

MyChildsFuture.org

Parent Involvement = Future Success

Ten ways you can support your child's future

Children of all ages need their parents and other adults involved with purpose in their lives – to nurture and to motivate, to clarify and to connect, to challenge into realizing their dreams.

Nurture the individual...

Passion for life, learning, and work comes from within. Help your children discover their passions. Cultivate their sense of hope. Believe in their dreams, and they will believe in them.

1. Tell your children you are proud of them.

A positive sense about who we are is central to a healthy and productive life. High self-esteem, combined with hope for the future, feelings of control over life events, and a sense of purpose, build positive identity. Reinforce your children regularly to lay the foundations for a strong sense of self-worth. Notice and praise your children when you see them doing a good job. Encourage them to spend their time doing things at which they feel competent and valued.

2. Listen to your children and express interest in those things they care about.

Talk with your children about the everyday stuff. (Believe it or not, 78% of middle school and 48% of high school age students say they want to talk more to their parents.) Start early by asking about their ideas and opinions regularly. Show them that you are really interested in what they think and feel, and they will become comfortable about expressing their thoughts to you.

3. Help your children understand who they are and what makes them special.

Ask your children questions about things that interest them and activities they are good at. Share what you observe about their strengths and interests. Probe their unique interests to better understand them. Consider their favorite games, books, school subjects, toys, activities, and make believe. Talk about how they learn best - is it through reading, talking, or doing?

- 4. Recognize that your children are unique and that their career paths will be unique.**
Sometimes we expect that life should follow a perfect and predictable path. However, career development is a process, and everyone does it differently. Each child learns and develops at different rates. Talk about the positive aspects of these differences. Help your children express and cherish their uniqueness.
- 5. Be involved in school activities and support school work because education is important.**
When you are involved in your children's education, they will achieve more regardless of your economic status, ethnic or racial background, or educational level. Your children need to see that you care about how they do in school. Be a partner with the teachers and school staff in supporting your children's education.

Connect to the real world...

Let their dreams create purpose and purpose fashion their goals. Challenge your children to reach for those goals and help them navigate the barriers.

- 6. Set a good example of school and work attitudes and behaviors.**
Motivate through example. Model good work behaviors. Share workplace stories. Talk about the skills and knowledge you use every day in your job. Every time you talk about your salary, your workday highs and lows, your selection of work clothes - you send a message to your children about work. Be positive. Whether you realize it or not, you are passing on important work values. These values will last a lifetime.
- 7. Use everyday life activities to provide opportunities for your children to develop important life and work skills.**
Encourage your children to be involved in activities that develop skills or knowledge. Begin with household chores to learn about responsibility and consequences. Volunteering and part-time jobs help develop reliability, decision-making, and self-respect. Music, sports, dance, and art expand self-awareness and knowledge about the world. Discuss what they are learning in these activities, what they like or dislike about them, and how they might want to use the skills they are learning in the future.
- 8. Encourage your children to make the most of career-related learning activities in school and the community.**
Schools want to connect school to life so our students understand the importance of what they are studying. In Oregon, students must complete various career-related learning activities to earn their diplomas. Activities may include interest inventories, career research, education planning, job shadows, service learning, work experience, and classroom projects tied into real life issues. Learn

about and support these efforts. Talk about them with your children - help make them more than requirements on a checklist.

9. Believe that education after high school is possible and important for your children.

College is not for everyone nor is it necessary for all jobs. However, it is fair to say that most people need some type of training beyond a high school degree. You may feel that you are not in the position to help your children with college or training. Despite rising costs, not all postsecondary training is that expensive, and there are many ways families and students can get help. Commit to working together - your children to do well in school, and you to help in any way you can to support their dreams.

10. Have high expectations.

Set goals realistically but expect hard work and discipline. Make sure your children attend school. Ask them about homework, and verify that assignments are completed. Encourage them to take challenging courses. Help them overcome discouragement when they aren't able to reach a goal. Celebrate their accomplishments.

Your positive, proactive involvement is an important factor in your children's successes in school and work. Keep in mind that the career decision is each child's, not yours, to make. If you are listening, observing, and being involved, you will understand their paths and will want to be a part of making their dreams reality.