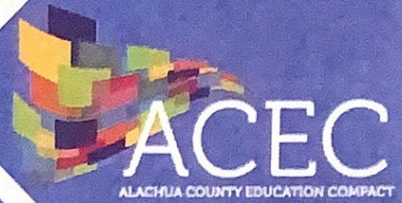




GREATER GAINESVILLE CHAMBER



SF SANTA FE COLLEGE

Parent  
Advocacy  
and Empowerment  
Community Resources

## Advocating for Your Student

**Advocacy** is the act of advocating for someone or something.

**Parent Advocacy:** Assuring that as a parent, your child is receiving the appropriate services at school and the quality education he or she deserves.

Advocacy can mean something different for every parent and child, but it generally involves paying close attention to the services and education that a child is receiving, and speaking up to the right people if the child is having a problem at school.

**Feel free to speak up and speak out on behalf of your child!**

### Characteristics of an advocate:

- Be informed – be aware of school policy and educational resources
- Never stop – parent advocacy should continue through all grade levels
- Communicate – converse with teachers, school and community leaders
- Be involved – volunteer, join PTA and/or other school activities

### What a parent advocate should know:

- School policies as outlined in the student handbook
- How the school system works
- Specific laws including individuals with Disability Act, if applicable
- Parent training opportunities in the schools and community
- What educational services are best for your individual child, because every child is different

### What Else Can You Do as a Parent Advocate?

- Become more politically active and involved in issues related to education that directly impact your child and other children.
- Meet with school personnel, school board members, state legislators and others, as necessary.
- Research education policies and decision-making to determine who is making the decisions that affect your child. Your school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and/or the Alachua County Council of PTA's can be a good resource of information. [www.accpta.org](http://www.accpta.org)
- If you are uncomfortable advocating for your child due to past negative experiences or for whatever reason, ask a friend, mentor, or professional to go with you to the schools or meetings to help you clearly state your concerns
- Consider additional resources available outside of your student's school. Within this booklet are family, mentor, wellness, mental health, legal and several other community resources that can be used for advocacy purposes.

## Support Parent Advocacy: Draft Proposal

**Strategic Plan:** Provide funding and support for those agencies, organizations and after school programs that aid in helping parents become stronger advocates for their children.

The Alachua County Education Compact is mobilizing the community around education to better prepare students for higher education and sustainable careers. A critical piece of this mobilization effort is parental advocacy. The Children's Trust has the potential to support these efforts in the following ways: (Recommendations are not in priority order).

- Increase parental understanding of school policy and procedures and how the education system works.
- Assist parents in becoming stronger advocates for their children who are disabled or have special needs.
- Improve parental understanding of their legal rights as parents and the legal rights of their children and how to best protect those rights in the schools.
- Help parents teach their children how to advocate for themselves, by providing them with specific skills and techniques that can be used.
- Provide a series of written and verbal communication skills training sessions for local parents.
- Pair parents with community volunteers, mentors or professionals who can assist and/or accompany them (when requested), during their live interactions with teachers and school personnel.
- Support faith-based agencies and churches that provide annual parent conferences, trainings and resources that empower parents and teach them stronger advocacy skills.
- Continue to support local PTA initiatives that provide sessions for parents related to strengthening their advocacy skills.
- Support programs that help parents advocate against abuse/violence in the home, since violence can directly or indirectly affect their child's academic performance in the schools.
- Support the "Gainesville for All" initiative's family component that looks for ways to strengthen families and break the generational cycle of poverty through education and many other areas, including advocacy.
- Empower parents to advocate for more mental health support and wellness initiatives for youth.