

We assist families and their children who have mood, emotional, and behavioral challenges to understand and navigate services, advocate effectively, and achieve their potential.

Raising kids and being a youth can be tough. If you need help . . .

JUST ask

Fall 2016

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Fall Brings Many Changes

For many of us who have school-aged children, Fall means getting ready for our kids to go back to school. This can involve a lot of preparing, organizing, and planning to ensure that our children are equipped to be successful in the academic environment. For some kids, making the transition from summer break to a more structured educational environment may be stressful. We want our families and youth to know that we are here to assist by providing information and support.

Here at ASK, we have been going through a lot of exciting changes. One big change is that we will be moving to a new location on September 16th. Our office will be closed on this day. We will officially be operating at our new space at 445 W Michigan Ave., Suite 102 Kalamazoo, MI. 49007 on Monday September 19th. Some of the exciting advantages to this move include:

- We will have dedicated space for youth and families
- We will be partnering with Parent to Parent of Southwest Michigan and Kalamazoo Community Mental Health Family Support Partner services to share the space
- We will be conveniently located in downtown Kalamazoo on the bus line with a designated parking lot

You can take part in the excitement by being a part of decisions regarding some of these changes! Here are some ways you can get involved and have a voice:

- We have started a contest to come up with the name for the new family and youth space. Check our Facebook page or our website for more information. Suggestions can be submitted to our Office Coordinator, Kim Beachy, at



kimb@askforkids.org or by calling (269)343-5896

- Contact us if you are interested in helping us decide how to best utilize our new dedicated family and youth space

- Let us know what groups and trainings you are interested in and the days and times that work best

We wish you all the best as you and your family prepare for changes that are coming for you this fall. We hope you will consider sharing your input and ideas as we make the move into our new building.

Tina Robbins, Executive Director

Jeter's Leaders Youth Leadership Conference



Members of C.A.Y. M.O.V.E., the Youth Peer Mentor, and Youth Services Manager traveled to Chicago with other Kalamazoo area afterschool programs to attend the Jeter's Leaders Youth Leadership Conference August 7th-9th. The youth participated in a variety of workshops facilitated by

members of the Jeter's Leaders program.

Conference participants also had the opportunity assist in a community service project with Derek Jeter and his family. Together they prepared 170,000 packs of food to be distributed to food banks throughout Chicago. The conference was a great learning experience and a time that members of C.A.Y. M.O.V.E. will never

forget. Our group would like to thank Kalamazoo Jeter's Leaders and KYDNET for making the trip possible.

Kaley Ford, Youth Services Manager



Lacey Ruble, Youth Engagement Specialist



What is your role at ASK?

I am the new Youth Engagement Specialist. Meaning, I am here to help youth voices be heard and

decrease mental health stigma! I will be assisting with the C.A.Y. M.O.V.E. program, the youth advisory board for the Kalamazoo System of Care. I will also act as a support, resource, and mentor to young people who bring youth voice into the system of care, while empowering youth and enhancing their advocacy and leadership skills.

Why did you choose this particular profession?

I would have to say this profession really found me. I have played with the idea of many professions; a hobby of mine is learning new things, so it is often hard to keep up with my interests. Though, the central theme has always circled around helping others to help themselves. I attended Michigan State University and majored in Psychology with a minor in Anthropology. I believe understanding the mind and cultural competence are amazing tools to have when empowering others.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part is getting to know new people and building new relationships. I suppose that reinforces why I chose to study psychology and anthropology, because I find enjoyment in getting to know new people and their background. This really applies to any

new job someone starts. However, the great thing about working at ASK is I get to work with youth who want to make a difference in their community and advocate for themselves and others.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

When I was younger (and not so long ago) I wanted to be an archaeologist. As a kid I could be found digging holes in my parent's back yard and sifting through rocks attempting to uncover fossils. I was fascinated with discovering hidden history, and to my mother's dismay my clothes were often covered in dirt. In a way, my childhood dream did come true. While in college I was given the opportunity to participate in an archaeological dig of the Maya in Central Belize. It was an amazing experience, and I would love to volunteer on another dig in the future.

10 Ways to Ask Your Kids About Their School Day Without Asking

10 ways to ask your elementary student how school was without asking.

1. Where is the coolest place at the school?
2. Tell me a weird word that you heard today.
3. If I called your teacher tonight what would she tell me about you?
4. If an alien ship came to your classroom today and beamed somebody up who would you want it to be?
5. Tell me something good that happened today.
6. What word did your teacher say the most today?
7. Who in your class do you think you could be nicer to?
8. Who is the funniest person in your class? Why?
9. What was your favorite part of lunch today?

10. What was the hardest part of your day? What would make it better?



10 ways to ask your teenager how school was without asking.

1. What would school be better with/ and what would it be better without?
2. Tell me one thing you learned today.

3. If your school was a movie today what would it be?
4. Who do you think you could be nice to?
5. What is your easiest class? Hardest?
6. Which class has the cutest boys/girls in it?
7. Who did you help today?
8. Tell me one thing you read today
9. What part of the school do you hang out in? Why?
10. If your day was an emoticon which one would it be?

This is a great way to connect with your child after school to get the information you need without making them feel like they are being grilled and that you value their input.

Pam Waterman, Family Support Partner

How to Be an Effective Advocate for Your Child

One of the things I often tell parents regarding school concerns is that “you are the expert on your child.” Sometimes when I say it I get a funny look from the parent, and to be honest, when someone said it to me for the first time I was puzzled too.

I was taught that teachers and principals were the experts, which is why they worked in the professions that they do, and in a way they are. They know a lot about children and how they develop, but they are not the expert on *my* child or *my* child’s development. I am. I know his strengths and the things he struggles with. I also know what we have tried and what has worked and what hasn’t.

This school year, my son will be starting 6th grade. For me, this means starting over and working with a new staff at a new school to advocate for the resources he needs so that he can be successful. Below are some ways that parents can effectively advocate for their child’s needs.

Create a paper trail. Keep copies of all report cards, emails from teachers, evaluations, IEPs, homework samples etc. These documents can give you insight on your child’s progress and provide a history of what has worked and what has not.

Build relationships. Teachers and the other staff at your child’s school spend nearly as much time with your child as you do. They may see issues that your child is having at school that you may not be able to see at home. Having a good relationship can help with making sure your child is getting the accommodations needed.

Ask questions. Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification if you don’t understand something that is happening with your child or why it is happening.

Stay calm. Make a list of topics or concerns that you would like to address. If you start to get frustrated, take deep breaths or ask for a break. You can always bring a friend or relative to the meeting to help keep you focused or to take notes.

Assume good intentions. Typically teachers, principals, and other school staff want to help your child be successful. By walking into a meeting assuming that they do, can help keep things from becoming adversarial.

Remember you are in control. Parents shouldn’t feel pressured to make decisions. It’s important to listen and be open-minded, but ultimately if you feel something isn’t in the best interest of your child, don’t agree to it. You drive the bus that is your child’s education.

Know your rights. Take the time to read about your child’s rights to a free and public education (FAPE) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Wrightslaw.com has a lot of great information regarding special education law.

Corrie Petersen, Family Support Partner

Homework Help: How to Make a Productive Study Space

- **Calendar** - Pencil in tests and block out study time.
- **Bulletin Board** - Choose school work your child was proud of. Add notes of encouragement.
- **Window** - set up by a window, studies show daylight boosts work habits.
- **Clock** - Give each assignment a time limit. Work in a few 10 minutes breaks.
- **Fidget toys** - Give your child something to squeeze while working. It will help them stay calm and focused.
- **Seating** - Some kids like to sprawl out on the floor, get them something solid to write on.
- **Water bottle** - Cognitive function drops when kids are dehydrated. Keep a cold bottle close by.
- **Organizer** - All kids do better when their workspace is neat. Store supplies in a desk top caddy for a clutter free space.
- **Music** - Background music can make kids more productive. Classical/instrumental is best as pop/rap/rock can be a distraction.
- **Snacks** - A mix of protein, fat, and carbs will power kids through their studies. For example, apple slices with peanut butter.

Pam Waterman, Family Support Partner

One of my kids’ favorite after school snacks are what we call “Pizzazillas” They are like quesadillas, but made with pizza toppings.

Quick ‘n Easy After School Snacks: “Pizzazillas”

INGREDIENTS

- 2 whole wheat tortillas
- 1/2 cup pasta sauce, divided
- 1/4 cup mozzarella cheese
- Toppings: pepperoni, mushrooms, pineapple, ham, or other favorite pizza toppings
- Nonstick cooking spray

DIRECTIONS

- Spread pizza sauce on one tortilla.
- Sprinkle with cheese.
- Add toppings of your choice, or add some extra cheese and keep it

simple.

- Top with second tortilla.
- Spray the pan, place the “pizzazilla” in the pan, and then spray the top side, so that all of the ingredients won’t fall out trying to juggle it.
- Cook until golden brown and cheese is melted in a pan over medium heat, flipping once.
- Cut into wedges. Use remaining sauce for dipping!

Corrie Petersen, Family Support Partner



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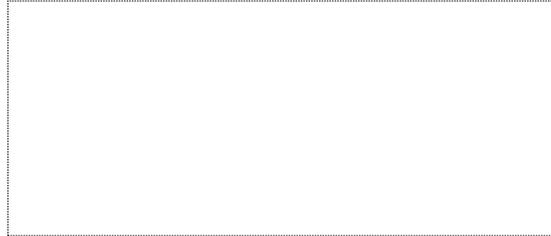


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Raising kids and being a youth can be tough. If you need help, just ASK!



Homework Help: Tips for Busy Parents

Know the teachers and what they are looking for. Attend school events, such as parent - conferences, to meet your child's teachers. Ask about their homework polices and how you should be involved.

Set up a homework-friendly area. Make sure kids have a well-lit place to complete homework. Keep supplies - paper, pencils, glue, scissors - within reach.

Schedule a regular study time. Some kids work best in the afternoon, following a snack and play period; others may prefer to wait until after dinner.

Help them make a plan. On heavy homework nights or when there's an especially hefty

assignment to tackle, encourage your child to break up the work into manageable chunks. Create a work schedule for the night if necessary - and take time for breaks every hour, if possible.

Keep distractions to a minimum. This means no TV, loud music, or phone calls. (Occasionally, though, a phone call to a classmate about an assignment can be helpful.)

Be a motivator and monitor. Ask about assignments, quizzes, and tests. Give encouragement, check completed homework, and make yourself available for questions and concerns.

Set a good example. Do your kids ever see you diligently

balancing your budget or reading a book? Kids are more likely to follow their parent's examples than their advice.

Praise their work and efforts. Post a test or art project on the refrigerator. Mention achievements to relatives.

If there are continuing problems with homework, get help Talk about it with your child's teacher. Some kids have trouble seeing the board and may need glasses; others might need an evaluation for a learning problem or attention disorder.

Pam Waterman, Family Support Partner