

# Parents: Connecting family learning across settings

We know how passionate children can be about the solar system, basketball, dinosaurs, cooking, and the many other things that interest them. By exploring children's interests with them in everyday routines and ordinary places, you'll foster a passion for learning itself, preparing them with the skills and dispositions they'll need to succeed in school and beyond.

[The Families Learning Across Boundaries \(FamLAB\) Project](#) surveyed 1,550 parents and 600 pre-K through grade 8 teachers in the United States about how they support learning. We've taken select findings from this research to come up with suggestions that will build on the important work you're already doing.

## Kids learn everywhere, not just in school.

Sports and religious classes are the most popular out-of-school (OOS) activities for 3–12-year-olds, according to our survey. But many local public libraries also offer art classes, camps, reading groups, technology clubs, and language classes at no or low cost. Yet 56% of parents believe there aren't enough affordable, convenient activities for their children in their communities. Fortunately, there are resources that can help you find activities that are right for your child.

+ **Visit the library, and not just for books.** Ask librarians about the programs they host in-house and around the community. Follow your library on social media, sign up for its

newsletter, and visit its website for upcoming events. If you can't find what you're looking for, your local librarian may be able to suggest activities that fit your child's age and interests.

- + **Ask teachers for advice.** Because teachers talk with other parents, they may be aware of a wider variety of activities in the community than you are. They may be able to guide you toward OOS programs that meet your child's interests and feel manageable for your family.
- + **Talk with other parents.** According to our survey, 4 out of 10 parents feel like they're different from other families at their child's school. Yet all parents belong to the school community and other parents are likely looking for similar connections. So reach out—ask the parents of your child's friends for their advice on OOS programs. Perhaps there's a program your kids can attend together.

## Media can help your child learn.

Take advantage of your child's interests in media to help them learn more about their favorite topics.

+ **Find educational content related to their interests.** First, talk with your child about the topics they would like to see in their apps, videos, TV shows, and music. There are great resources online, including [Common Sense Media](#), which features professional, parent, and kid reviews of apps, games, shows, and YouTube channels. [PBS KIDS](#) also features high-quality content

(including dozens of free, bilingual apps) about science, technology, math, literacy, and more. Once you find content related to your child's interests, we suggest previewing this new content yourself before your child uses it.

- + **Build learning connections around media.** Ask your child what their favorite TV shows, apps, and games inspire them to learn more about, and then visit the library together to find books about the topic and/or related local activities. Find out from your children's teachers what they're learning at school so you can select related media for them to extend their learning at home. Visit [PBS KIDS for Parents](#) to access a variety of learning activities that you can play together.

## Kids can learn in transit too.

Nearly all 3–12-year-olds ride in cars regularly, and 43% spend more than three hours per week in them. One in five children also take public transportation regularly. Parents report that while in transit, kids talk to them, listen to music, use mobile devices, play or chat with their siblings, read, and/or catch up on sleep. Here are some tips on how you can use family transit time to cultivate your children's interests:

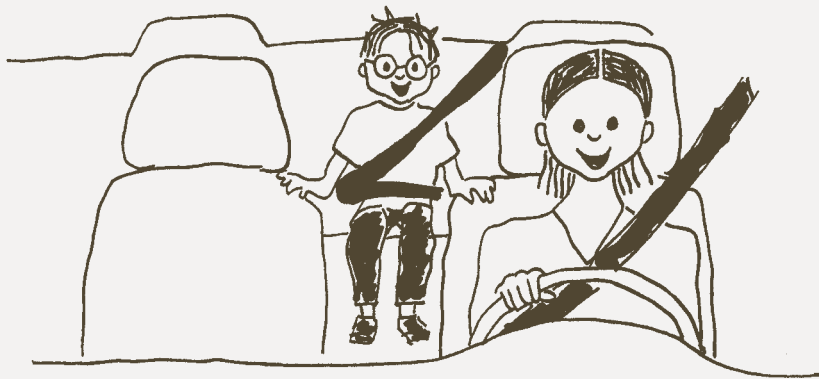
### + Match the music you play on your commute with their interests.

Your library may have a partnership with a free music service like [Freegal Music](#), which will allow you to download music to a mobile device to connect to a car sound system.

If you subscribe to Spotify or another music streaming service, look for playlists dedicated to topics like dinosaurs or sea creatures, often compiled by other parents.

+ **Tune into podcasts.** Train your child in the art of listening by playing podcasts during commutes. There are dozens of free podcasts created with kids in mind, including [KidNuz](#), which may inspire your child to become a news reporter; [Smash Boom Best](#) for aspiring lawyers; and [Wow in the World](#) for kids interested in science and technology. Resources like [Common Sense Media](#) offer lists of recommendations.

+ **Turn down the volume and talk.** Ask your child about what they're learning, and what they would like to learn more about. Discuss ways to develop new skills and share what you know about their favorite topics. For many families, the daily commute is one of the few times during a busy week that parents and kids can just talk.



*Let your child's interests drive the activities you select for him or her. The more passionate your child is about an interest, the better. No matter the amount of time or money you have, you have the power to support your child's learning.*

Use the [PBS KIDS Parents Play & Learn app](#) to find games, activities, and conversation starters related to what you're doing together, whether it's visiting a store or playground or taking a drive.



Check out [PBS KIDS Outdoor Family Fun with Plum app](#) for family-centered "missions" that you and your child can complete right in your neighborhood. Search for activities that are tied to your child's interests.



**For more about the FamLAB project and findings, visit:**

[joanganzcooneycenter.org/famlab](http://joanganzcooneycenter.org/famlab).

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**SESAME WORKSHOP**

Joan Ganz Cooney Center