Notes to facilitator

Introduction
This is one of nine Take and Teach lessons designed to encourage parents’ involvement in their children's education. Each lesson is based on University of Minnesota Extension’s *Parenting for School Success* booklet, which should be used as a companion resource.

It is recommended that you offer this lesson only *after* you have taught “Lesson 1: Parents Make a Difference,” which provides an overview of factors and parental roles in aiding children’s school success, as well as learning in the wider world.

Lesson goal
The primary goal of “Lesson 3: Structure (General)” is to provide an overview of the importance of structure and routine in parents’ support of their children's education. Remember a key objective of all lessons: to persuade parents to be more intentional about helping their children learn in school, at home, and in the community.

Lesson objectives
Participants will understand:
- The importance of structure and routine in children’s lives and their relationship to school success.
- Negotiable and non-negotiable rules and how to identify where their own family rules fit.

Suggested scripts
Suggested scripts for facilitators are indented and printed in the “Lesson Plan” in sans serif typeface. Here’s an example:

Children learn better when parents provide routine and enforce consistent rules and limits. Let’s talk more about those things.

Time
Allow 60 minutes for the lesson.

Handouts for participants
Each participant should receive one copy of the following:
- "Partnering for School Success: Structure" fact sheet – Master form provided; make copies
- "Rules and Limits in My Family" worksheet – Master form provided; make copies
- *Parenting for School Success* booklet (already received)
Materials
- “Survey Topic Map” (for facilitator use only) – Document included
- Flipchart and markers
- Pens or pencils – Provide one for each participant

Before the lesson
- Review the "Partnering for School Success: Structure" fact sheet and select highlights for discussing with participants.
## Lesson Plan

**Note:** Suggested scripts are indented and in sans serif type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning activities</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welcome and introduction</strong></td>
<td>• “Survey Topic Map” (for facilitator use only)</td>
<td>10 min</td>
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</table>
| **Learning activity #1: Routines**       | • Parenting for School Success booklet
                                             • "Partnering for School Success: Structure" fact sheet
                                             • Flipchart
                                             • Markers | 15 min |

Welcome participants. Briefly review the last session you conducted and ask how participants fared completing any tasks or “homework” they were assigned. For example, if participants previously attended Lesson 1, ask them how things are going on the action steps they set to support their children's learning in school and at home. Discuss briefly.

Respond to any questions participants might have about what they have learned to date.

Begin the content portion of the lesson. Say:

Many of you asked to learn more about at least one of the following topics when you filled out the survey during Lesson 1: "Establishing structure at home," "Setting and enforcing limits for my children," or "Monitoring my children's behavior."

Children learn better when parents provide routine and enforce consistent rules and limits. Let’s talk more about those things.

Refer participants to the "Structure" section of the Parenting for School Success booklet. Say:

Children learn better when parents provide routine. Nutritious meals, healthy snacks, consistent bedtimes and other activities that occur regularly help children feel secure. Things like making sure children eat breakfast and get enough sleep help them be ready to learn when they get to school.

Become familiar with your child’s schedule. Many families post a family calendar where everyone can see it. All family members can fill in events at school, progress on school projects, homework assignments, and family events.
Distribute the “Partnering for School Success: Structure” fact sheet to participants and discuss the highlights you selected before class. Ask parents to read sections of the fact sheet out loud, if you wish. Ask the following:

- Do you have any questions about ideas in the fact sheet?
- How can you provide more structure for your own children?

Listen and respond to participants’ questions about information in the fact sheet. Write responses to the second question on the flipchart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning activity #2: Introducing rules and limits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce the concept of rules and limits by asking parents to name at least one rule or limit that provokes conflict with their children. Write responses on the flipchart.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning activity #3: Rules and Limits in My Family</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shift the discussion from rules and limits in general to rules and limits in the participants' families. Say:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Think about rules in your family. Family rules fall under two categories: Negotiable and Non-negotiable.</td>
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</table>

**Negotiable rules** are usually related to activities and behaviors, such as clothing choice, chores, and phone or computer use. Parents may change negotiable rules if conditions warrant; it's best for parents to change these kinds of rules by mutual agreement with their children. Rules are more likely to be followed if parents and children work together on setting them.

**Non-negotiable rules** are usually related to physical or emotional safety and strongly held family values or societal norms and laws. These rules center on things like alcohol and drug use, and driving and seat belt use. Parents are not willing to change non-negotiable rules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flipchart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Markers</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Rules and Limits in My Family&quot; worksheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pens or pencils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flipchart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Markers</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>20 min</td>
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Negotiable rules may vary widely from family to family. Non-negotiable rules will show less variation among families, especially rules related to societal norms and laws.

However, one family's negotiable rule may be another family's non-negotiable rule, depending on the family's values and priorities. Be careful about making too many rules non-negotiable. It's best to keep non-negotiable rules to a minimum, so children take them seriously.

Distribute the "Rules and Limits in My Family" worksheet to participants. Ask parents to fill out the front of the worksheet according to the instructions.

Give parents a few minutes to complete the worksheet, then ask each participant to name a non-negotiable rule he or she wrote on the sheet. Record responses on the flipchart.

Point out the similarities and differences among non-negotiable rules, noting (again) that some rules might be negotiable for some families and non-negotiable for others – depending on values and priorities.

Also note that it’s best for the children if parents not living in the same household for whatever reason (such as divorce or immigrant status) agree on rules for their children and whether they are negotiable or non-negotiable.
**Closing**

Ask participants to use the reverse side of the “Rules and Limits in My Family” worksheet to write down one rule that they want to work on with their children in order to minimize conflict.

Tell parents that if the rule is non-negotiable, they might need to do more to help their children understand why it can't be changed. If the rule is negotiable, parents should talk to children about ways it might be changed to minimize conflict without compromising its purpose.

Urge parents to discuss the front of the "Rules and Limits in My Family" worksheet with their children at home. Also ask them to list their high-priority rules in the space labeled “Our Family Rules” on the reverse side of the worksheet and post the rules in a central place in their home where everyone can see them.

Thank participants for coming and wish them luck supporting their children's school success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• Note cards</th>
<th>• Pens or pencils</th>
<th>5 min</th>
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Partnering for School Success: Structure
Fact Sheet

“The most important thing that children need from their parents is love, but a close second is structure.”

—Laurence Steinberg, Developmental Psychologist

Structure refers to the overall routine and monitoring provided by parents for their children. When families and schools provide a consistent routine and age-appropriate monitoring and supervision, students do better in school. Structure includes a schedule of daily activities, directions for schoolwork, rules for behavior, and so on.

Parents can provide structure for children by setting expectations for proper behavior, as well as limits. All children need rules and limits. Rules help children develop the ability to manage their own behavior. Over time, the control of your child’s behavior gradually shifts from external (imposed by you and other adults) to internal (imposed by your child on his or her own).

Youth do best in school when parents provide predictable boundaries for their lives, encourage productive use of time, and provide learning experiences as a regular part of family life. This can include regularly scheduled study time and routines that involve eating, sleeping, doing chores and playing. When parents set aside time each day for studying and learning, rather than asking children to study only when required to do so by teachers, children learn that the family values studying and learning.

Children whose parents are firm but accepting and use a positive parenting style earn higher grades in school, are more independent, report less psychological distress related to anxiety and depression, and are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior.

Six types of parental involvement are important for student success:

1. Encouraging learning and generally creating a stimulating learning environment at home
2. Limiting screen time, including TV viewing and computer use, as well as monitoring completion of homework (but parents should not do homework for children)
3. Conducting family learning activities at home
4. Praising natural ability, but emphasizing effort
5. Promoting independent thinking
6. Setting high expectations and providing parental support and supervision

Parents can provide structure at home by:

• Consistently monitoring children's behavior and arranging for age-appropriate supervision when they (the parents) are not home.
• Ensuring children understand the consequences of not following household rules.
• Reinforcing routine daily activities, such as family dinners, homework completion, and regular bed times.

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• Being aware of how their children spend their time and providing guidance and supervision when necessary.
• Staying informed about their children's school progress and communicating regularly with their children's teachers.
• Using a positive parenting style when communicating with their children, e.g., asking a child's opinion in a discussion and explaining reasons for a rule.
• Monitoring or supervising out-of-school activities.
• Enforcing household rules and following through with consequences.
• Understanding the most effective ways to discipline children.
• Helping children organize their school work and use their time efficiently.
• Holding children accountable for completing household tasks and chores.
• Ensuring that children understand household rules; being firm about bed times, curfews, etc.
• Asking each child about school every day.
• Giving schoolwork and other educational activities priority over TV watching and leisure activities (get homework done before relaxing).
• Limiting TV viewing and other screen time to no more than two hours per school night.
• Ensuring their children attend school each day.
**Rules and Limits in My Family**

*Worksheet*

**Directions:**
1. List the rules most likely to provoke conflict between you and your child.
2. Rank the rules as "critically important, very important," or "important."
3. Now, decide if the rules are negotiable between you and your child, or if the rules are non-negotiable. Use the following guidelines to make that decision.

**Non-negotiable rules:** These rules usually arise from concerns about physical and emotional safety, from strongly held family values, or from societal norms and laws. Parents are not willing to change non-negotiable rules. The fewer non-negotiable rules that parents set, the more children will pay attention to those rules. Examples of non-negotiable rules would be no underage drinking and no riding with anyone who has been drinking, including adults.

**Negotiable rules:** These rules are about activities and behaviors, such as curfews, household responsibilities, dress, or homework. Parents may be willing to change negotiable rules, but such rules are best determined by mutual agreement with children. Examples of negotiable rules would be no watching TV until homework is finished and a weekday curfew of 9:30 p.m.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Rules</th>
<th>2. Priority Ranking</th>
<th>3. Negotiable or non-negotiable</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>
Rule to work on
Use the space below to write a rule that you want to work on with your children in order to minimize conflict.

Post family rules
List high-priority rules from the other side of this worksheet in the box below, clip out, and post in a prominent place at home where the entire family, especially children, can see them.

Our Family Rules

This worksheet was adapted from the following sources by Mary Laeger-Hagemeister, University of Minnesota Extension Educator, Steele County: