

## What Can Mom and Dad Do To Help Their Children Succeed in College?

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Parents can be instrumental in their children's educational success if they take a proactive interest in what their children learn. Following are some strategies and techniques parents can employ to enhance their children's likelihood of doing better in college. These suggestions include content and process steps to help start your children off with a bang.

First, most fields of study require some basic knowledge of current events. Journalism, political science, social work, art, history, education, the sciences, and law leap immediately to mind as examples. Current events interest and acquisition skills are not learned on demand; it requires years of experience to have sharpened current events skills.

Parents need to help their children identify, evaluate, and connect current events issues read in newspapers and news magazines, confronted on TV or heard on the radio, and made part of group discussions. Parents need to stay up-to-date on current events with their children so they can discuss, evaluate, and probe these events with their children on a **daily** basis. Some time each day should be set aside to go over political, social, and economic, events of that day. Parents need to watch the news and read at least one common news magazine so they have a base of common material with which to discuss with their children.

Second, students need to be encouraged by parents to take classes in high school from a variety of teachers, not just from "favorite" teachers. In college, many classes are taught by only one professor and students have no choice but to study with that individual. Practice in coping with instructors with divergent personalities, varying teaching styles, and different demands on students will make your children better able to cope with college practices. Adaptability is one common hallmark of a successful college student.

Third, parents can help their children cope with the "real world" by taking them to work once in a while and letting them see that many tasks are not as predictable as they might believe; are not always presented in neat, complete, easy to understand ways; and are not always doable. Children too frequently believe the world is neatly and predictably packaged; and that naiveté can be devastating if it lasts too long and is crushed for the first time in college.

Fourth, parents can help their children by insisting that skills development courses be chosen despite what requirements are made by the school. One invaluable skill is typing. Whether one uses a typewriter or a computer, typing proficiency is a huge asset. Computational skills are vital to all college students. Knowing as much math as one can and being able to competently use a sophisticated calculator will likely save your college student lots of time and potential grief. Being able to write clearly, directly, responsively, and in a mechanically sound fashion will be expected in college. One of the most frequent and devastatingly frustrating college freshman deficiencies is poor writing skills. Parents should encourage their children to write as much as possible in elementary and high school. Participation in school newspaper article writing, competing in essay contests, and writing letters to friends and relatives all contribute to improving one's writing. Students should also be strongly encouraged to take a public speaking course and to make use of that course's skill learning by actually speaking in public so the learned skills do not atrophy.

Fifth, parents can enhance the likelihood that children will continue to see education as fun by providing home entertainment in the form of intellectual activities. Such games as Scrabble, Jeopardy, and Scruples can help in this way. When children see learning as fun and they see, in some cases, that their learning allows them to equal or surpass their parent [or grandparents], it acts as a stimulus to continue learning.

Sixth, when possible, parents can take a giant stride ahead in convincing their children that an education is meaningful by enrolling in a course at the local adult education center or at a local college. When children observe their parents taking the time and expending the effort to further themselves, they are more likely to internalize education as important for themselves.

Admittedly, these six steps are no guarantee that children will succeed in college; but they are high predictors of success. These steps are demanding of parents in terms of time and energy. Nurturing is expensive, but positive steps like these can provide lifetime bonuses for your children.

In order for these steps to succeed, they must be entered into enthusiastically and mutually with children. Students who are helped by enthusiastic, involved, and supportive adults tend to achieve better, be more confident, and internalize value in what they do.