

# Encouraging Academic Success

Adult & Child

Therapeutic Foster Care Licensing  
Program

# Emphasize the importance of education.

- Understand that what you think and say about education can have a big impact on how your child feels about education.
  - Know that your belief in the child's ability to succeed in school, and your high expectations and aspirations for the child can help build up the child's self-confidence and improve his/her performance in school.
  - When you are talking to the child about school, be aware that your words may impact how the child thinks and feels about education, and about his/her own ability to do well in school.

# Emphasize the importance of education.

- Remember: if you believe that you have the ability to help the child in school, then you will help the child in school. You have the power to motivate the child and help the child learn. Don't be afraid to ask questions or seek help so that you can become a confident and assertive advocate for your child.
- Tell your child that you believe education is important.
  - Let the child hear you express excitement about school and interest in learning new things.
  - Talk to the child about the ties between school and the future – like getting to go to college, having good job options, and being financially secure.

# Emphasize the importance of education.

- Show your child that you believe education is important.
  - Keep a folder or scrapbook of the child's best schoolwork. This will show the child that you value his/her hard work and achievements.
  - If your schedule allows it, think about signing up to volunteer in the child's classroom or at a school event.
  - Attend school meetings and events, such as:
    - Back to school nights
    - Teacher conferences
    - Other school events in which the child is participating (science fair, spelling bee, etc.)
  - Encourage the child to read every day. Let the child see you (or another adult that the child looks up to) reading, too.

# Show interest.

- Ask how your child's day was or what he/she learned at school.
  - Don't accept "fine" and "nothing" as daily responses.
- When something your child is learning in school comes up in daily life, talk about it with him/her. This will help your child understand that what he/she is learning in school is important, and will reinforce that learning. Here are some examples:
  - Ask the child to help you write a grocery list, as a way to practice writing and spelling.
  - Ask the child to read street signs or directions to you, as a way to practice reading.
  - Ask the child to help you count out the correct amount of change to practice addition skills.
  - Ask the child to summarize a newspaper article or make up some questions about a story he/she heard on the radio.
  - If the child has a job or earns an allowance, ask the child to create a monthly budget and track his/her spending.

# Discuss your child's progress.

- Glows – Identify strengths by giving authentic, specific praise.
  - Here are some examples of things you can say to the child:
    - “I’m very proud of you for working so hard on this assignment.”
    - “I’m very proud of you for getting all of your homework done and turned in on time on your own.”
    - “I know how hard you’ve been working on your reading lately – you are becoming a strong reader!”
    - “I’m really proud of you for asking questions when you needed help.”
    - “I’m very impressed with how hard you’ve been studying for your Biology test.”

# Discuss your child's progress.

- **Grows – Watch for frustration and areas of weakness.**
  - If the child is struggling in school, he or she may feel frustrated or sad about school.
  - Keep a positive attitude. Be encouraging. Focus on improvement and problem-solving.
- **“Table Talk”**
  - Whenever possible, attempt to sit down to meals (particularly dinner) as a family. This is a great opportunity to discuss school and whatever else is going on in each other's lives.

# Discuss your child's progress.

- For example, if the child is struggling in a specific subject, here are some ways you can help the child focus on improvement:
  - Talk to the child about the situation, and let him/her know you are there to help figure out a solution.
  - Review the child's work in that subject (tests, homework, reports). Look at the questions/assignments the child did well on, and the ones with which the child struggled. Try to determine why the child struggled (e.g., didn't study enough, didn't understand the question, studied but didn't understand the material).
  - Help the child develop a plan for improving. Depending on the situation, this could include things like: making sure to do all the assigned reading next time, setting aside more time to work on the next assignment, making flash cards to help study for the next test, talking to the teacher about the material with which the child is struggling, or signing up for tutoring.

# Build independence & perseverance.

- Let your child know that you believe he/she has the ability to do well in school, and that you have high aspirations for his/her education.
  - Here are some examples of things you can say to the child:
    - “I know learning \_\_\_\_\_ is hard work, but I believe you can do it.”
    - “I know that your goal is to get into college, and I am confident that you can do it.”
    - “You came up with a very interesting idea for your project. I think you’ll do a great job on it.”
- Develop responsibility by setting realistic expectations and providing opportunities to demonstrate healthy autonomy.
  - Ensure that your child feels his/her value and a sense of belonging to promote inner discipline and a strong self-identity.

# Offer encouragement.

- Acknowledge what your child is feeling.
  - When you validate your child's emotions, especially the difficult ones, your empathy reduces stress and builds trust between you.
    - Phrases like, "I can see how frustrating this must be for you," and "That must make you feel sad," can lead to more effective, collaborative problem solving.
    - Remember that emotions are normal and temporary. We cannot truly control them, but we can respond to them in healthy, proactive ways.

# Praise grit.

- Give careful praise.
  - Praise is an important tool, but it can backfire if you aren't mindful of how you use it. It is very important to praise a child's **efforts, not abilities**, so that your child knows his/her self-worth is not based on performance.
  - Keep your feedback positive and sincere.
    - Studies have shown that kids respond better to brief praise for good effort made. Make sure they know they are loved for who they are, not something they *did*.
  - Focus on success and downplay minor setbacks.
    - Use “failure” as an opportunity to talk and strategize with your child; a child who learns to cope and learn from his/her mistakes fares far better than a child who is taught that “failure is not an option.”
    - Let the child hear you compliment him/her in front of other adults.

# Encourage your child to set goals.

- **Help the child set educational goals.** This will help show the child that you have strong expectations for his/her education and help the child develop strong expectations for himself/herself.
  - Here are some things you can say to a younger child:
    - “What kinds of things do you want to learn to do by the end of this school year?”
      - *Examples:* learn to read a book with chapters, learn multiplication tables
    - “Let’s set a goal for something you want to do this week.”
      - *Examples:* get 90% on my math quiz, practice all of my spelling words
    - “Let’s set a goal that you will read for at least \_\_\_\_ minutes every day after school.”
    - “Do you have any ideas about what you might want to be when you grow up?”

# Encourage your child to set goals.

- Here are some things you can say to an older child:
  - “What classes would you like to take next year and why?”
  - “Have you thought about taking any honors or AP (Advanced Placement) classes?”
  - “What do you want to do after high school?”
  - “What is your goal GPA (grade point average) for this year?”
  - “What are your teachers and classmates saying about college? What do you think you want to study in college?”
  - “What kinds of jobs do you think you’d be good at?”
    - Explore career choices and post-secondary opportunities
    - Share success-focused statistics – justice system, employment, lifetime earnings, etc.

# Guide your child to make healthy decisions.

- All aspects of goal setting— articulating a goal, defining objectives, etc.—require decision-making.
  - A number of strategies are available to you when it's time to make an important decision. You can:
    - follow an accepted rule (go by the book);
    - use a rational process (think about what the expected consequences of your action will be);
    - act to gain social approval (decide on the basis of what relevant people value);
    - follow your intuition (decide on the basis of how you feel);
    - arrange a compromise (decide on the basis of what will be of benefit to you and someone else); or
    - consult an expert (decide on the basis of another person's recommendation).

# Guide your child to make healthy decisions.

- Whether you realize it or not, you follow one or more of these strategies whenever you make a decision, so you might as well do so conscientiously:
  - Clarify your intentions and understand your value system.
    - What do you want to achieve? What do you think is right?
  - Determine what your goals are.
  - Gather all necessary, relevant information.
  - Make a decision using one or more of the above strategies.
  - Evaluate that decision.
    - What will be the consequences if you exercise plan A as opposed to plan B? Are there any negative consequences that you can see might be a result of the actions you choose?

# Set SMART academic goals.

- Formulating Your **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound Goals**
  - Goals can be either short- or long-term in nature.
    - For example, one of your short-term goals might be for you to earn an “A” in English/Language Arts this semester, while a long-term goal might be to graduate with a GPA of 3.5 or higher.
  - State your goals in writing.
    - Writing crystallizes your thoughts and helps keep you focused on the task at hand.
    - Generate statements for each goal that clearly describe the circumstances that would convince you and others that you’ve fulfilled that goal. For instance, you’ll definitely know that you’ve achieved your goal of being admitted to college when you have that acceptance letter in hand. Put these measurable specifications in writing as well.

# Set SMART academic goals.

- State your goals in positive rather than negative terms.
  - In other words, instead of saying, “I don’t want to flunk Algebra 1 this semester,” put it this way instead: “I want to get a ‘B’ or better in Algebra.” Thinking positively will dramatically improve your performance in all aspects of life.
- Make goals attainable.
  - Setting a goal such as “graduating in seven semesters with a 4.00” may be commendably ambitious, but perhaps not realistic or even necessary.

# Set SMART academic goals.

- Make your goals compatible with your personality and life-style.
  - If you like to stay up late Friday nights with friends, will you really be able to arise at 7:00 a.m. Saturday to study for a Biology exam? If not, are you really going to be able to meet your goal of earning an “A” in that class this semester? You might find that you need to change your behavior in some respects to attain an end you desire.
- Make goals personal.
  - Aspiring to someone else’s goals may not be very meaningful or altogether successful. It’s unlikely that you’ll ever really accomplish a goal that you can’t truly make your own.

# Gain perspective.

- **Keep your list handy for future reference.**
  - As time goes by, periodically review the list and evaluate your performance by determining whether you're achieving your goals based on the conditions you described.
- **Try to look at the total picture.**
  - Don't let the past trip you up. If you earned poor grades last semester, don't let that negative experience keep you from doing better this semester.
  - Imagery can be a powerful tool for success. Visualize yourself reaching your goal. Imagine the day when you are walking up to the stage to receive your diploma. Each milestone you pass in the meantime brings you closer to that moment.
  - Be specific when planning your intentions. Instead of thinking to yourself, "I need to study sometime soon" say something like, "I'll study physics for two hours each Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning."

# Exercise patience.

- **Be mindful of your temper and disposition.**
  - Learn to recognize triggers and practice ways to respond to them appropriately.
- **Consider sleep, diet, and lifestyle.**
  - Assess if you and your child are eating regular, nutritious meals and getting adequate rest, and make adjustments to the family schedule as necessary.
- **Recognize your child's limits.**
  - Your child's brain is still developing (25!) and building new skills all the time, and he/she needs you to help tackle the demands of life.
    - For example, help to break projects into manageable steps, create realistic after-school and weekend schedules, and learn how to listen to cues from his/her own body and behavior for when he/she has reached a threshold of frustration or sustained attention for the day.

# Exercise patience.

- **Create special time for your child each week.**
  - Your foster child is not just a student – he/she needs special one-on-one time with you, preferably engaged in tasks that are stress-free, fun, and focus on processes rather than products.
  - Engage your child in activities he/she loves to do and does well, and encourage your child to explore new interests and ideas.
  - Your child, like you, also needs “down time” by him/herself or with friends.
- **Celebrate your child’s uniqueness and allow for everyone in the family to “be themselves.”**
  - The emotional and mental health of your child is strongly connected to your own well-being and that of the entire family.

# Help your child be prepared for school.

- **Make sure homework gets done.**
  - Stress that schoolwork needs to be done each day.
  - Structure homework time.
  - Review completed work.
- **Help your child prepare for tests.**
  - Be available.
  - Practice ways to minimize test anxiety.
- **Provide supplies and identify resources.**
  - Remove the barrier of not having paper, pencils, calculator, etc.
  - Find additional help for your child if needed.

If it is difficult for you to help your child with schoolwork, contact the school, tutoring groups, after school programs, churches, and libraries.

# Teach good study habits.

- Remove distractions such as noise and socializing by setting aside a special place to study.
  - Monitor the use of cell phones, internet, television, and video games
- Establish a regular time for schoolwork.
  - Stick to a consistent, daily schedule, even if your child is “caught up”
  - Routine will make your child more mentally & emotionally prepared for each study session = more productive sessions over time

# Teach good study habits.

- Don't cram all studying into one session.
  - The Forgetting Curve – At the end of 9 weeks, students who reviewed their notes within a day recalled ~75% of what they'd been taught. Students who did not review their notes following class were only able to recall ~50% of the information covered during the lecture after 1 day and ~20% of the information at the end of nine weeks.
  - Space intensive academic work (projects, essays, tests) out over shorter periods of time
  - Review class materials each evening and again over the weekend
- Don't enable procrastination because of lack of interest in the subject, other things that need to get done, or the assignment is hard.
  - Studying will become less effective and everything may not get accomplished
  - Rushing is the number one cause of errors

# Develop comprehension skills.

- Teach explicitly: direct explanation, modeling, guided practice, application
  - Monitor own comprehension
    - Be aware of what they do understand, identify what they don't understand, choose an appropriate strategy to resolve problem
  - Metacognition
    - Clarify purpose, preview text, adjust speed, look back in text, check for understanding
  - Graphic & semantic organizers
    - Focus & organize concepts or relationships between concepts
    - Maps, diagrams, webs, charts, frames, clusters, storyboards, etc.

# Develop comprehension skills.

- QAR (question-answer relationship)
  - Right There (text-based recall), Think & Search (text-based, more than 1 place), Author & You (relate to text), On Your Own (based on prior knowledge)
- Generate questions
  - Give purpose, focus attention, think actively, check for understanding, review & relate content
- Recognize story structure
  - Categorize and organize content
- Summarize
  - Identify/generate main ideas, connect ideas, eliminate unnecessary information, remember information

# Train all types of comprehension strategies.

- **Make Connections** - Connect the topic or information to what they already know about themselves, about other texts, and about the world.
  - This reminds me of..., This is just like..., I know about this because...
- **Ask Questions** - Ask themselves questions about the text, their reactions to it, and the author's purpose for writing it.
  - I wonder why..., What will happen..., What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean?
- **Visualize** - Make the printed word real and concrete by creating a “movie” of the text in their minds.
  - I can really see...., It gives me a picture in my mind when the author describes...

# Train all types of comprehension strategies.

- **Determine Importance** - Distinguish between what's essential vs. what's interesting, distinguish between fact & opinion, determine cause & effect relationships, compare & contrast ideas or information, discern themes/opinions/perspectives, pinpoint problems & solutions, name steps in a process, locate information that answers specific questions, or summarize.
  - I know \_\_\_\_\_ is important because..., This \_\_\_\_\_ helps me understand that...
- **Make Inferences** - Merge text clues with their prior knowledge and determine answers to questions that lead to conclusions about underlying themes or ideas.
  - I can conclude \_\_\_\_\_ from the clues, If I read between the lines...
- **Synthesize** - Combine new information with existing knowledge to form original ideas, new lines of thinking, or new creations.
  - My opinion of \_\_\_\_\_ is..., I can generalize that..., This information is really about...

# Improve note-taking abilities.

- **The Cornell System**
  - **Student Accountability:** for recording learning in a meaningful & interactive way
  - **21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills:** forces critical thinking & creative communication
  - **Classroom Routines:** establishes an easily maintained culture of inquiry & interaction
  - **Higher Order Thinking:** requires students to analyze & synthesize information
  - **Increase Retention Rates:** research-based method, proven to dramatically increase ability to remember learning over time (when used with fidelity)

Topic:	Name:	Date:
Class:	Period:	
<p><b><u>Step 2:</u></b> <b>Cues</b> <b>(Reduce)</b></p> <p><b>When:</b> During class but after the lecture, activity or discussion</p> <p><b>What:</b> Reduce learning to the essential facts &amp; ideas</p> <p><b>How</b> (make lists):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facts</li><li>• Key ideas</li><li>• Important words</li><li>• Pivotal phrases</li><li>• Questions</li></ul> <p><b>Why:</b> Students can not recall everything and need to filter out the most important ideas, concepts and questions.</p>	<p><b><u>Step 1:</u> Notes</b> <b>(Record)</b></p> <p><b>When:</b> During class lecture, discussion or activity</p> <p><b>What:</b> Record as many facts and ideas from the lesson as possible</p> <p><b>How:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bullets, phrases and pictures</li><li>• Avoid sentences and paragraphs</li><li>• develop abbreviations and symbols</li><li>• leave space between points to add information later</li></ul> <p><b>Why:</b> Students need to record the learning in a method that is meaningful to them before they can do anything with it.</p>	
<p><b><u>Step 3:</u> Summary</b> <b>(Reflect &amp; Review)</b></p> <p><b>When:</b> At the end of class, after class for homework or as a warmup at the start of the next class</p> <p><b>What:</b> Synthesis that reviews and summarizes the main ideas from the lesson</p> <p><b>How</b> (in complete sentences, answer questions such as the following):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Why is this information important?"</li><li>• "What conclusions can I make from this information?"</li><li>• "How can this information be applied?"</li></ul> <p><b>Why:</b> Summarizing and reviewing information after it is learned is one of the best research based strategies for ensuring long term retention of any content or skill.</p>		



# Utilize memory strategies.

- Acquire (working/sensory memory), store, access (retrieval)
  - Make the information meaningful.
    - Application & usefulness
  - Organize the information.
    - Brain as filing cabinet with bridges
  - Review repetitively and frequently.
    - Schoolwork is not like riding a bike!
  - Adapt studying to learning style.
    - Use pictures or visualization
    - Study actively
    - Change the words to familiar songs
  - Use mnemonic devices – acronyms, chants/rhymes, etc.
    - MVEMJSUNP; 5 and above, give it a shove; I before E, except after C; 9s multiplication facts; Never Eat Soggy Wheaties

# Demonstrate how to study effectively.

- **Set session-specific goals.**
  - Know exactly what needs to be accomplished during each study session to reach overall academic goals.
    - **For example, memorize 30 vocabulary words in order to ace the vocab section on the upcoming Spanish test.**
- **Start with the most difficult subject first.**
  - Difficult tasks require the most effort and mental energy. It is better to finish a study session with easier material due to mental fatigue.

# Demonstrate how to study effectively.

- **Always review notes before starting an assignment.**
  - Before the start of each study session, and before starting a particular assignment, review notes thoroughly to determine how to complete the assignment correctly.
  - Reviewing notes before each study session will help your child to remember important subject matter learned during the day, and make studying more targeted and effective.
- **Use study groups effectively.**
  - Working in groups enables your child to (1) get help from others when he/she is struggling to understand a concept, (2) complete assignments more quickly, and (3) teach others, which helps all members to internalize the subject matter.
  - Study groups can become very ineffective if they're not structured and if groups members come unprepared.