



How do you shape up?

You'll be familiar with portfolios of evidence as a means of tracking the performance of children at school. It's quite likely that some of you have been co-opted into helping in their preparation for the end of year exams. If there were a parenting exam at the end of the year, how would your portfolio of evidence measure up?

There are many criteria for good parenting. The six below are offered as thought-provoking starters.

- Do you have evidence that when you talk to your children you balance the times you share your wisdom with them with the amount of times that you encourage them to think things through for themselves? The best evidence here would be feedback from children.
- Can you show that you have been wisely protective of your children with regard to their use of the Internet and social networking sites? Or have you allowed them freedom that might put them at risk? The evidence could be family ground rules you have agreed to and how well you have ensured that everyone sticks to them.
- Have you shown up at school-related or social events to support your children, or have you been guilty at times of letting them down? Being reliable in doing what you undertake to do is the most important indicator.
- Can you show that you are interested in what your children are learning and how they are progressing, by regularly checking their homework and talking about the subjects they are doing? Do you know exactly what subjects they are being examined on at the end of the year? Have you been available to older children to talk about career choices and further education?
- Through the year, have you organised regular family time that is protected from work and cell phone interruptions? It's more about the quality of time than the amount of time you spend, and the extent to which it brings you together.
- Even when your own life is pressurized, have you remained accessible and approachable to your children so that you are one of the first people they come to for help and advice? The best evidence would be feedback from children themselves.

Exams can be tough. A parenting exam would be one of the toughest.

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