

10 ways to be partners in your children's learning

Few endeavors are as humbling as parenting. Indeed, I believe God has allowed me to become a parent, in part, to show me my weaknesses and make me more dependent on Him, my eternal parent. As a parent who is also an educator, I can empathize with the Apostle Paul, who laments that he knows the good he should do but does not always do it. It is, therefore, with great humility that I offer these considerations for partnering in your child's learning.

1. Know your child

Look for and work with his or her strengths—which may or may not be the same as your own or those of your other children. Additionally, no one is good at everything, including your child. Help your child celebrate the successes of others.

2. Model curiosity

Three-year-olds are notorious for incessantly asking "Why?" When you ask why, though, you help your child develop a habit of thinking more deeply about how things work or could work.

3. Resist the urge to do it for them

While it is quite possible that the art project would be more aesthetically pleasing, or the research paper more accurate, or the

homework more complete if you would do most of it for them, this does not mean the product will be better—at least not for the sake of the child.

4. Explore new things together

Adulthood can too easily get in the way of remembering what it is like to be a novice at something and the thrill of accomplishing a new task. Help your child to see the fun of trying new things—even if the task does not go as planned.

5. Support your child's teachers

They will not always make the choices that you would, but most have your child's best interest in mind. A positive attitude is essential because your child spends significant amounts of time with these important people.



6. Promote mastery over performance

Make mistakes an acceptable part of learning. Let your child see you make mistakes and talk to your child about how errors can teach you considerably more than safe, correct answers.

7. Develop a can-do attitude

A child's beliefs about his or her abilities are a strong predictor of actual performance. Give your child lots of opportunities for authentic success to jump-start a positive cycle of beliefs and achievement.

8. Promote thinking over learning

Perhaps my favorite piece of parental advice is one that a Messiah student relayed from her mom. "Be a thinker, not just a learner."

9. Reminisce about your own growth

My children love to hear about overly simplistic or silly ideas I had about the world, and how my experiences have helped me develop a fuller picture of reality. These trips down memory lane remind my children that learning and growth take time.

10. Don't push too hard

The goal is to promote a *lifelong* love of learning, not to produce a grade school prodigy.

—*Jennifer Fisler* is an assistant professor of education at Messiah College. She lives in Dillsburg with her husband, Andrew, who teaches middle school mathematics, and their three children, Emma, 8, Shea, 5, and Kolya, 3, who may one day sit together and muse over the blessings and the curses of being the children of educators.

