

## **HELPING CHILDREN ACHIEVE ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

We live in a time when success seems to be equated to being famous and making lots of money. A large portion of our current society glorifies athletic superstars, rock stars and singing divas, in spite of the fact that very few people can achieve such stardom and wealth. Unfortunately, the education level of a person does not seem to be held in high regard. The reality is that the level of education a person achieves is what is most likely to correlate with success in society. Fortunately, education in this country is available to everyone. It is never too late to learn and achieve success.

But, where and when do we begin? At home and in the mother's womb is a good place to start. A child should be read and sang to before birth. This will help to form the beginning of a strong foundation for life's challenges and future accomplishments. The parent/caregiver of a child is the first and most important teacher that child will ever have. As that child grows he/she is observing, hearing and learning everything the caregiver does and says. It is with this realization that I will review some of the most important factors necessary for children to achieve not only academic success in school, but also success later in life. These include motivation, prioritization, organization, concentration and time management. First, let us remember that before learning can occur, a child must have sufficient sleep, proper nutrition and good health. As a parent, you should keep health check ups and immunizations up to date. Never send your child to school without breakfast. It is the most important meal of the day and sets the stage for learning.

### **GET THEM MOTIVATED**

Motivation can be described as the desire or need to reach a goal. This can come from within oneself or from our environment (parents, teachers, etc.). A positive learning environment is necessary to create and improve motivation. Children should be challenged to learn something new as well as reassured when failure or the fear of failure occurs. Repetition of the learning exercise will reinforce the concept. Application of the concept to real life will lead to long term learning. For example, if your child is fascinated by bugs, encourage him/her to find out everything there is to know about bugs. Read about them, collect them, and watch videos about them. You will find that your child will become motivated to learn about other things with a similar passion. Make homework fun and not just a chore. Motivation is probably the most important factor for achieving success.

### **HELP THEM PRIORITIZE**

Most importantly, you need to realize that your child's education and homework is a priority. My father once told me. "The best inheritance I can leave you is your education." Help your child to list the things that need to be completed by order of importance. Difficult subjects will require more time and energy so allocate time accordingly. Allow the child to spend equal time on the subjects he/she enjoys most. Talk to the teacher and get a sense as to what he/she considers most important in the classroom. Talk to your child about goals and interests, in order to understand what is important to him/her. In time your child will learn to prioritize on his/her own.

### **HELP THEM GET ORGANIZED**

Help your child learn to organize by making a checklist, in order of importance, of items that must be completed and when they are due. Keep the list handy, such as the refrigerator door. Help organize the backpack so that it is easy to find everything. Use tools such as binders, and folders to keep subjects separate and organized. Work with your child so that he/she can come up with a plan that best suits him/her. Organization saves time, reduces stress, and eliminates confusion for everyone.

### **HELP THEM CONCENTRATE**

Eliminate distractions and interruptions while your child is working. First, find a well lit and quiet spot for homework completion. Turn off access to E-mail while working on the computer. Telephone, television and snacks are off limits during work time. Allow for break time and a nutritious snack away from the work area. Remember that for concentration to occur one must also be well rested and well fed. A tired and hungry child will not concentrate.

### **HELP THEM WITH TIME MANAGEMENT**

Help your child come up with a realistic schedule for work completion. Staying on task and keeping track of time will reduce stress and anxiety. Remember to allow time for a relaxing break, a snack and some time for fun play before the day ends. Have homework free days too. Friday is a good day for just play and relaxation after school. Weekends are also good free days if there are no Monday assignments due. If your child is enrolled in sports or other extra curricular activities, these must come second to academics and homework. It is crucial that your child understands this. A failing child will not compete in sports for long.

There is no guarantee for success in life. But, you are increasing your child's chances if you help him/her get motivated to learn and achieve realistic goals. Provide a positive home environment that encourages growth, compassion, independence, teamwork, leadership, and pride. Encourage, congratulate, and celebrate your child's successes. Failures should be seen as opportunities to learn and grow. Do not dwell on failures and allow your child to go back, regroup, and start over. Seek assistance from the school for extra help. Talk to the teacher and ask about after school programs, tutoring, and even testing for your child if it appears to be indicated. And please don't beat yourself up if there are days when you can't get your own self motivated, much less help your kids. We all have those days. Take a break, relax, enjoy your family, and regroup yourself. Don't lose faith because a brighter tomorrow is always on the horizon.

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