

A Parent's Role in Education

Nothing helps a child succeed like an involved parent. A little willingness from a child's parents can work wonders in the classroom. Read on to learn more about your role as a parent in the education of your child.

Parents want their children to succeed in school, but a parent's role in that success must not be underestimated. In school as in life, consistent support from parents is crucial to sustaining a student's confidence and sense of achievement. Parents play four distinct roles in their child's education: cheerleader, friend, teacher and enforcer. An understanding of these roles can help you help your child step up to the challenges of learning.

Be a Cheerleader

Children thrive on encouragement. It's just as important to support a child who doesn't perform well as it is to congratulate them for success. Real learning is not based on reward, but on the value your child places on the process itself.

It's important to make something positive out of failure and to teach young learners this vital skill. Ask your child what they do when they fail at something they're good at - a missed tackle on the football field for example, or a missed key on the piano. This will help them to see how important it is to keep trying and it will teach them to access the skills they already have when faced with new or less interesting challenges.

Be a Friend

Learning about math and reading isn't the only struggle your child faces in school. Maybe they're having problems with a teacher, a group of friends, or a bully on the playground. Sometimes what they really need is someone who is willing to hear what they're thinking...and that someone should be you.

With nobody to confide in, your child will have extra stress in their life, which can decrease self-esteem and motivation. Try to recall the struggles of your own school days. Here's a chance to start fresh and pass along a more positive experience. Listening respectfully to your child's concerns can be a major confidence booster all by itself. If you take your child seriously, they are more likely to do the same for their education.

Be a Teacher

You can't just leave it all up to the teacher. Sure, it's their job, but even the best and brightest can be hard pressed to address the individual needs of every child, especially in a crowded classroom. Children still need personal attention, so it's the role of the parent to make sure they get it.

Stay in touch with your child's assignments, tests and ongoing projects. Set aside time each day to offer help. Be available and enthusiastic; your child needs to feel like you want to be there and that helping them isn't a chore. Connect with their teachers regularly to keep up with how things are going in the classroom. If you find your child needs extra help, be active in getting it, or better yet, work with them yourself. Tutoring your own children can be rewarding for both of you.

Be the Enforcer

Yes, sometimes you've got to be tough. But there's more to it than just discipline. Enforce in advance by helping your child set and keep schedules, reach goals and complete assignments on time. Be respectful. Don't expect your child to know how to use an assignment pad, or understand a class schedule. They won't get it right the first time.

Be patient but unwavering with the basics and your student will catch on. Sometimes you'll have to be strict, but a little firmness each day will teach your child vital time management skills. This will give them a sense of control and can help prevent a homework or term paper crisis. Be willing to be the bad guy, but don't make school or homework seem like a punishment. Think of yourself as the leader of an expedition, not a jailor. When things get difficult, they'll respect your authority and see you as a resource for the help they need.