
INSIGHTS

FOR PARENTS

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Helping Your Children Achieve

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- ❖ INSIGHTS FOR PARENTS is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Written by Skip Bonuccelli, communications consultant.

For many, taking tests is a difficult and emotion-filled experience. Students often feel unprepared and stressed out and thus face a test with feelings of failure rather than confidence. However, these fears can be overcome, and students will do better on tests, if you help them develop a few simple, yet effective study skills early in their educational experience.

Check each day.

- ❖ Check in on your children's daily progress by spending a few minutes and asking open-ended questions. This lets your children know that you want to be in touch and are interested in their progress. Ask questions that allow your children to explain the day's activities in and out of class. Don't cross examine; have an interesting and informative discussion.

Say to your children:

- ♦ "I am really interested in what you learned in math today."
- ♦ "Would you teach me how to do that?"
- ♦ "How did you do on your spelling test? What were some of the words on the test?"

Remember, your goal is to learn more about what took place at school and information about your children's progress. Such questions are far better than the traditional, "How was school?" which is generally followed by, "Oh it was fine." If your children know that you are going to ask about the day's activities they will be more apt to be ready to describe their day and will generally look forward to the interaction.

Teach note taking.

- ❖ It is important that students understand and are able to use the information taught in class. Thus, they have to be active, rather than passive participants in the learning process. Taking notes can be very helpful if done in a way that fits the individual student's learning style. Many students find themselves taking notes that have little or no value and become frustrated when reviewing for a test. The earlier you help your children develop note taking skills that work for them, the more they will benefit from this knowledge.

Suggestions to consider as you help your children learn to take notes:

- ♦ Have a spiral notebook for each class.
- ♦ Develop a method of abbreviating words or phrases that speeds the note-taking process and allows the student to concentrate on what the teacher is saying rather than spelling out each word.
- ♦ Design a method of highlighting key points emphasized by the teacher.

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- ♦ Have a consistent place on the page for the date and topic covered that day.
- ♦ Set a time each day to review notes. Reviewing the activities of the day and clarifying sentences or phases will pay off in the long run. This review allows the student to reinforce the lesson and gives him or her the opportunity to ask questions the next day. This is far better than trying to cram the night before the test by reviewing several weeks of notes for the first time and, as a result, becoming confused.

Encourage learning.

- ❖ Parents are children's first teacher and can lay the groundwork for habits that encourage learning. Below are some ways you can help your children achieve at high levels on both standardized and classroom tests.
 - ♦ Read to your children, and have them read to you.
 - ♦ Ask your children to give their opinions and to explain their thinking on various topics.
 - ♦ Ask lots of "why" questions.
 - ♦ Encourage your children to write. Make corrections together.
 - ♦ Praise the children's progress.
 - ♦ Correct mistakes in a positive tone of voice.
 - ♦ Make learning at home as enjoyable as possible for both you and your children.
 - ♦ Model the characteristics you wish to see in your children.
 - ♦ Be sure your children know that your family places a high priority on education.
 - ♦ Play games that involve problem-solving.
 - ♦ Practice basic skills such as multiplication tables, spelling and vocabulary.
 - ♦ Ask your children's teachers for materials or books to use at home to create an environment which encourages self-education and motivation.
 - ♦ Provide a quiet place to study.
 - ♦ Before a test be sure your children:
 - Get a good night's sleep;
 - Have a well-balanced breakfast consisting of foods high in protein; and
 - Hear encouraging words from you urging them to do their best.