

EDUCATION BREAKS THE POVERTY CYCLE

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We are astonished at the number of children who have no idea why they go to school. A teacher said to a 7 year-old student recently, "Do you think your teachers are mean and just give you work to keep you busy?" She said, "Yes." The teacher asked another child, "Why do you think you come to school?" The answer was, "To learn." The teacher asked, "Why do you need to learn?" There was absolute silence. The child had no idea. Unfortunately, this situation is very common.

Very few children know what the benefits of a good education are. If kids have no idea why they need to learn, they are far less likely to put the effort in. I am always saddened when an adult jokingly says within their children's hearing, "Oh, I just went to school to eat my lunch." "I never liked school." "I was never any good at math so I can understand why my kid is not good at it either." What does a child deduce from these parent messages?

Let's consider the process of learning. From infancy a happy child is one who has his needs met immediately. He cries and something good happens to satisfy him. The louder he yells, the quicker the gratification comes. It takes time for a child to learn the concept of patience such as waiting his turn, getting up when he falls down or picking up his blocks and starting to build them again. When a child realizes that a goal that takes time to succeed is often more satisfying than instant gratification he will work hard to achieve it.

So what is the good news about learning? Education teaches us logic and helps us make wise choices in life. It not only gives us skills in memorizing facts and understanding concepts, but the discipline of tenacity and setting and achieving goals. There is power in knowledge. Education protects us from blindly accepting the values and beliefs of another. Being educated breaks the poverty cycle. The better educated we are the better jobs we get. Higher-level jobs create greater incomes.

Education creates fulfilling work opportunities, greater income and satisfaction of achievement. It expands our horizons of possibility to try new things and to succeed beyond our wildest dreams. It creates confidence and makes for a much more interesting person. An educated, confident, satisfied person is more optimistic about life and will likely live longer because their brain is stimulated even when the body weakens. We met a 93 year-old woman recently who had just completed her Bachelor's Degree, just because she felt like doing it to keep her gray cells ticking over.

Learning is not just for kids in school. We need to adopt and instill into our kids a lifelong learning approach. They need to see us constantly upgrading our

knowledge and skills. We literally need to sit down with our children and explain the value of education from an early age, and the rewards of studying hard at school in order to succeed in life. We need to praise them for trying hard and not just when they come home with an “A” grade. We should not accept mediocrity. When we allow our kids to coast through school with low grades we are setting them on an unsatisfying path for the rest of their lives.

In this country we are blessed to have a relatively level playing field where education is concerned. Everybody has the chance to get a good education. We need to take advantage of the rich experiences that a good education brings us.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.