50%), physical bullying (29%) and cyberbullying (25%).

Bullying often involves repeated aggressive behavior with the intent to harm, intimidate or control another person. Signs that a child may be experiencing bullying include changes in behavior, mood or academic performance, as well as social withdrawal or reluctance to attend school.

## ADDRESSING BULLYING

Encourage open and honest commu-



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nication with children. Make them feel comfortable discussing their experiences, fears and concerns. Ensure they understand that reporting bullying is not a sign of weakness, but a brave and responsible action.

Support children who are being bullied by providing emotional support and reassurance. Let them know you believe them and are there to help. Encourage them to confide in a trusted adult, whether it's a parent, teacher or school counselor.

Parents and teachers should collaborate with the school to address bullying. Schools often have anti-bullying policies and programs in place. It's essential to engage with teachers, counselors and administrators to create a united front against bullying.

Promptly report any incidents of bullying to the school. Document details of the incidents, including dates, locations, individuals involved and any witnesses. This information can be valuable when addressing the issue with school authorities.

Educate students on conflict resolution and nonviolent communication skills. Teaching children how to resolve conflicts peacefully can help prevent bullying situations from escalating.

## PREVENTING BULLYING

Foster an inclusive and accepting school and community environment. Encourage friendship and cooperation among students of diverse backgrounds. Inclusive environments deter bullying behavior.

Promote awareness of the consequences of bullying. Organize workshops, seminars or awareness campaigns that educate students, parents and teachers about the effects of bullying and the importance of prevention.

Empower students to become allies against bullying. Teach them the importance of standing up for others and reporting bullying when they witness it. According to the National Bullying Prevention Center, 57% of bullying situations stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student being bullied.

Parents and teachers play a crucial role in modeling respectful behavior. Demonstrate kindness, empathy and conflict resolution skills in your interactions with others.

# Cultural Competency

Cultural competence in education isn't just a desirable trait. In today's diverse world, it's a necessity.

By promoting cultural competence and inclusivity in classrooms, educators and parents can create a more enriching and accepting learning environment for all students. Cultural competence is about acknowledging differences while celebrating and embracing them. It's a way of making all students feel valued, respected and empowered to succeed in a diverse and interconnected world.

The Connecticut State Board of Education explains that cultural competence encompasses three things. First, one needs to understand one's own cultural identity, biases, prejudices and experiences of both privilege and marginalization. Second, one needs to continuously pursue skills, knowledge and personal growth that helps one establish a meaningful connection with people from various cultural backgrounds. Finally, one needs to nurture a life-long commitment to action that supports equity within all school communities.

## EMBRACE DIVERSITY

The first step toward cultural competence is to acknowledge and celebrate diversity. Encourage students to share their cultural backgrounds, tra-



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ditions and experiences. This creates a sense of belonging and mutual respect within the classroom.

Incorporate diverse perspectives and voices into the curriculum. Ensure that the materials used in the classroom represent a wide range of cultures, histories and backgrounds. This helps students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and exposes them to different worldviews.

Create a safe space for open dialogue about cultural differ-

ences and biases. Encourage students to ask questions, express their thoughts and engage in respectful discussions that foster empathy and understanding.

Respect individual learning styles and recognize that cultural backgrounds may influence how students learn. Be flexible in teaching methods.

## PROMOTE LEARNING

Invite guest speakers from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences and insights.

These real-life stories can help break down stereotypes and broaden student perspectives.

Provide multilingual resources to support students who may speak languages other than English at home. These can include books, educational materials and translation services.

Incorporate anti-bias education into the curriculum. This includes teaching students about prejudice, discrimination and social justice issues. It empowers them to become

advocates for equality and fairness.

Incorporate activities that promote empathy and perspective-taking. Role-playing, literature and art can help students understand and appreciate different viewpoints.

Empower students to take the lead in promoting cultural competence. Support student-led clubs, initiatives and projects that aim to create a more inclusive school community.

## COMMIT TO ACTION

Organize cultural celebrations and events throughout the school year. These events can showcase different cultures through food, music, dance and art. Students can actively participate in planning and organizing these celebrations.

Be mindful of using inclusive language. Avoid assumptions about students based on their cultural backgrounds and genders. Use gender-neutral language when appropriate.

Encourage parents to get involved. Parents can share their cultural insights and participate in school activities that celebrate diversity.

Have clear policies and procedures in place to address bullying and discrimination. Ensure that students feel safe reporting incidents and that consequences are enforced fairly and consistently.

Cultural competence is an ongoing journey. Commit to continual education about it and stay open to learning and growth.

# Financial Literacy

Financial literacy is a crucial life skill that prepares students to make informed financial decisions and secure their future financial well-being.

By teaching students about budgeting, managing money and understanding financial concepts, parents and teachers can equip them with the tools they need for financial success.

Good money management skills benefit students throughout their lives. It can help them achieve financial independence and avoid pitfalls that saddle them with debt or interfere with achieving their dreams.

Forbes reported in 2022 that 87% of teens say they don't understand their personal finances.



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## IMPORTANCE OF FINANCIAL LITERACY

Financial literacy encompasses a range of skills and knowledge related to managing money, including budgeting, saving, investing and understanding financial institutions and concepts.

Financially literate individuals are better equipped to navigate the complexities of personal finance. They can make informed decisions, leading to greater long-term financial stability.

Understanding the value of

money and the consequences of financial decisions encourage responsible financial behavior. Students are less likely to accumulate debt or engage in risky financial practices when they have a solid understanding of financial concepts.

Financial literacy empowers students to take control of their financial future. It enables them to set financial goals, make strategic financial plans and achieve financial independence.

As students transition into adulthood, they face financial challenges like managing expenses, paying bills and planning for major life events. Financial literacy equips them with practical skills to handle these responsibilities effectively.

## TEACHING GUIDANCE

Tailor financial literacy lessons to students' age and developmental level. Younger children can grasp basic concepts like saving, while older

students can delve into more complex topics like investing and credit.

The National Education Association says only half of the nation's schools require a financial literacy course, so they provide a list of resources that teach financial literacy in a series of mini-lessons. They are available at [www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/tools-teaching-financial-literacy](http://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/tools-teaching-financial-literacy).

Use real-life examples and

scenarios to make financial concepts relatable. Encourage students to create budgets for fictional scenarios or simulate investing in a mock stock market.

Teach students how to create and stick to a budget. Explain the importance of tracking income, expenses and setting financial goals. Encourage them to allocate funds for savings, spending and emergencies.

Introduce the concept of saving and investing early. Teach students about the power of compound interest and the benefits of saving for long-term goals like education or retirement. Explain the difference between good and bad debt, emphasizing responsible credit card use and the importance of paying bills on time to build a strong credit history.

Teach students how to open and manage a bank account and use online banking tools. Teach students how to evaluate financial products and make informed decisions about loans, investments and insurance.

Discuss economic concepts like inflation, interest rates and the effect of economic factors on personal finance. Show how these factors can affect savings and investments.

Provide opportunities for students to practice financial skills, such as managing a small budget, researching investment options or participating in financial simulations.

# Nurture Tomorrow's Innovators

STEM education, which focuses on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, is at the forefront of preparing students for the world they will live in.

Encouraging a love for STEM subjects can lead to endless opportunities for a child's future. Fostering a curiosity-driven, hands-on approach to learning benefits children academically and prepares them for a future where STEM skills are increasingly valuable and in demand.

Whether you're a parent or a teacher, there are many strategies and resources that can help you effectively promote STEM education at home and in the classroom.

## ENCOURAGING INTEREST

Stoke the flames of curiosity by asking open-ended questions. Encourage children to explore their interests by reading books, watching documentaries or visiting science museums.

Introduce students to real-life STEM role models. Showcase the achievements of scientists, engineers and innovators to inspire and motivate young minds. Parents and teachers can facilitate discussions about these role models' journeys.

Explore local STEM clubs, competitions and organizations. Many communities offer



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extracurricular STEM programs that provide hands-on experiences and opportunities for collaboration with peers who share similar interests. In the summer, enroll your child in a STEM camp at a nearby university or community organization.

## RESOURCES

Invest in STEM-related

books, magazines and online resources. These can introduce complex concepts in a fun and accessible way. Consider creating a dedicated STEM reading corner in your home or classroom.

Leverage educational apps and games that make learning STEM subjects engaging and interactive. There are countless apps and platforms that offer

gamified learning experiences, making complex topics more digestible for young minds. Explore online STEM communities and forums. These platforms provide a space for students, parents and teachers to share resources, ask questions and collaborate on STEM-related projects.

Parents and teachers can collaborate to create a seamless

STEM education experience. Share resources, coordinate STEM-related activities and maintain open communication about the child's progress.

## ACTIVITIES

One of the most effective ways to foster a passion for STEM is through hands-on activities. For parents, this could mean simple experiments at home, such as building a volcano or creating a basic circuit. Teachers can integrate hands-on projects into their lessons, allowing students to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

Arrange field trips to science centers, technology companies and research institutions. Invite STEM professionals to speak to your students or children. These experiences offer real-world insights into STEM careers and possibilities.

Engage students in problem-solving challenges and competitions. These can range from building a simple machine to participating in robotics competitions. Such challenges foster teamwork and critical thinking.

Teach the value of failure as a stepping stone to success. Create an environment where making mistakes is seen as a natural part of the learning process. Encourage perseverance and resilience.

Guide students in exploring potential STEM careers by sharing information about various professions and the educational pathways to achieve them.

# Study Abroad

Studying abroad can enrich and enhance a student's education.

It offers a unique opportunity to explore different cultures, gain international perspectives and develop valuable life skills. It can provide students with a transformative educational experience that broadens horizons, enhances academic and personal growth and prepares them for an increasingly globalized world.

Parents and teachers can provide information, guidance and support that empowers students to embark on this educational journey, ensuring it becomes a valuable and enriching chapter in their lives.

## CULTURAL IMMERSION

Studying abroad provides an opportunity for cultural immersion. Students are exposed to new languages, customs and traditions, fostering a deeper understanding of the world's diversity. This first-hand experience cultivates empathy, adaptability and open-mindedness, which are essential qualities in today's interconnected world.

For students studying in countries where a different language is spoken, immersion offers a powerful way to improve language proficiency. Conversing with locals, attending classes in a foreign language and navigating daily life in a new environment sharpen language skills. Enhanced communication abilities extend beyond language, encompass-



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ing nonverbal communication, intercultural competency and the ability to bridge cultural gaps.

## BENEFITS

International Student lists several benefits to studying abroad including seeing the world, education, taking in a new culture, career opportunities, finding new interests, making lifelong friends, personal development and life experiences.

Many study abroad programs offer specialized coursework and opportunities not available at home institutions. Students can explore subjects in a global context, deepening their academic knowledge and broaden-

ing their perspectives. Moreover, study abroad experiences enhance resumes and demonstrate qualities such as independence, adaptability and a willingness to take on challenges—attributes highly valued by future employers.

Living in a foreign country requires students to step out of their comfort zones and become self-reliant problem solvers. They learn to navigate unfamiliar environments, manage their finances and make important decisions independently. This fosters personal growth, self-confidence and resilience.

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS

For parents and teachers,

supporting students in their study abroad endeavors is essential to their success.

Start planning early. Encourage students to research programs, destinations and scholarships well in advance. Discuss academic goals, budgeting and safety considerations.

Familiarize yourself with the safety measures and support systems in place at the chosen program and destination. Ensure students have access to health care and travel insurance. Make sure students know their medical history and if they take medication, ensure they have enough of the prescription for the entire time.

Coordinate with an academic advisor to confirm that credits earned abroad will transfer seamlessly and contribute to students' academic progress.

Help students prepare for cultural differences and potential culture shock. Discuss cultural norms, etiquette and customs to promote respectful interactions.

Maintain regular communication with students during their time abroad. Technology allows for easy communication, offering reassurance and support from afar.

Go Overseas encourages parents to ask their child lots of questions once they get home and to get excited about hearing their adventures.