

PARENTAL GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTING CHILDREN'S SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

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Bookstores are lined with parenting books. Radio and television shows often interview experts in the field of parent education. No wonder – after all parenting is one of the most important and challenging roles adults undertake. We bring to this role our beliefs, past experiences as children, knowledge, love and hopes for our offspring to become secure, independent and successful(Coloroso, 1999; Gordon, 2000; Hendrix& Hunt, 1997; Kropp, 2000; NASP, 2008; Smith, 2004).

Children's schooling plays a central role in shaping their future and parental involvement in education has a positive impact on children's academic achievement. In fact, studies have found that the influence of the home on children's success at school includes higher achievement rates, better attendance and higher school completion. The following are guidelines for positive parenting in support of children's learning:

1. **School-Home Partnership**: Parents often have questions related to school policies, homework, grades, behaviour codes and the curriculum. The process of communication between parents and teachers is likely to provide valuable information about education and increase this important partnership on behalf of children (Cole & Siegel, 2003). Parents may need to be reminded that they can and should initiate communication with the school in order for their questions to be answered, as well as for them to share information that will assist teachers in understanding their child. One-way communication from the school to the home is less impactful when compared to a two-way communication pattern. When was the last time you called a teacher to report that your child came home happy and excited about the material taught that day?
2. **Organizational Skills and Work Habits**: Active learning and positive study skills tend to promote better academic output. The younger children are when they begin to adopt consistent work habits, the easier it will become for them to achieve academic success. Some parents take the ability to plan and organize for granted. As a result, they may get frustrated with children who are disorganized and question their motivation and sense of responsibility. For disorganized children, seeing patterns of simple everyday events in school or at home may be difficult. Talking to them is not enough, since they may have problems translating their promises into actions (Burns, 2009; Kraus, 2002).

First, consult with the teacher about strategies which work well in the classroom. Identify one or two goals per day and review them consistently. This will provide your child with immediate feedback and encouragement to continue the tasks. Teach your child that organization of materials and information is sorted according to similar groupings. Try to draw on examples of interest to your child, such as sports,

activities. By making time to listen to your child about his/her areas of interest, you may make a linkage between those topics and the need for planning and organization.

If your child has become progressively more disorganized, you may need to question other areas. Having difficulties with concentration and organization may also indicate stress at school or with peers. Take time to question, listen and praise when things have been accomplished. Your child needs to hear from you that you have noticed positive change.

3. **Language Proficiency**: Children come to school with a variety of communication skills in their first or second language, and this impacts on their readiness to learn. The power of language is linked to the development of resiliency and a sense of purpose. When children express themselves clearly and with confidence, they are more likely to feel socially and academically competent (Cole & Siegel, 2003).

Language encompasses many different skills which require support and development. At home, read to or with your children. Keep in mind that as parents we model expressive language and a range of behaviours. If our children see us read, they are more likely to engage in such behaviours. Promote discussions which allow your children to provide opinions, examples and questions. Respect their ideas by listening with interest. This type of style, as opposed to “telling and lecturing” is more likely to support your children’s expressive skills.

4. **Self-Esteem and Validation**: High self-esteem is a result of feeling capable and able to achieve in a variety of areas. It is related to the way children and youth evaluate their qualities, including physical appearance, academic functioning, autonomy and social relationships (Barkley & Robin, 2008; Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Nichols, 2004).

As parents, we want our children to feel secure and happy. Although self-esteem is subject to change, feeling worthy is central to the development and maintenance of one’s positive identity. At home, listening with understanding is likely to enhance communication and constructive feedback. Judgment and perceived criticism, on the other hand, are likely to stifle communication and increase anxiety. Ask your children what skills they feel they have? What is easy for them to learn? What help do they need? What can they teach someone else? Last, as a parent, note that helping children to make decisions and exercise choices leads to more positive self-evaluation.

Suggested Readings

1. Barkley, R. & Robin, A. (2008). *Your Defiant Teen*. New York: The Guilford Press.
2. Cole, E. & Siegel, J. (Eds., 2003). *Effective Consultation in School Psychology*. Cambridge: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers.
3. Coloroso, B. (1999), *Kids are Worth It!* Toronto: Penguin Books.
4. Faber, A. and Mazlish, E. (1995). *How To Talk so Kids Can Learn*. New York: A Fireside Book.

5. Flanagan Burns, E. (2009). *Nobody's Perfect*. Washington: Magination Press.
6. Gordon, T. (2000) *Parent Effectiveness Training*: New York: Three Rivers Press.
6. Hendrix, H. and Hunt, H. (1997). *Giving The Love That Heals, A Guide for Parents*. Toronto: Pocket Books.
7. Kindlon, D. & Thompson, M. (2000). *Raising Cain- Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*. New York: Ballantine Books.
8. Kraus, J. (2007). *Annie's Plan- Taking Charge of Schoolwork and Homework*. Washington: Magination Press.
9. Kropp, P. (2000). *How to Make Your Child a Reader for Life*. Random House Canada.
10. National Association of School Psychologists-NASP. (2008). *Stress in Children and Adolescents: Tips for Parents*. Bethesda, www.nasponline.org.
11. Nichols, M. (2004). *Stop Arguing with Your Kids*. New York: The Guilford Press.
12. Smith Harvey, V. (2004). *Helping Children at Home and School II: Handouts for Families and Educators*. Bethesda, NASP.

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