

Six in Ten (62%) Canadian Parents say they'd like to Spend More Time Helping Their Child Learn at Home

Most (70%) Parents Believe They're Their Child's Best Teacher

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Toronto, ON – Six in ten (62%) parents 'agree' (15% strongly/46% somewhat) that they 'don't have as much time as I would like to spend' helping their child learn, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of ABC Life Literacy. In fact, most (63%) 'disagree' (24% strongly/39% somewhat) that 'the primary place for a child to learn is at school, not at home', while four in ten (37%) 'agree' (11% strongly/27% somewhat). But while seven in ten (70%) 'agree' (22% strongly/48% somewhat) that they are their child's best teacher – a feeling even stronger among those with young children – many Canadian parents appear to be missing teachable moments with their children.

For example, just three in ten (27%) say that every time they cook or bake they use the opportunity as a learning moment for their child, meaning that a majority (73%) aren't always taking full advantage of the teachable moment. Most (55%) use it as a learning opportunity just some of the time, while others do so rarely (9%) or never (8%). One in three (31%) always use grocery shopping as a teachable moment, while most only do so sometimes (51%), rarely (11%) or never (8%).

Two in ten (19%) always use doing the laundry as an opportunity to teach their kids, while most only do it sometimes (47%), rarely (21%) or never (13%). Only one in three (31%) always use travelling as an opportunity to teach their child, while others do so sometimes (45%), rarely (14%) or never (10%). When it comes to participation in sport, one in three (32%)

parents say they always use it as a teachable moment, while most do so only some times (43%), rarely (15%) or never (10%).

Perhaps the biggest area where parents are not taking advantage of an opportunity to teach their kids is with the task of paying bills. Just 14% say that when they pay their bills they always use it as a learning opportunity for their child. In fact, only 31% do it some of the time, meaning that most never (27%) or rarely (28%) use it as a teachable moment.

Reading is the activity that parents are most likely to do with their child on a daily basis, followed by helping them with their homework (35%), play games together (34%), use a computer together (22%), write stories together (4%) or visit a library together (2%). Understandably, activities vary based on age range of the children: reading on a daily basis is most common among those whose kids are between the ages of 3 and 6, while helping with homework is most common among those whose kids are 7-9. Playing games is most common for parents who have children who are two years old or younger.

The fact that many parents are missing teachable moments could be a function of the fact that some are not completely confident when it comes to teaching their children about various topics. While seven in ten (69%) are very confident with teaching their child to read, 26% are only somewhat confident and 5% are not confident (2% not at all/3% not very). When it comes to teaching writing skills, six in ten (59%) are very confident, while one in three (33%) are only somewhat confident, and 8% are not confident (3% not at all/5% not very).

Next on the teaching confidence list is driving, with 55% saying they're very confident with teaching their kids how to drive (when the time comes!), while three in ten (30%) are only somewhat confident and 15% are not confident (7% not at all/8% not very). A similar proportion (54%) says they're very confident with teaching their child to use a computer,

while one in three (32%) are only somewhat confident and 14% not confident (5% not at all/9% somewhat).

A slim majority (53%) say they're very confident when it comes to teaching their child about money, while four in ten (39%) are somewhat confident, and 8% are not confident (2% not at all/6% not very). Finally, just four in ten (43%) say they're very confident when it comes to teaching their child math skills, while most are either somewhat confident (34%) or not confident (6% not at all/18% not very).

Apparently, teaching in the home doesn't just go one way – many Canadian parents say their child has taught them as well. One in three (35%) say their child has taught them to use computer software, while others say their child has taught them to use a smart phone/iPod (28%), upload photos/videos from digital camera (27%), use Facebook (25%), program their digital technology like a DVD player, microwave, etc (22%), and even shop online (10%).

Defining Literacy...

While Canadian parents don't necessary agree on a single definition of literacy and what it truly means, most do agree that it is more than just the most basic tasks of reading and writing. Just two in ten (19%) believe that literacy is best defined as the 'ability to read and write', while only 8% think a slightly expanded definition of 'ability to read, write and do math' is best. Others think it's defined as the 'ability to communicate well' (3%), or 'ability to understand written material and technology'.

Nearly half (44%) of parents think that literacy is best defined as having 'the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create and communicate using printed and written materials', while one in four (23%) think it's best defined as the 'ability to read for knowledge, write coherently, and think critically about printed materials'.



These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between November 17 and 22, 2011, on behalf of ABC Life Literacy Canada. For this survey, a sample of 1,002 Canadian parents between the ages of 18 and 55 from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and political composition to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of parents in Canada been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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