It is a natural desire for parents to want what is best for their children. For most of us, we believe that education plays a vital role in a life of success. Therefore, as parents, we are anxious to help our children succeed in school. What follows are suggestions parents might like to consider to ensure that a child be given the opportunity to succeed in school.

SET THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS EARLY!

Even if your head is cluttered with your own thoughts, push them aside and listen when your child talks about their frustrations. You can expect to hear that they may feel stressed because of schoolwork, tests, peers, and even teachers. Be supportive and attentive; give your child your undivided attention while they share parts of their day with you. Praise your child's efforts, accomplishments and keep your expectations for your child realistic.

ESTABLISH PARENT-TEACHER COLLABORATION!

Creating a parent-teacher collaboration or partnership can be instrumental in your child’s classroom success. Work on developing a positive rapport with your child's teacher. Seek out opportunities to meet the teacher or communicate with the teacher. If the school does not offer a Parents Night, create an opportunity by sending in a note, call or establish a quick visit. You might like to offer some information about your child but most importantly, offer your support and cooperation by making your personal contact information available to them. Encourage them to call you directly if assistance is needed from home. Let the teacher know that you are concerned about your child’s education and you are willing to assist the teacher so that everyone has a positive experience.

Check in with your child’s teacher periodically to discuss classroom progress. If you have concerns or you would like to share your child's concerns with the teacher, ask to schedule a conference. If a conference is needed, give the teacher an idea about the situation that you are concerned with. This may alleviate any misunderstanding and thus maintain an open line of communication.

Before any parent-teacher meeting, first check with your child to learn what is going on at school academically and socially. Learn as much as you can from your child about what they are experiencing in school.

A POSITIVE CONFERENCE

A parent-teacher conference is a great way to clarify or discuss what your child is experiencing. When establishing any conference, find a mutually agreeable time to meet the teacher, but before you meet, do your homework! A successful parent-teacher conference will require you to spend some

CONSIDER ASKING ONE OR ALL OF THE QUESTIONS LISTED BELOW.

- Is my child in different groups for different subjects? Why?
- How well does my child get along with others?
- What are my child's best and worst subjects?
- Is my child working up to his or her ability?
- Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?
- Has my child missed any classes other than ones I contacted the school about?
- Have you noticed any sudden changes in the way my child acts? For example, have you noticed any squinting, tiredness or moodiness that might be a sign of physical or other problems?
- What kinds of tests are being done? What do the tests tell about my child's progress?
- How does my child handle taking tests?
- Where does my child sit and whom does my child sit next to?

Source: National Education Organization
time preparing for the conference. Preparation will provide you with an opportunity to think the situation through with logic instead of reacting with emotions. Remember that it is in the best interest of your child to develop a positive parent-teacher partnership; take the time to do your homework.

At the conference ask questions about how your child performs or behaves in the classroom. Find out where your child sits. Occasionally, even the best of children may be acting up in class for a variety of reasons that can be physical or emotional. Leave the conference with a plan and follow up with the teacher. Keep communications open. If the situation is continuing or if it is worsening, take the next step and call your child’s school guidance counselor.

WHEN DO YOU GO TO THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR?

Most counselors support parent-teacher collaboration and can also be a resource. Counselors assist students in a number of ways.

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR’S ROLE?

Guidance counselors are child advocates. They can play an essential role in your child’s success in school. Whether the school guidance counselor is an elementary or secondary counselor, their role is to understand and meet the needs of each individual student. This is an awesome task as each student’s needs are unique and the role of the counselor will vary in order to meet their needs. Counselors work to find the “best” service, plan or strategy for each of their students.

Most commonly, the role of the counselor is to assist students to understand and deal with social, behavioral, and personal problems that may impede their development. The counseling goal is preventative, to define the problem before it becomes a detrimental issue for the child. They may assist students in mediation between peers and/or teachers; find additional services to meet the students’ needs or identify other resources to assist the child. As communication experts, they consult and collaborate with parents, teachers, school administrators, psychologists, healthcare professionals and social workers in order to develop and implement strategies to help students succeed in school.

ELEMENTARY COUNSELORS

Primarily, the role of the elementary school counselors is to observe children. This is accomplished either within the classroom, during play activities or with an individual interview. They confer with teachers and parents to evaluate the children’s strengths, problems, or will assist in the identification of learning disabilities or special needs. By working collaboratively with parents, teachers and administrators, they make sure that the curriculum addresses both the academic and the emotional developmental needs of students.

SECONDARY COUNSELORS

Secondary school counselors assist students in identifying and evaluating their abilities, interests, talents, and personality characteristics in order to develop realistic academic and career goals. Your child’s high school counselor can advise or direct students regarding college majors, admission requirements, entrance exams, financial aid, trade or technical schools, and apprenticeship programs. They can also help students develop job search skills, such as resume writing, interviewing techniques and assist in career development and job-hunting techniques.

These counselors emphasize preventive and developmental counseling to provide students with the life skills needed to deal with problems before they occur and to enhance students’ personal, social, and academic growth. Counselors provide special services, including alcohol and drug prevention programs and conflict resolution classes. It may even be possible for them to identify cases of domestic abuse or other family problems that can affect a student’s performance ability. They interact with students individually, in small groups, or with entire classes.

Their tools include: the use of interviews, counseling sessions, interest and aptitude assessment tests, and other methods to evaluate and advise students.

Whether you’re a parent of a pre-school aged child or high school, stay connected with your child-volunteer, establish positive, collaborative relationships with school administrators, teachers and counselors. Staying connected with your child from preschool through highschool starts is challenging, but it is possible to be a part of your child’s school experience. Parents play an important role in their your child’s success in school!