



Academically Supporting Your Child in High School

Eastwood Collegiate Institute

This booklet contains information that will help you support your child with their school work, including information about:

- how ***your involvement is crucial***,
- supporting your child with their school work,
- top skills your child should have,
- the importance of organization, and
- homework information and suggestions.

Information in this booklet has been gathered from a variety of sources, along with personal opinions and suggestions.

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Quick Information:



- Your child may need to **be reminded DAILY** that school is their job, and should be their priority.
- **Attendance**- on-time every day for all classes should be the norm. Once behind, some never catch up.
- Students must take **responsibility** for getting up and to school on time.
- Start off with **supplies** needed: backpack or bag, lock, planner, pens and pencils, ruler, calculator and binder with paper.
- A **positive attitude** towards learning is VERY important and **effort** is critical.
- **Communication** between the student, parent and teacher needs to be ONGOING.
- Your child is not an adult, yet, they need to take responsibility and grow. Monitoring and help is still required, and your **guidance and support will be critical**.
- A **planner** of some type is necessary. They will have too many items to remember, and this is good practice for increased responsibility for adulthood.
- **Organized notebooks** will lead to greater success.
- **Homework should be done every night**- in whatever form it may take.
- The **more involved you can** be in your child's schooling, the more likely they are to be successful.

"It takes a village to raise a child."

African Proverb

We are all here to support the transition to adulthood, for your child to be successful in whatever path they may choose to go down. This requires us to all work together.



Part 1: Your Involvement

Families are important teachers.

A common view held by parents with children in senior and high school is:

“Since I don’t know how to teach chemistry, literature, algebra, or (choose a subject), I can’t help my child with schoolwork”.

This view is far from true!!!

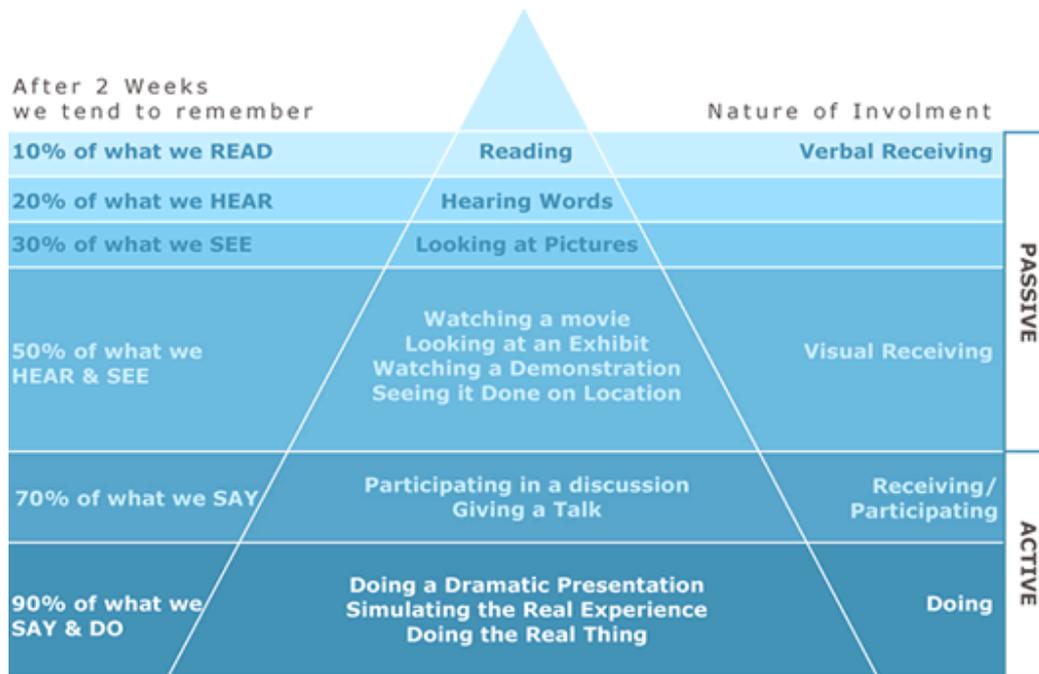
In fact, parents can play a central role in helping their adolescent children grow into independent learners. By helping children learn the vital *skill of learning*, parents can support their children’s success not only in secondary school, but also as they move on to work and higher education.

Adolescents and Learning

In the rush to complete homework as quickly as possible and the stress of passing high-stakes exams, many students see education as nothing more than an information transfer process. **Many students believe that learning is the same thing as memorizing and success is based on a good memory.**

Students who know how to learn typically understand (whether consciously or not) **that learning is a process that always begins with a question or problem.** Learning takes place when we answer these questions and then make the new-found understanding part of our prior knowledge.

CONE OF LEARNING



SOURCE: EDGAR DALE

In order to answer a question we need to **effectively use resources** that are available to us. Examples of common resources that students use in completing schoolwork are:

- Teachers
- Family members
- Peers
- Books
- Other print and media sources
- Observations
- Instruments/tools
- Trial and error

We can say that we have learned when we are able to do something that we weren't originally able to.

Knowing how to begin solving a problem and what resources are most appropriate for answering a particular question is based on the **student's ability to connect the question to some prior knowledge** about the topic.

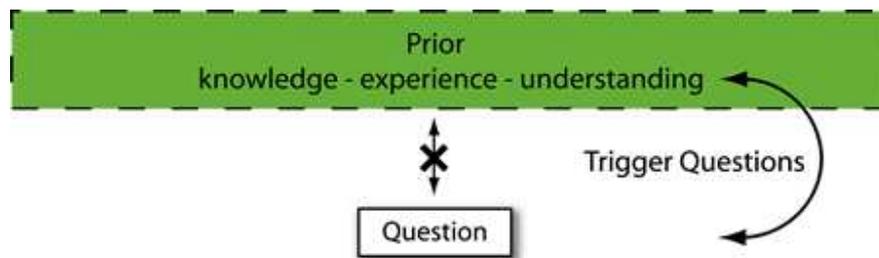
How do parents fit into this learning process?

Using *TRIGGER QUESTIONS*, providing *RESOURCE HELP*, and using *BIG IDEAS* when working with your child are three ways that parents can play an important role.

Trigger Questions

Students at the secondary school level struggle with making connections to prior knowledge when they are doing their schoolwork. It is a skill that many students do not develop. They approach their schoolwork as if each new assignment is an independent, isolated piece of information that has no connection to what they have done previously.

Parents can use questions, which I call trigger questions, to help children make important connections between new problems and what they have learned before. I use the term trigger questions because these types of questions trigger, or spark, the association of the new question with the child's prior knowledge base.



Resource Help

Family members play a crucial role in helping children identify, get access to, and learn how to use the resources they need to successfully complete schoolwork.

For example, consider these questions:

1. Do your children have the books that they need to complete an assignment?
2. Do they know where to look in the book to find useful information?
3. Are there family members that can serve as content experts and help with an assignment?
4. If you or your children do not understand an assignment or how to complete it, do your children have targeted questions to ask their teacher the next day in school?
5. Is your child spending unproductive hours searching the internet for information to complete their assignments?
6. Are there libraries, museums or other community resources that your child does not know about?



What's the Big Idea?

Not all of us can teach our child algebra, literature, or biology and that's ok.

At minimum parents should try to learn about the "big ideas" that their child is covering in class. All subjects are organized around big, or essential, ideas that define how experts think about their discipline.

So where do parents learn about these big ideas? The ideas that are most important to a particular assignment were most likely discussed in class in the recent past. *Referring with the student to a recent reading assignment, checking the headings in the text, looking at their notebook, or accessing an on-line resource are some ways to identify these big ideas.*

The best source, however, is your child's teacher. It is the teacher who decides which ideas to emphasize and what the goals for a particular class, unit or lesson are. Working with the teacher (whether at the parent's, teacher's or school's initiative) is the best way to understand what your child is expected to do.



Conversation Starters

- What are the big ideas that you are going to be discussing in this class?
- What are the goals for this assignment – topic - lesson - unit - week - month?
- What should my child be able to do at the end of this lesson or unit?
- Could you suggest some questions or strategies that I could use to help my child with this lesson?
- I was helping my child with the other night and we both had trouble understanding. Could you explain to me?
- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses in this class? What skills can I focus on when I help them at home?
- What are the resources available to my child at school if they are having trouble with this assignment?

Final Thoughts

Learning is a process that requires the use of available resources to connect new understanding to prior knowledge. Learning this skill is what becoming an independent learner is all about.

Source: <http://www.academicresources.org/learning.html#>



Part 2: Homework

There are five key ways parents can assist with homework:

1. Study Space and Materials

Parents should provide their child with the space and materials he needs to do a good job. A quiet space that is free from distractions is best. Checking with teachers about what supplies are needed, and making sure they are obtained, can reduce stress and last minute trips to the store.

2. Time and Task Management

The student might need help structuring school work time and other activities so they have plenty of time for their assignments. The planner received from school can be used for time and task management purposes. They may need some practice breaking assignments down into chunks and scheduling time for their homework and other responsibilities.

3. Assignment /Notebook Review

Students may need help reviewing their work when it's completed, to make sure nothing has been forgotten. Students often attempt to do their homework from memory and then wind up missing something. It's good to give reminders to use their notebook or instructions as a guide to confirm that everything is done and ready to be handed in.

4. Developing Organizational Skills

Students should be encouraged to organize their binders, notebooks, and lockers every week or two to keep things orderly. If their belongings are neat, the student will have an easier time keeping track of what needs to be done, won't lose things, and will feel more in control of their success.

5. Monitoring Grades

Parents should remind their child to check their grades frequently, so there aren't any surprises at report card time. Knowing their grades also helps them take ownership of them; if they are doing well, their confidence will be enhanced, and if not, they can seek help before they get too far behind.

As the year progresses, parents should find that their kids become more independent with these tasks. When that happens, parents can gradually reduce the amount of support they give. Parents should monitor grades as well, so they can jump back in if more help is needed. Check out our website in Academics- Students Marks @

<http://eci.wrdsb.ca/www/ecimarks/>

Source:

http://youthdevelopment.suite101.com/article.cfm/homework_help_for_middle_school_students



What if my child says they don't get or have homework?

Best practices would say that your child should be doing **homework every night**, whether it is assigned or not. What can they do?

- Start *study notes* the very FIRST DAY
- *Re-read* the day's notes and make sure that it all *makes sense*. If not, research, ask a friend or write questions down to ask the teacher the next day.
- *Create questions* that can be used for study purposes- write them on a cue card with answers on the back.
- Look up *information connected to the topic*. The more they can see the relevance and where it can be 'used in the real world', the better the likelihood that they understand and will remember it.
- Spend time each day *organizing their notebooks*.
- *Start assignments and/or projects early*- read their instruction sheet and have them explain in their own words what they think the requirements are.
- *Reading is also critical*. The better the reader they become, the more successful they will be in school, and more importantly, in life. Have them read- not texts, but newspapers, books, online articles, comic books, instruction manuals- anything where they are required to take in words and make sense of them!

How much time should they be spending on homework each night? 1- 2 hours would be appropriate for a high school student, though it is dependent on the courses they take.

Part 3: Top 10 Skills for High School Students

Developing the following ten skills will help your child achieve success in school, in their chosen career, and in life.



Take the time to talk to them about these topics- it may be a great way to become 'involved' in their schooling.

1. Time Management

It's easy to over-schedule or "double-book" if we aren't careful. Manage your time wisely and you'll get the maximum out of each day. For this, use a planner (paper or electronic).

2. Good Study Habits

If you've got them, great! If not - well, there's still time to develop them. Good study habits include these basics:

- Always be prepared for class, and attend classes regularly. No ditching!
- Complete assignments thoroughly and in a timely manner.
- Review your notes daily rather than cram for tests the night before.
- Set aside time each day for study -- even if you don't have homework or a test the next day!

3. The Ability to Set Attainable Goals

It's important to set goals, as long as they're attainable. Setting goals that are unreasonably high is a set-up -- you'll be doomed to frustration and disappointment.

4. Concentration

Listen to your teacher and stay focused. Be sure that you understand the lesson. If you don't understand something, ASK QUESTIONS!!

5. Good Note-Taking

You can't possibly write down everything the teacher says. But, you do need to write down the important material. Note-taking should be in a form that's most helpful to you. If you really have a problem with note-taking, talk to your teacher. Do whatever it takes!

6. Completion of Assignments

Teachers assign homework for a reason. While it may seem like "busywork" at times, it definitely has a purpose. Put your homework to good use. Remember, you'll only get out of it what you put into it!

7. Review of Daily Notes

Don't wait until the night before the test to review your notes. Go over your notes each day while the lecture is still fresh in your mind.

8. Organizational Skills

Keeping yourself organized will save you valuable time and allow you to do everything you need to do.

9. Motivation

You need to be motivated to learn and work hard, whether or not you like a specific subject or teacher. Self-motivation can be extremely important when you aren't particularly excited about a class. Set your mind to it and do it -- no excuses. Success is up to you!

10. Commitment

You've started the course, now you need to complete it. Do the best -- and get the most out of it -- that you can! Your commitment will pay off in the end

Source: <http://www.sunnysideud.k12.az.us/content/top-10-skills-high-school-students>



Part 4: Organization

Binders:

If using one binder, it should have sections (use tabs) - one for each subject.

You may choose to have a separate binder for each subject.

A separate folder may need to be used to bring important papers, homework and projects back and forth to school.

Notes:

Notes should be taken every day. This may mean just adding extra information to handouts.

Dates should be included, along with a title, so that it is easier to organize and search. The notes should be marked up- highlighting, underlining, different ink colours, etc., make the note-taking more interactive and helpful when studying or reviewing information.

Planners:

For each day, any work assigned should be recorded- with ALL the information given. Typically teachers have an area on the board where students can 'check-in'. Tests should be written on the date they are happening, with a countdown to them.

Put a big planner in your home where it can be consulted (like a dry-erase).

Part 5: Study Skills



Studying is not just memorizing.... It is understanding and working with the information provided in class.

Studying does not just mean re-reading notes- the brain can be very easily tricked into thinking we know information in front us... we need to work with it! This means:

- Highlighting important information
- Asking questions and being tested on the information
- Talking to other people to discuss and expand on ideas (fellow students, teacher, parents)
- Creating study cards, flash cards, memory aids

And many other ways.... Students need to experiment and find the best way that works with their type of learning- whether they understand better when they **DO**, **SEE** or **HEAR** or a combination of them.



Please see the booklet that was previously compiled and work through it with your child....it contains information and suggestions about learning the **SKILL** of Studying!

Part 6: Conclusion

How are the many ways that families are engaged in their children's education related to achievement? Many studies have found that students with involved parents, no matter what their income level or background, were more likely to:

- earn higher grades and test scores, and enrol in higher-level programs.
- be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits.
- attend school regularly.
- have better social skills, show improved behaviour, and adapt well to school.
- graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

Source: SEDL – Advancing Research, Improving Education. A New Wave of Evidence-The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. **Annual Synthesis 2002**