

Psych Savvy

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

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STUDYSKILLS

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September: The beginning of a new school year. **For** most of you the year begins with a fresh start and high hopes for your children's success in school. Even the youngest school aged children can begin to develop patterns now that will speak to their **future** organization and planning skills.

Start now to head off frustration and failure in school due to a lack of study skills. **Good** study habits are important for: success in school, feelings of competence, positive attitudes and a sense of control over their life.

Form a team with your child and teacher with yourself **as** the head coach. Develop a system that works **for** your child and use it consistently. Student need for parental support does not disappear in middle and high school!

Take an inventory of current time usage when in and out of school. **For** fun and enlightenment conduct a survey of the amount of time your children spend a) watching TV, b) playing video games, c) reading, d) playing computer games and e) playing sports **or** getting physical exercise. Do TV, video games and or computer games seem out of balance? Take steps now **to** balance activities and establish a healthy combination. How about in school? **Does** your child have study time but not use **it** wisely?

Four Basic Principles to Enhance Study Skills

1. Make homework completion a positive experience; associate it with love and affection, freedom, fun and control.

Be available to provide non critical assistance. Provide help, support demonstrations--this does not mean doing it **for** them. Let children choose where, when and how they complete homework. Some **kids** work best with music on some don't. Some students prefer doing least preferred tasks first others last. Let your child decide. If a subject is particularly challenging build in stretch breaks.

Schedule something fun or relaxing after homework is done (snacks, TV, call friends). Use a visualization technique of breezing through the work or being a successful student. Brainstorm how to reach those goals. Put a plan in action. Match an activity and its duration to the age: little ones can read picture **books**, practice simple spelling, practice letter sounds and naming pictures for **5-15** minutes. Upper elementary students should be able to work **for 25-30** minutes.

2. Make homework completion a high priority.

Establish and follow a routine of studying at the same time, in the same place. Take into account family routines, commitments and favorite TV shows. Ideally your family should agree to a study hour with no distractions (TV, phone, stereo). **As** an adult use this time to pay bills, read, assist your child, get paperwork done. Provide good lighting and comfortable study areas. Have needed supplies on hand; ruler, pencil, eraser, paper, markers, glue, reference **books**. etc. Demonstrate and enforce **that** study time is more important than other activities. **Sports** are important for physical, social and mental health but should not take priority over mastering academic skills.

If needed provide a tutor for your child who is knowledgeable about the subject and can help the child without becoming **angry** or frustrated. Know when tests are due and schedule study time. Know when projects are due and help your child to break down the task then set a time line for each step.

3. Use homework completion to teach organizational **skills** and improve learning skills.

Remember the **primary** purpose of homework is to foster work habits and improve learning.

Help your child to learn how to use an assignment book, record in it daily, carry it back and forth between home and school. Help your child learn time management by estimating time needed to complete various **tasks** and then monitoring that time. Many students think the work will take much longer than it actually does. Others procrastinate because they underestimate.

Sometimes completed homework gets lost. Get in the habit of putting all incomplete work in a "to do" folder and all completed work in a "done" folder. Place the folder in a backpack **as** soon **as** the study time is through.

4. Provide and enforce logical and meaningful consequences.

TV Phone time **AFTER** homework. Week-end **overnights/** dates if work is complete.

Along with your children note their progress, improvements and areas of need. Display well done work in **a** prominent place. Providing genuine praise is a great reward. Call a relative or **friends** and "brag" about your child's improvements when they are around to "overhear" you. Schedule a family activity-outing, board games **as** a reward for good effort.

If children "forget" homework or supplies have something else planned for your prearranged study time. Read, practice math facts, practice writing by providing story **starters**: If I had...If I could If I won If reasonable, have your child walk back to school to get materials. (One or two times walking back to school and your child is unlikely to forget again). **IF** you need to drive them back to school charge the child gas money through allowance or extra household chores.

SUMMARY

Early action now will set the stage for a smooth school year in which both you and your child can be happy and proud about study skills and school success. Take note of your child's needs and progress. Celebrate your successes! If you have further questions contact your child's teacher and or the building school psychologist.

References:

Benson, Peter Galbraith, Judy Espeland, Pamela. **what Kids Need to Succeed.**

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