

Five Strategies to Help Your Child Become More Successful in School

by Carole Richards

We have developed a philosophy over the years for helping children become successful in school. Our philosophy is very simply: honesty and communication. You will see how we implement this philosophy in this article.

Strategy # 1 -- You understand your child better than anyone else.

YOU are the most important person in your child's life! No one loves your child more than you. While you may find it difficult to describe your child's strengths and needs, you have the most insight into your child. When you sense that something is wrong with your child at school ... take action!

Be confident in your understanding of your child and the need to make changes. Positively and assertively communicate the needs of your child and your concerns to your school's teachers, administrators, and other professionals.

Strategy #2 -- RELAX!

If you feel that your child is struggling in school ... don't panic. Relax! Your child will concentrate better and perform better if you DO NOT micromanage every page of homework and every school project. If you take over school performance, you will work hard and you, not your child, will earn the grade. In effect, you take ownership of school performance away from your child.

Many uptight and frustrated parents look for outside help and advice. Many of their children have one problem - parents' expectations - they want "straight A's." Parents target the Ivy League for their ten-year-olds and act like every single test and grade reflects on that goal. Children become too worried about every test ... and as a result "freeze", or do poorly on tests. Their feelings are compounded because their parents remind them to do better or there will be no Harvard in their future.

Stay relaxed. Ask yourself, "Who wants Yale ... you or your child?" Only high school grades affect the "Ivy League goal." Relax, encourage your child, and face reality. A hard-earned "C" is more important than an easy "A."

Strategy #3 -- The Team Concept

As the parent, establish the team ... you, your school, your tutor, and your child. Keep in mind that all team members are "imperfect humans." By working together you will resolve learning challenges. Listen, really listen to your child and watch her body language. When you respect your child's feelings about school it builds your child's confidence and creates open communication. Work toward this same goal with the school.

If you feel your child has valid concerns, LISTEN! Always focus on solutions to the “team’s problem” ... your child’s success in school. He will go to school more confidently knowing you are there to listen. When discussing school, avoid any negative comments about your teacher. They will only be magnified in your child’s mind and undermine the team relationship.

Keep your teacher involved in the “team concept” by communicating positively and assertively. Even when you become frustrated, avoid confrontations and accusations at school. Continue to encourage your teacher to focus on solutions, not the problem. Offer creative solutions whenever possible. Let your teacher know you are genuinely interested and involved in your child’s success in school. Remain persistent, positive and tenacious.

Strategy #4 -- Seek outside help when you think your child needs it.

The parent child relationship is important and unique. When a parent tries to help a struggling child, tensions build. The child wants to please the parent, and the parent wants the child to be successful ... NOW! If your home begins to feel like a “battlefield of learning,” it’s time to seek outside help. Perhaps extra help from a teacher, private tutoring, or a learning center will be productive.

Sometimes parents choose to deny that there is a problem in school until mid-May. Then, they want help to salvage a whole school year. It is unrealistic to expect a magical turnaround in just a few weeks. Seek help at the first early warning signs. Establish the need for a “learning team,” meet with your teacher, look for outside help. Your relationship with your child will remain positive ... your home will not become a “learning battlefield”.

Strategy #5 -- Do your child’s homework? Never!

Help your child become responsible ... never do your child’s homework! You come home from another long day at work. You dread the thought of another night of homework. Your child also dreads the thought of another night of homework combat. You both know you will sit there hour after hour helping with homework. Tension builds.

You deserve “A’s” for your efforts but you communicate that your child is not capable of doing the work. Your teacher knows who does the work because the quality of homework is noticeably better than the work in school.

If the struggle is caused by not understanding homework assignments ... find a solution. If your child is struggling because of lack of interest, let her fail. It’s called tough love and it is painful for the moment. It’s important that your child take responsibility for performance. The lesson of responsibility is learned for life.

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