

Parents Matter

Volume 1, No. 1



Establishing Study Habits for Success

For many students the first weeks of school involve understanding the expectations of new teachers and classes, making new friends, and establishing different routines. Usually by the time Easter rolls around, the demands of school step into high gear.

It's at this point, we as parents, can help our students develop the best habits possible to promote their academic, emotional, and social success. Perhaps you have a high school student who comes home late from activities, studies until the wee hours of the morning and by June is unable to sustain their schedule. Or maybe you have a Primary school student who rarely remembers her folder and loses most pieces of paper handed to her. Or perhaps your 13 or 14 year old student is far more interested in staying plugged into his social world through texting and Facebook than completing his maths homework.

At some point in time most parents struggle to keep their students on track. Here are a few tips to help you start your year strongly:

Primary Students:

- **Establish a routine and help your child stick to it.** If you develop a routine of coming home from school, eating a snack and have twenty minutes to play outside - then its time for homework. They will learn to take on the responsibility of homework more easily down the road. The routine can then set the framework for each day, rather than you having to remind (and nag!) them to get their work done.
- **Create a place for your student to study.** Make sure it is well lit, stocked with supplies, and if possible free from distractions.
- **Develop a system for monitoring your child's backpack.** Go through it each and everyday! If your child spends time in two households, make sure you take the lead on communicating with the other parent or guardian to help your child stay organized and on track.

Intermediate School Students:

- **Teach your child to use a day planner** where they track all assignments, extracurricular activities, and social plans. Developing the skill to keep all activities recorded in one central place will help them be better organized as they move on to high school and in to adulthood.
- **Have your child disengage from technology while studying.** Research shows that reading or sending a quick text or even quickly glancing up at the TV breaks concentration, lengthens the time it takes to complete a task, and decreases efficiency.
- **Teach your child how to communicate with their teachers.** Role play if it helps. Go over what they need to say if they've been absent and need to collect assignments, if they are confused and need help, or if a social situation in the class is interfering with their learning. A key part of intermediate school is developing these self advocacy skills.

High School Students:

- **Help your student set priorities and goals for the year.** High school can be one of the busiest times in a child's life. Teaching them to prioritise what they must do, would like to do, and if time permits - might be nice to do, is critical as they juggle a rigorous course load, outside activities, part-time jobs, and the university application process.
- **Teach your child strategic thinking skills.** See where they want to be at the end of the year, and at the end of high school. What subjects do they need to take to meet these goals, what relationships do they need to develop, and what experiences do they need to pursue?
- **Coach them to be resourceful.** In high school, some students no longer turn to parents for help with day-to-day homework and personal dilemmas. However, they still need assistance to learn how to seek help. Take time now to review the resources available to them (tutors, counselors, career experts, coaches, etc.), and what they need to do to access these resources.

Helping our children, no matter their age to be organised, focused, and resourceful will allow them to navigate many of the challenges they will face in the coming school year.

Maureen Breeze

*Maureen Breeze is a parent, academic coach, writer, and teacher. She is also the co-author of **Critical and Creative Thinking for Teenagers** and **Leadership for Teenagers**.*

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Spectrum Education, PO Box 30 818, Lower Hutt 5040, NZ
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