

Collaborating for School Success

Promote Success for Your Child within the School Setting

School success is often a challenge for children and their families and may be more so for those affected by trauma, loss, stigma, and marginalization. This has been the experience of many adoptees and children in foster or kinship care. Therefore, it is important that parents and caregivers develop specific strategies that will promote educational success.

As a parent, understanding your child's learning style and the teacher's approach allows you to advocate for individualized teaching to accommodate the child's needs. Does your child learn best visually (graphics and pictures), auditorily (sounds or music), verbally (writing or talking), physically (touch and use of body), logically (mathematics or reasoning), socially (in groups), solitarily (alone), or, typically, some combination of these styles?

Best practices in teaching demand delivering content in a manner that works for all learning styles, using a variety of teaching techniques. Parents can advocate within the school to ensure that responsive teaching techniques are used—this constitutes “inclusive” education, which is the expectation in education today.

Be an Advocate to Promote Adoption Awareness

Parents and caregivers can play a powerful role in promoting awareness of, and sensitivity around, non-traditional family constellations. Individually or in groups, you can have tremendous impact on how teachers, schools, and educational systems treat a child and approach the topics of adoption and foster/kinship care. Parents and caregivers need to build a *positive alliance* and then take the lead to educate teachers and administrators about core issues in adoption and kinship/foster care. This partnership helps school personnel to gain new insights and learn strategies for making the school more responsive to children's needs.

Strategies for School Success

- Maintain open communication with the school community about adoption, foster/kinship care, and—with *boundaries*—your child's history and background.
- Be mindful of your child's social/emotional experiences and academic achievements, as well as their learning style in comparison with the teaching style of their teachers.
- Be an advocate to ensure your child's needs are met, and to the extent possible, involve your child in your outreach and advocacy with the school.
- Prepare yourself and your child with responses to possible questions from teachers, students, and other school staff related to adoption, foster/kinship care.
- Get feedback from a range of school personnel (such as the PE teacher, guidance counselor, administrators, and lunchroom and recess monitors) about your child's behavior and performance, and be sure everyone takes this into account for ongoing assessment.
- Advocate for adoption and foster/kinship care-sensitive assignments, materials, and language.
- Educate teachers and counselors about adoption, foster/kinship care, the need for sensitive language, and our kids' culture; share informed books, organize support groups at the school and in the community, and help all to appreciate and celebrate non-traditional family structures.

Strickler, Amy and Mark Dodd. “School Success!” *North American Council on Adoptable Children*, 16 August 2022, nacac.org/resource/school-success/.