

Volunteer Insights

Inspiring Catholic Faith and Principles While Encouraging Academic Excellence

Fall 2007

Help Your Children Improve Their Study Skills

If your children need to improve their study skills, they need to develop the habit of studying in advance of the time papers are due or tests are given. Don't allow them to get locked into pulling all-nighters or cram sessions.

To get into a good study routine, young people need to decide exactly what they need to study and how much. Suggest they look at the class schedule, check class deadlines, and then enter those dates in their planner so that tests and papers don't sneak up on them.

If your children struggle with procrastination, help them learn to study whatever they dread most, first. This is a great principle to live by. It helps free you to enjoy the other things in life. Whatever you are putting off, just do it and get it out of the way.

Suggest children study in small chunks of time, interspersed with short breaks. If they've been working and find themselves not being productive, it's probably time for a break. Just remind them not to procrastinate. Also suggest that if they need to memorize a long list of facts, it is often advantageous to do that just before falling asleep.

If your child needs help in a subject, perhaps he or she can study with a friend. Help the child choose a friend who is serious about studying so that the friend won't just be a distraction.

--Adapted from the University of North Carolina website.

Parents Have Homework, Too

The gift of education is a most valuable one. When a child begins school, the parents' role takes on a new dimension, that of enhancing the "formal education." Attitude, support, priorities, consistency, communication, missed work, and attendance are all segments of the parents' homework.

Attitude is important. If you have a positive attitude toward school, your child will too.

Support is crucial. Your child cannot go it alone. When he or she has an assignment that requires special help or supplies, you are the one he or she will turn to for help. If for some reason you cannot help, speak to the teacher.

Priorities are important. For a child to succeed in school, he must be advised which pursuits are most important, especially in light of the many interesting and beneficial activities available.

Parent-child communication is important. Talk with your child. Listen to his or her opinions and concerns.

Parent-teacher communication is vital. Keep the lines of communication open. Check your child's agenda daily.

Missed work. If your child is absent due to illness, he or she may need extra attention from you in order to get caught up on assignments.

Attendance. You, the parent, have the power to control your child's attendance, including being on time. Poor attendance and tardiness directly affect a child's success, emotionally as well as scholastically.

As long as you are responsible for your child, your homework continues. If you don't hold up your end, your child's school experience will fall short of its potential. The complete article "Parents Have Homework, Too" by Sybil Humphries, can be found online at:

www.middleweb.com/INCASEPrntHmwk.html.

Study Skills Websites

Comprehensive Study Skills Help

<http://www.how-to-study.com/>

<http://www.studygs.net/>

<http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html>

How to Show Your Children That Reading Is Important

Families commonly mark their calendars for future special events, such as out-to-dinner night, sporting events, theater night, neighborhood gatherings, birthday parties, and so forth. Why not include family book night?

Parents who show as much excitement over reading books as they do over social and sporting events are helping their children move ahead of the crowd. Reading should come first, and parents should set a good example at home. If one night a month, or even one night a week, were marked on the calendar as book night, imagine how this would benefit the children and the family as a unit.

Ideas for book night activities are endless and should be varied, offering entertainment and fun for everyone. Here are a few suggestions:

- Start a competition in which the person who reads the most books, and reports on them, gets special privileges or a prize.
- Like a book club, your family can choose a book, read it as a group, and discuss its theme. Let each person have a turn at selecting the book of the month.
- Families can make scheduled trips to the public library and read for an hour, or they can select books and bring them home to read.

Major book chains offer special free events in the evenings and on weekends for all ages and interests. Attendance at these events can be scheduled in advance. Most stores even offer a calendar of events. Add family book night to your events calendar. This will show your children that reading takes priority.

Attendance Linked to Achievement

Parents who let their kids miss a lot of school may be setting them up for academic failure. Researcher Mary Frase tracked students who dropped out of high school. One thing that nearly all of them had in common was poor attendance and tardies.

One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to get your child to school on time every day.

The start of a school year is a

time to help your child make this a habit.

Follow these tips:

- **Enforce a regular bedtime** for your child. Make sure you have an evening routine that includes some time for reading.
- **Make sure your child is organized** so he can get out the door with what he needs.

- **Remember that everything** you add to a schedule means something must be taken away. For example, if you add before and after school activities, you take away time for your child to read, play and study.

Some kids can handle a busier schedule. When extra activities leave your child too tired for homework or to wake up in the morning, it's time to cut back.

Creating a Positive Homework Environment

Do you have a child who hates to do homework? If you do, it's important not to get into a power struggle over the issue. A power struggle creates stress in the household and rarely rewards participants with what they want.

As a parent, what can you do to get your child to turn in homework assignments on time? Setting up the right environment is key. Here are a few tips on what you need to have in your home:

- ✓ A good dictionary.
- ✓ A thesaurus.
- ✓ A world atlas.
- ✓ A metric ruler and a compass.
- ✓ Glue and a stapler.
- ✓ Lots of lined paper.
- ✓ Pens, pencils, colored pencils, a pencil sharpener, and markers.
- ✓ A library card.
- ✓ Internet access.
- ✓ Poster board.
- ✓ A subscription to your local newspaper for reading and studying current events.

--Adapted from the *Chicago Sun-Times*.