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ABC's of Homework: Healthy Tips for Parents

For most people, the New Year occurs on January 1st. However, for teachers, parents and students, another new year begins in late August or early September with the start of the school year. The excitement of that first day --- seeing old friends and meeting new ones, book bags filled with freshly sharpened pencils, clean notebooks and supplies, and teachers eager to turn young minds from summer pleasures to academic interests --- soon settles into routines, assignments and homework. To keep that first day excitement and energy flowing all year, to promote a healthy and happy relationship between school and work, and to avoid homework hassles, follow these simple ABC's

Attitude: Communicate a positive attitude toward school and learning to your children.

Break: Pace and space learning over time to maximize retention and stamina.

Choice: Let your child select what they will work on first and how they will study.

Directions: Read the directions carefully. If necessary, reword them for your child.

Encouragement: Frequently comment positively on your child's effort, neatness, or accuracy.

Furnishings: Suitable lighting, seating, and supplies maximize the likelihood that your child will be comfortable and oriented toward the task.

Games: Drilling basic concepts can be accomplished more enjoyably through games. Making the activities fun increases your child's interest and attention span.

Habits: Set up a routine pattern for doing homework – in the same place, at the same time – to build good study habits.

Incentives: Initially, your child may need some small rewards for building consistent study habits. For example, try stickers, small treats and extra privileges.

Joy: Don't forget that learning should be fun. Relate hard subjects to your child's special interest.

Keys: Remember, certain study habits are the keys to mastery – frequent review, practice over time, and short intense study periods.

- Learning Rate:** Remember, each child learns at his or her own rate and way. Help your child to find his or her best strategies.
- Memory:** Frequent review and practice over time helps your child remember better than one long, last-minute study time the night before the test.
- Normal:** Make homework part of the routine. Even if your child does not have homework, encourage your child to spend some time reading.
- Opportunities:** Use every day activities to let your child practice new skills. Let your child write the grocery list, add up the bill, count coupons, and so on.
- Praise:** Find something to sincerely praise your child for – neatness, effort, accuracy, attitude, improvement. Find them doing things right and tell them.
- Quality Time:** It is not the quantity of time you spend, but rather the quality of time you spend with you child on his or her homework.
- Reading:** Encourage leisure reading as much as possible. The only way to improve reading is by reading.
- Supplies:** Having all the materials handy eliminates interruptions and excuses and reinforces good organization skills.
- Teachers:** Don't hesitate to ask the teacher for assistance or suggestions. Some districts have homework hotlines or access to assignments on the internet. If there is a persistent problem, schedule a conference.
- Understanding:** Be supportive and patient. Homework can be frustrating to both the parent and the child. Wait until you are both relaxed and well rested. Ask someone else to help if you are caught in a power struggle or if the subject is a struggle for you, too.
- Value:** Let your child know how important education is to you and reinforce the importance of good study habits.
- Work:** Homework is your child's responsibility. Insist on the old rule: first you work; then you play.
- Xxxxxoo's:** Words of praise and encouragement will help your child to persist and build a solid foundation of good study habits and self-confidence.
- You:** You are a vital participant in your child's education. Model positive attitudes toward learning, help your child where you can, and get assistance when you need it.
- Zzzz's:** Well-rested and well-nourished children learn better and can concentrate longer. Plan study time when your child is alert – not the last thing before bedtime.

If challenges or struggles surface, know they are real and seek information to better understand your child's learning styles and find the help they need.

Send your questions to *ASK TLC*, 12 West Dover Street, Easton, MD 21601, or write to info@thelearningconnections.net and look for answers in our upcoming columns.

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