

Studying Smarter, Not Harder: 6 Effective Study Skills

Sometimes, as parents, we are frustrated that our children aren't spending enough time studying for a test, are starting a long-term assignment tonight for an assignment due tomorrow, that backpacks overflow with crumpled impossible-to-find papers.

Our frustration is felt by our children, too. The fact is that they too want to do well in school. Working hard and getting results is rewarding at any age. However, many of our students don't know that by applying study and organizational skills, tools and techniques to bear on their work, they can get it all done and still have time for fun.

Here then, are some tips as to how to support and encourage your child to study smarter, not harder:

1. Set Goals

Setting goals is an essential ingredient to getting desired results. It keeps one focused on the target. Goals help establish a vision, allowing a student – and adult for that matter – to develop priorities enabling concentration on the desired end result. When a clear goal is established, decisions are easily made: if the goal is to do well on the math test, the question of “Should I study for Friday's test, or play a pickup game of basketball?” is easily answered.

2. Use a Planner

Managing and scheduling time is a powerful way a student can take control of her destiny. Even if homework is posted online, successful students keep a scheduler so they can budget and plan their work. When a student gets in the habit of actively using a calendar, anxiety and stress is reduced as they can see — and plan — what needs to be done, and by when, relative to all of their in-school and extracurricular responsibilities and commitments they may have.

3. Take Notes

Because memory isn't very reliable, taking notes is important so one can review and refer to them at a later time. Taking notes also helps to self-monitor and crystallize one's understanding of the material. If upon review an element is unclear or not completely

understood, one can go back and get the answers.

4. Ask Questions

What do Thomas Edison, Sir Isaac Newton and Marie Curie, among other famed inventors, have in common? They all asked questions that inspired amazing discoveries and inventions. Asking questions is one of the keys to being a successful student too. The more questions asked, the more engaged, informed and enlightened a student will be.

5. Eliminate Distractions

In this era when multi-tasking is considered strength, think again. Studies have definitively proved that doing many activities at once leads to substantially less than optimum results. Studying should be done with crispness, purpose and velocity — hard to achieve if one is texting and listening to rock music at the same time.

6. Study Space Set-Up

How frustrating is it when one can't find the materials needed to complete a project? Students should have a clean, clear and quiet space designated for school work only. At hand should be all the materials needed - worksheets, calculators, paper, etc. Looking for an assignment, a sharpened pencil, the outline written yesterday, causes stress and wastes needless time.

Take advantage of the new academic year to sit down with your child to help him determine what he wants to accomplish and achieve this academic year. You might be surprised to learn that his goals are exactly the same as yours!

Michelle Sagalyn is president of S4 — Successful Study Skills 4 Students, LLC, an organization dedicated to helping students in grades 6 through 12 achieve their full potential through effective time management, organization, and executive functioning. S4 works in affiliation with schools, public and independent, as well as with students and their families directly. For more information, go to, www.SuccessfulStudySkills4Students.com, or call 203-30-S-K-I-L-L. (307-5455) f: 203-254-1973.