

You Can Make a Difference – A Parent’s Role in the Organizational Life of Your Child

A Recap of the October 2008 Forum

Presented by Megan Stone of Stone Foundations of Learning, Inc.

How would you feel if on the way to a job interview you suddenly realized that you weren’t sure exactly where the interview was supposed to take place, you were dressed too casually, and you’d forgotten your resume? According to Megan Stone of Stone Foundations of Learning, that’s the adult equivalent of what many students feel at some point during their school day.

In a lively and informative presentation, Ms. Stone discussed why 80 percent of children feel unprepared for what is expected of them at school and how parents can help. Kids often have difficulty taking ownership of their own work in school because they’re used to having most things done for them by mom and dad. From a very young age, children try to do things for themselves, and in many cases, parents take away that sense of accomplishment by doing those very things for them. And as they get older, the desire to see them succeed makes it hard for parents to let kids fail.

During their school years, a child’s job is being a student, and parents need to give them back ownership of that job while making sure that they have the tools they need to be successful. In order to help a child feel in control of their world, parents need to let them make their own decisions and find safe ways to allow them to fail. These character-building ownership experiences will help them to know they are responsible for their own success.

Practical ways to give them ownership include not always answering their questions but encouraging them to think through solutions themselves, as well as biting your tongue when they do a job that you’re not totally satisfied with (i.e. not re-making the less than perfectly made bed). It’s also helpful to use language that conveys the message about who’s responsible, such as saying, “Whose job is that?” when asked to fix a child’s problem like driving forgotten homework to school.

To ensure that students succeed when they take ownership, it’s very important for parents to teach the tools needed to succeed in school. These tools include having two weeks of their planner filled in including evening activities which could conflict with getting homework done; checking Edline themselves, which allows *them* to convey important information -- both bad and good -- to parents; running a homework meeting with their parents weekly to provide a consistent time for discussion and to develop communication and listening skills; having a folder system at school and at home to keep track of their work; and finishing homework whenever possible on the day it is assigned.

As Ms. Stone said, “With ownership comes pride and with pride comes hard work.” For children to try their hardest and thus do their best in school they need to have both ownership of their work and the tools that will help them succeed.