

Parents' Participation in Children's Education

By: Paul Banas, September 18, 2008

You cannot expect the school district to bear sole responsibility for the teaching of a child. Education is a process, so stick with your child each step along the way to ensure a smooth transition through the years.

Know your child

According to Betsy Combier, administrator for the parentadvocates.org website, knowing your child is the first step. Take an active role in recognizing what your child's strengths and weaknesses are and knowing how he learns best. If you know what excites and frustrates your child from a learning perspective, then that information can serve as a point of reference for his teacher. Combier recommends sharing these feelings along with him. "Get in there," she says. "Get excited right along with him."

Be active

To maximize your child's education, it is not enough just to have your voice heard during an annual parent-teacher conference. Teachers want your help in educating your child through his successes and failures. Reach out to your child's teacher with phone calls and e-mails. If you two maintain a cooperative relationship from the onset of the school year then if and when an issue arises you can face it together as a team. A joint understanding and clear communication are usually enough to help solve any problem.

Success benchmarks

No classroom environment is perfect. One teacher cannot address each student's needs. Furthermore, since education is not one-size-fits-all, a high grade does not necessarily mean that your child is being challenged. Parents should ask teachers about course benchmarks and their child's achievements so they are updated. Don't forget that other parents can provide a wealth of information as well. All of you have expertise in different areas so share what you know. Also, do your part to know what's expected of your child in each grade by researching educational resources online and reading the newspaper to stay current.

Curriculum check

If you are interested in checking out your child's curriculum, approach the situation from a curiosity perspective so you're not on the offensive when talking to your child's teacher. Do not be afraid to ask questions and know there is always more work that can be done at home. You can enhance your child's education by using library resources as well.

Communication tactics

Always act with integrity because your children are watching. Be respectful of the teacher's boundaries since it is his classroom. Set up appointments beforehand and keep careful notes of any communication you have. If any issues escalate that you and the teacher or the guidance counselor cannot resolve then consider reaching out to the principal or another administrator.

No matter what your parenting style, the key to a successful academic experience is to partner with your children in their education.

About the Author:

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