

GOOD STUDY HABITS - Pt 2

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In my last article I talked about the influence parents have on kids' attitudes to study, by giving personal value to education and by being an example. I also described my own experience of finding that I could do well at school when I found something I was good at. When I saw results, it made all the difference to my own self-esteem and I went on to achieve far more than I ever thought possible, in various fields.

Today, if children excel, peers often criticize them and call them derogatory names. It doesn't seem to happen with athletic prowess so much as with academics. The 'nerds' and the 'geeks' are often seen as those who spend all their time with their noses in books instead of 'having fun'. It is not often that book learning is depicted with the same enthusiasm and energy as sport.

A healthy attitude to study needs to be planted in kids' minds from the very beginning and should be included as a strong family value. When toddlers have books read to them, a positive attitude is created immediately. They associate book reading with parent attention - cuddles and laughter. There is also plenty of positive affirmation shown when the child recognizes shapes, colors and words.

Unfortunately, when kids go to school, reading at home tends to diminish as homework and reading 'for fun' gets lost in the busyness of family life. It is not solely the teacher's responsibility to encourage kids to read. When parents show interest in what their kids are reading and learning, then kids will continue to associate reading with being a positive experience and not merely a chore. When a child is excited about the opportunities that reading brings, then study comes much more easily. The next skill is to work out how they can best retain knowledge for the future.

Studying effectively is a skill in itself. Here are some tips for your family. Make a regular time for study, even when it is not required homework. Show support by having all family members doing some kind of study or reading during 'study' time. Create an environment that will be conducive to a positive leaning experience. Trying to study in a noisy environment does not usually work well. Have your child work in the same place each day, like at a study desk or the dining room table where there is good lighting. Lying on a bed to study with a TV going won't cut it.

Encourage your child to pace their study or homework by using a planner to map out appropriate lengths of time for projects or study for tests. Show them how to do this. Play games with your kids that require memory skills. To practice, get them to learn a poem or the lyrics to a song. Ensure there are plenty of resources for them to access. Each day, have them learn five new words, whether they have any homework or not. Let them spell the words, help them check the meaning in a dictionary (a must in every home), and tell them

how those words are used in context. Get them to say the word out loud, spell it, write it in the air, write it with a finger on the desk/table, say the word again, then write a short sentence to show they understand its meaning. This method uses three body senses and reinforces retention.

Train your child to place everything back in their school bag when homework has been completed and you have checked that everything has been done to your satisfaction. The methods above can be used with children seven and above, and may be more parent-directed at younger ages. If your child comes home regularly saying they have no homework, check with their teacher, and give them some anyway.

Expect the best effort from your kids. They will rise to the occasion when the level of expectation is reasonable. Sloppy or careless work will not give them satisfaction or good grades.

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.