



Helping a Child To Do Well

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Well, it's time for a new school term. Most parents and grandparents think that it is up to a child to do well in class and on their report cards. They often don't recognize, however, how their own actions contribute to the child's progress.

Here are some things that you can do to help your child succeed:

1. Encourage and praise effort - I remember hearing about a research project where children were given puzzles beyond their abilities. Some of the children were excited and asked if the researchers would give their mothers the name of the manufacturer so that they could keep trying to solve them at home. The other children gave up and refused to try because the puzzles were too difficult. Upon further examination it was found that the first group had always been encouraged to try and so they were not afraid of failure. In fact, the more that they tried to solve problems, the more they succeeded and the better they felt about themselves. The second group, however, had been told that they were smart, attractive and "special". They gave up easily thinking that they didn't want to fail and damage the image that others had of them.
2. Promote accountability and communication - When you are aware of the expectations of the teachers and school staff, you are able to help your child to complete their work and tasks on time. It is not acceptable to say "I didn't know they were supposed to do that". On the other hand, it is important that you don't do the work for the child. Show an interest in the child's academics and keep in touch with the teachers. Make sure that you attend the Parent-Teacher interviews or set up an alternate time so that you are aware of the progress that is or isn't being made. If there is a specific weakness, arrange to have regular communication with the teacher so that you understand what is required and when it is due. Teach your child the importance of meeting deadlines and submitting work that shows good effort.
3. Provide a safe, clean and peaceful environment - It is difficult for anyone to do well if they are living in chaos. Make sure that the child has nutritious meals and a regular routine that they can depend upon. A bedtime (without computer distractions) will provide their brain with the best chance to do well in class the following day. Have them prepare their clothing and books the night before so that they have everything ready and don't have to rush. The most important thing is that they are able to experience a stress-free and peaceful environment. Children who live with conflict are never able to relax and think about positive things. Keep things calm!
4. Be a good example - "Do as I say and not as I do" is not a credible stance to take. If you want your child to be responsible and respectful then you will need to model this for them. When I worked in the school system it was always interesting to meet the parents of children who performed or acted inappropriately. Sometimes you could pick the parents out of the crowd as they looked and acted exactly like the child (or the other way around). Your child loves you, needs you and emulates you. The most powerful way to change their behaviour is therefore to correct your own flaws and weaknesses. Set a good example.