

How can I ensure that my child fulfils their potential without being too pushy?

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It is completely natural for a parent to want their child to fulfil their potential; to do their best; to *succeed*. We all want that for our children. However, the challenge is to know what role we as parents need to play in a child's development to ensure that our children have the best possible chance of flourishing.

The first step is for the child to feel safe and secure in the learning environment – once this fundamental necessity is established, then the teachers can stretch and challenge – ideally in a way that encourages the child not to fear failure – as failure (or challenge) is a vital ingredient in the recipe for success. More of this later.

Young children and teenagers need their parents – no matter how uncommunicative or closed they may appear; they need to know that their parents are interested in their progress – that they care about how they are doing. A parent absolutely should be interested in their child's progress, performance and achievement – whether that be in the classroom, or if appropriate - on the sports field, in the music room, on stage or in the art school. However, it can be detrimental or counter-productive to be overly intrusive. This is something that we must guard against.

For any child's journey through education – primary or secondary – it is essential to have a strong network or team around that individual. Trust is an essential ingredient in the success of any team and in using the analogy of a team being crucial to the progress, development and fulfilment of potential, it is paramount to have mutual trust between parent and teacher (or school) and vice versa. Open and regular communication is encouraged and both parties must demonstrate respect towards each other. Teaching and education is an emotive topic – with every parent having experienced education at some stage themselves – irrespective of whether they are educators by profession or not. This “emotion” should be harnessed in the most positive and productive way – as ultimately teachers and parents are after the same goal – for that individual pupil to flourish. Here is where we must trust our educators.

It is absolutely natural for a parent to feel proud if their child succeeds. However, parents also have an important role to play in building the resilience of their children. To help with this, it is beneficial for parents and teachers to acknowledge effort or achievement in all children – by, for example, offering affirmation, congratulation or endorsement – a literal or metaphorical “pat on the back” and a recognition that their hard work has not gone unnoticed. However, it is also important for us as educators to ensure that children (and we) don't get too excited by “victories” and likewise that they (and we) don't get too despondent by “defeats”. We are all well advised to live by Kipling's words of over a century ago, as he asks us to “meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two imposters just the same”.

If we do this, we can be assured that we are equipping the children of today with the best possible chance of not just dealing with the inevitable challenges that will come their way but of flourishing in their future life. Surely, that is what we are all trying to achieve?