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www.TeachingK-8.com

The Parent Connection

A Monthly Newsletter for Parents

Homework Helpers

Assist kids to find their focus

Parents are vital in the successful completion of homework. Every day, students bring home activities that are as much about process as product. Setting aside the appropriate place, time and materials is only the beginning. Checking for neatness, completion and correctness goes a step further. So, what else is there a parent can do?

Zero in on the target

Being sure that your child has a complete understanding of the assignment is vital. Does he or she know what this assignment has to do with the materials studied in class? Can he or she specifically tell you what it is that the teacher expects, and what is on the rubric that will be used to grade the subject? This is only partially about getting good

grades; more importantly, it is about being able to focus on the topic well enough to see the target.

Throughout the assignment or project, ask your child to describe to you what relationship this segment has toward reaching the conclusion. Make sure the assignment is seen as a path leading to a specific place.

The on-time successful completion of homework will prepare your child to use these practiced skills to identify and hit any project target anytime, anywhere. What boss in today's world wouldn't love an employee who could do that?

Library Reminder

Encourage lifetime use of this resource

In the United States we have free access to books, periodicals, computers and library services. Many schools and communities in the world don't even have libraries. We don't realize the extraordinary advantage this gives our children in the worldwide community. Teachers take your elementary-aged children to the school library and provide time for them to return time after time to select books.

Missed message?

But according to a recent poll by the Young Adult Library Services Association and SmartGirl.org, almost 16% of teenagers visit neither public nor school libraries, and many of the students polled don't expect to use a library anytime within the next five years.

One explanation for this trend is that
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Books to Share

March 2 is Read Across America Day, a great time to celebrate reading as a family!

Biscuit by Alyssa Capucilli (HarperCollins,1996) is a wonderful read-along for beginners. It is the 10th anniversary of this puppy story that now has many sequels.

I Spy Two Eyes: Numbers in Art by Lucy Micklethwait (Greenwillow, 1993) incorporates searching for different objects while sharing art.

Mirandy and Brother Wind by Patricia C. McKissack (Knopf,1988) is a story that celebrates the tradition of the cakewalk dance.

I Could Do That: Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote by Linda Arms White (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005) is an engaging tale about the Old West that shows girls what they can accomplish.

Grandpa's Teeth by Rod Clement (HarperCollins,1998) is a fun who-dun-it chapter book that will keep you guessing until the last page.

Small Steps by Louis Sachar (Delacorte, 2006) is the sequel to *Holes*. Read and discuss together the choices made by the main character, Armpit.

Field Trips From Home

- 1) dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Performing_Arts/Theater/Youth_Theatre/Theater_Companies/ lists area youth theaters.
- 2) www.kitefestival.org is the site for the Smithsonian Kite Festival in Washington, D.C. Enter a homemade kite or start your own festival.
- 3) www.historychannel.com/women is a good place to find out about famous women in history.
- 4) www.invent.org lists invention days and week-long camps in schools and museums around the country. It's not too early to plan for summer camp.

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using search engines is more fitting for current lifestyles. While this may be true as an information source for research it should still cause us to pause.

For one thing, students must be repeatedly cautioned to be selective in their online searches, not only for safety reasons but also for authenticity. There are huge differences between .gov, .org, .edu, .com and .net sites and children must be trained to recognize the differences.

Another major concern among educators is the continuing plague of plagiarism. Cut and paste is particularly habit-forming when conducting research on the Internet.

All things in moderation

Perhaps what we need to keep in education is the great variety of resources available to students of all ages. This includes CDs, DVDs, the web and the local public library. Take your children there one evening soon and get everyone their own library cards. Then spread out into your own areas of interest and select a pile of books to take home and enjoy for a week or two. Make it a habit and keep your visits consistent.

Before you return the books, sit down with pencil and paper. Add up the financial worth of the books that you have all just enjoyed for free. Then smile all the way back to the library.

Different Styles

Fun study habits spell success regardless of learning style

Whether one is primarily a visual learner or an auditory learner, our senses all work together in helping us learn. Whichever is the case for your children, writing in various colors, reading out loud, incorporating physical movement throughout the school day and building models would likely enhance their education as well as strengthen their memory.

Websites for Parents

- 1) www.pack-o-fun.com This is a great site for craft ideas using items found around the house.
- 2) www.worldalmanackforkids.com This site contains lots of great help for homework.
- 3) www.harperchildrens.com Show your kids a slide show of how a book is made.
- 4) www.literacycenter.net Play different alphabet games on this site that offers free literacy lessons in four languages.
- 5) www.childrensmuseum.org Learn about sculpture and make some easy ones at home that are planned according to materials, cost, directions and estimated times.

Observe your children to assess how they learn best. Incorporate many styles of study at home to enhance education and memory. For instance, when you help a child study for a test, read the study guide aloud. Have your child rewrite the important steps while saying them out loud to you. Come up with a rap that can be said or sung while jumping rope or snapping fingers while also learning states and capitals or vocabulary words. Practice spelling words while bouncing a basketball on each letter.

Young children do well to trace letters or geometric shapes. Even putting some sand or whipped cream on a tray in which to write words will make a study session fun and successful.

Mix it up

The important thing is to vary studying as much as possible. It will keep the learner interested and thinking creatively. After you have implemented some different study tactics that include seeing, hearing and touching, see what study ideas your child can come up with. Just be sure the final goal is not lost sight of in the midst of all the fun.

You might even find yourself looking forward to homework time...and you just might incorporate some of these learning techniques the next time you have something new to learn at the office. ↓

Skill-Builders at Home

1) **Red Light, Math Light** – When stopped at a red light, ask basic math facts (4+2, 7x3, etc.) of the kids in the backseat. Take turns among the kids or let them quiz each other.

2) **Which Way, Partner?** – When driving for everyday errands or on vacation, ask directionality questions. Left or right for the store? North or south from here to Grandma's? Help your kids have a solid sense of where they live and travel.

3) **Active Accounting** – Set up an Excel spreadsheet for each child's allowance. Help them keep track of how much and where they spend it and how long it takes to save up for something special.

4) **Measuring Monster** – Ask your young children to place cooking spoons and cups in order from smallest to largest and do the measuring called for in a recipe. They can also help measure soap for the washing machine and bubbles for the bathtub.

5) **Time Keeper** – Provide a kitchen timer for use in setting 20 minutes of household silence for math homework, 15 minutes to practice an instrument, 10 minutes to call a friend and 30 minutes for a television program. Use this consistently so the children will learn to focus on the task at hand and get a feel for elapsed time.