

Changing Children's Attitudes About Learning

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Children start out excited about school. They want to choose a new outfit for the first day. They can't wait to talk about what they learned. They discuss school in an excited voice. Their enthusiasm seems unstoppable.

Unfortunately, their enthusiasm does, indeed, wane. Too soon children pay more attention to their clothes than to what they'll do at school. They answer "nothing" when asked what they did at school or speak of how "boring" it is. These changes sometimes start as early as elementary school.

Children begin viewing learning as a chore, no longer experiencing the joy of discovery. Schools have a responsibility to teach and assess all students. That means they can't always make learning "fun." Parents need to work with teachers to change children's attitude toward learning, to no longer allow it to be colored by the necessary duties associated with standardized public education.

Parental Attitudes to Education

It may not always be obvious, but children take their cues from their parents. When they hear their parents complain about homework requirements or school duties, they pick up on that negative attitude.

Conversely, when parents show keen interest in school and learning, children's enthusiasm becomes renewed. Children spend the majority of their time at school, so it becomes their main source of conversational topics. Parents should reinforce these conversational gambits by guiding communication toward learning activities, asking specifics about a class or teacher and encouraging children to elaborate on learning. They should make a conscious effort to point out that the children's new knowledge is fascinating, or that their classroom activities sound like fun. Children will begin associating school talk with gaining their parents' attention.

Parents also need to show the value in education. They should remark on how education positively affects their lives. They can point out how their employment opportunities are positively impacted. They can also point out how education promotes life skills such as reading directions or analyzing choices for dinner. Another option is speaking about a specific teacher or class from their own school days. Such commentary helps children apply classroom learning to daily life, ultimately making it more interesting to them.

Homework

Children have so many activities competing for their time and attention. They may play sports, belong to clubs, enjoy video games or surfing the internet. Pretty much all of those activities are preferable to doing homework.

First, parents need to emphasize the reason for homework. Teachers normally assign activities either to practice a skill such as math facts or to prepare students for a more involved concept. Children don't see this -- they just see the drudgery. Parents can look at the assignment and remark on the likely rationale for it.

Concerning extracurricular activities, they are certainly an integral aspect of raising a well-rounded child. However, if children's schedules are packed, the day becomes one endless race from activity to activity. Children need time to relax in addition to time to complete their homework. Parents should attempt to minimize scheduling to only a handful of activities a week.

According to the education website ColorÃ-n Colorado, children spend far more time watching television or surfing the internet than they do on homework. Parents should emphasize first that homework gets done before play time. They must foster self-accountability for this in children. Parent-focused applications connected to online grade books allow parents to track their children's homework production.

Likewise, they should use children's love of electronics to their advantage. Many television shows are filled with teachable moments, whether they are educational or simply targeted to age-appropriate situations. Parents should encourage children to discuss what they learned from the show. Additionally, online games related to

academic skills sets are available from numerous sites. Children can have fun while practicing math, reading or even problem solving skills.

Inciting the joy of learning is a group activity. "A New Wave of Evidence," a report from Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, concluded that children like school and do better when schools and families work together to support their learning. Ultimately, if parents reinforce the importance of learning, take an avid interest in their children's academic activities and set guidelines for study, children are more likely to see the fun in education.