

ANDERSON CREEK ACADEMY

24 GOOD IDEAS TO HELP WITH DISTANCE LEARNING

Part Two: Items 13-24

- 13 **NEVER THREATEN**but have consequences available (read document) for noncompliance.
- 14 **FADE YOUR INVOLVEMENT** and reward as your child becomes increasingly independent.
- 15 **UNRELATED TECHNOLOGY SHOULD BE PUT AWAY DURING SCHOOL TIME.**
- 16 **IGNORE WHINING AND ATTENTION SEEKING BEHAVIORS** and let the clock keep ticking.
- 17 **ALLOW and REWARD WHEN A CHILD OPTS FOR ADDITIONAL READING...** school work in disguise.
- 18 **SCHOOL WORK IS MORE PALATABLE BY ANOTHER NAME** such as “Brain Boosting Time!” etc.
- 19 **POST A PICTURE OF THE REWARDING ACTIVITY** in front of your child in the work area.
- 20 **DO YOUR HOMEWORK AS YOUR CHILD DOES THEIR HOMEWORK.** Pay bills, read, etc.
- 21 **FREQUENTLY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CHILD’S TEACHER** so you know what they expect.
- 22 **MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS SUCH AS TV OR MUSIC...**these are NOT helpful.
- 23 **SCHOOL WORK IS YOUR CHILD’S RESPONSIBILITY** not yours...work toward this goal.
- 24 **SCHOOL WORK IS NOT ABOUT GRADES** it about learning....communicate this to your child.

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STRATEGY THIRTEEN

NEVER THREATEN

“Technically speaking” if you nag, threaten, give the evil eye or yell at someone “until” they do what you want them to do, your behavior is termed (in psychological terms) Negative Reinforcement. The term means that you provide something “undesirable” (nagging, threatening, etc.) to make your child “uncomfortable” and you will STOP the “undesirable” behavior you are doing when they “co-operate” and (as an example) “do their homework”. The word Negative in this term means...”take away”. The word Reinforcement in this term means ”increase the probability of a behavior in the future”. So you REMOVE or TAKE AWAY the yelling when your child DOES THEIR HOMEWORK and hope that in the future they will “just do their homework”.

We really don’t want to be doing this. Yes, it might work a time or two but it creates a noisy house, a resentful child, high blood pressure (for you), and the HOMEWORK behavior isn’t learned to stand on its on. It is not very likely to occur in the future “unless” you nag, threaten and give the evil eye. If you aren’t there to “yell” (provide the Negative Reinforcer) then it is very unlikely that your child will do HOMEWORK when you aren’t around. It’s science. It’s how Negative Reinforcement works and why we want to avoid it.

If you will, instead, provide the REINFORCING ACTIVITY (technically a POSITIVE REINFORCER) described in an early pointer (#4) when your child complies and does their homework...they can actually learn to do it on their own and the house will be a whole lot quieter. Trust me.

NEVER THREATEN

We all fall back on some behavior management strategies that don’t work well for us and don’t work at all when we aren’t around. Some of these are yelling, nagging, complaining and/or giving the evil eye (or all of the above at once if things have really gotten out of hand). These are technically called Negative Reinforcement in that we provide something uncomfortable to the environment and will only remove it when our child steps up and does what we ask. Would you believe alarm clocks work on this principle? They ring, ring, ring, ring (negative stimulus) and only quit when we get up and turn them off (desired behavior). Behaviors learned under Negative Reinforcement don’t stick. If you use this strategy to get your child to comply then when you aren’t there to yell, children might not (and probably won’t) do their homework by themselves. If the alarm clock doesn’t ring, we won’t wake up. So try to use Positive Reinforcement in the form of the REINFORCING ACTIVITY described earlier in these pointers (number 4).

PARENT TIP FOR REMOTE LEARNING

STRATEGY FOURTEEN

FADE YOUR INVOLVEMENT

When we learn new tasks we need someone to show us how it's done, help us as we try it, give us feedback, maybe show us again, and eventually step back and let us practice until we can do the task INDEPENDENTLY. This is true for riding a bike, driving a car, dancing and/or drinking from a cup. It's certainly true for Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic (and all other content areas). So help your child more in the beginning, then intentionally step back and require that they perform the academic task you are teaching them on their own (INDEPENDENTLY). We don't really consider any academic task as MASTERED until a person can perform the activity INDEPENDENT of support from teachers and/or parents. Step back, intentionally, when it's time, you will know when your child is ready to be INDEPENDENT.

FADE YOUR INVOLVEMENT

The fact is, we all need someone to teach us new concepts or behaviors in a sequence. First using a teaching strategy called Guided Practice. If we want to learn how to ride a bike, drive a car, dance and/or drink from a cup we start with “guided practice”. Sure you can learn a couple of the behaviors listed on your own, but the process is slow and it can be painful. But if someone “teaches” us and they use GUIDED PRACTICE, they show us how, they help us try it, they watch us do it, they give us feedback, maybe model the behavior again and eventually we “learn” how to ride a bike, drive a car, dance and/or drink from a cup. Then we don't really need their involvement, we are quite happy to do things on our own. The sequence of teaching really applies to all tasks (intellectual and behavioral).

Learning new academic tasks during Distance Learning is EXACTLY the same. When your child is “acquiring” a new academic skill, you need to show them how, help them try it, watch them do it, give feedback, maybe show them how again (model) and eventually they “learn” and perform the academic skill “on their own “(INDEPENDENTLY).

While it may seem you are spending a lot of time in the DISTANT LEARNING situation we find ourselves helping your child....you are doing what is naturally required whether you are a parent or a teacher. You are teaching your child so they can operate eventually INDEPENDENT of you and your guidance. So always plan to help more in the beginning and then FADE your support as your child needs you to let go of the bicycle sooner or later if they are ever going to ride on their own. Homework is the same, help until you're not needed. Children will let you keep doing their work if you don't intentionally step back and FADE your involvement but guide, support and intentionally fade your involvement once you see they can stand on their own.

PARENT TIP FOR REMOTE LEARNING

STRATEGY FIFTEEN

UNRELATED TECHNOLOGY SHOULD BE PUT AWAY DURING SCHOOL TIME

Unless your child is actually doing online learning with their laptop or chrome book, it and ALL other electronic devices (including yours) should be put away. This is not an anti-technology rant. This is about “interruptions” and how children AND adults need at least a good 15 minutes of focused attention on a new topic to begin to absorb that new academic (or non-academic) topic. An interruption can cause a reduction in the comprehension and recall of the information. An interruption at the “moment” the child (or you) were just about to “get it” and grasp a concept can derail the learning process and the entire lesson can be lost. Both comprehension and memory are negatively impacted by the prolonged USE of the electronics children and adults use for entertainment (but that’s not the battle here). It is simply a fact that the ringing or even constant checking of a phone for text messages renders a child’s and adult’s mind incapable of mental focus, mental attention, comprehension and storing information in our long term memory. So just put the electronic devices away during the SCHOOL TIME. Your child’s learning new concepts will occur faster and they will recall more accurately.

UNRELATED TECHNOLOGY SHOULD BE PUT AWAY DURING SCHOOL TIME

Put away ALL phones, games and electronic devices when it’s time for SCHOOL TIME. Of course your child may be doing their work ONLINE and the laptop or chrome book is appropriate and necessary. But other than the actual laptop that your child might be working on, NO OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICE SHOULD BE SEEN OR HEARD. Phones and devices which are commonly and constantly carried about and accessed by children AND adults are having a scientifically proven detrimental effect on our attention spans and social skills. I am not asking you to get rid of them (though that’s not a bad idea) but I am asking you to put them away during instruction time. Any new concept your child is approaching needs at least a 15 minute involvement to “start” being grasped and appreciated by your children and our adult minds. If that 15 minute of dedicated attention and concentration is broken into or interrupted by a ringing phone or just their or our glancing at texts....that 15 minutes of learning is drastically reduced and learning will most likely not take place. That’s why we as adults don’t like interruptions...we forget what we were doing. Children are just like adults, if a thought is interrupted...it is typically lost. The entire lesson can actually be lost if the interruption occurs at the moment that your child was about to “get it”. The entire learning session can be lost.

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STRATEGY SIXTEEN

IGNORE WHINING AND ATTENTION SEEKING BEHAVIORS

In item # 13 (labeled NEVER THREATEN), I described the uncomfortable stimulus we provided (yelling, nagging, evil eye, etc.) as NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT if we removed the uncomfortable stimulus only when the child cooperated and started doing their school work. I explained this is a psychological principle and it doesn't work for long...but it will work a time or two. Well, if your child has learned to whine, cry, pout or otherwise do something that makes YOU uncomfortable UNTIL you give them what they want (attention, candy, homework pass, escape from homework, etc.)...then YOUR CHILD IS ACTUALLY USING NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT ON YOU.

So do NOT respond to inappropriate or undesirable methods your child might employ to gain your attention, assistance or escape from homework. ONLY respond to requests for your attention and assistance that you have approved. In classrooms teachers ask students to raise their hands for help, not whine. You really can have your child raise their hand and ask for help in the home setting. It's not a bad strategy and it establishes good habits for when we someday return to the SCHOOL GROUND CLASSROOMS. Your house will be a whole lot quieter too! Simply do not respond and do not scold or remind, just simply DON'T RESPOND to inappropriate methods your child might use to gain your attention. And if you find you use whining or inappropriate attention seeking strategies, it's a good time to stop. Everyone lives happier in a quieter less stressful environment.

IGNORE WHINING AND ATTENTION SEEKING BEHAVIORS

If your child is whining, pouting, crying and making sounds which are MEANT to communicate to you "I want your attention" or "This is too hard" or "I don't want to do this" ...DO NOT RESPOND. This is the same principle as Item #13 NEVER THREATEN in that it is NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT. Your child will STOP making the undesirable sound (whining as an example) as soon as you provide the attention they seek or say "go ahead and put the homework away for tonight". They don't know it, and you might not have known it before now, but it's a psychological principle termed NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT but this time, it's being used by your child on you. To break this pattern, simply DO NOT RESPOND to inappropriate methods of getting your attention, respond if your child "raises their hand" or "calls you politely". Your house will be quieter and your children will be practicing skills that will help when they return to the SCHOOL GROUND CLASSROOM.

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STRATEGY SEVENTEEN

ALLOW AND REWARD WHEN A CHILD OPTS FOR ADDITIONAL READING TIME

Research continues to support that if there is any single activity positively related to educational gains and (get this) success in life...it would be READING. In as little as 30 minutes a day, a child can improve their attention, attention span, comprehension, memory and (in turn) academic success. Academic success in seemingly unrelated content areas such as Mathematics. So we know Reading is good for us and we all know we see our children spending too much time with electronics. So exchange your child's opting to read (books of their choice that you approve of) for additional play time not additional electronic devices (if you can pull this off). If you have established the one hour of REWARDING ACTIVITIES immediately following your two hours of SCHOOL TIME, then add minute for minute extra REWARDING ACTIVITY TIME for every minute your child READS on their own. It may be actually easier to do in 5 minute blocks of time, but you decide that. Just know that if your child were to read on their own an extra 30 to 45 minutes a day and you reward that with 30 to 45 minutes of ACTIVITY TIME (without electronics involved)...it's a really winning scenario. You provide parent approved activities for ACTIVITY TIME. If you can, those activities should be limited to or at least include parent approved books to read. Just keep electronics out of it (unless of course they are reading eBooks or Kindle or Nook or such). Reading is also an excellent behavior to model for your children. Let your children see that you read and they are more likely to pick up the habit.

ALLOW AND REWARD WHEN A CHILD OPTS FOR ADDITIONAL READING TIME

Research supports that reading in any form for just 30 minutes a day has a significant impact on your child's attention, attention span, comprehension and memory as well as significant impact on performance in content areas seemingly unrelated to reading such as Math. So if you will provide a minute for minute exchange whereby your child gets (as an example) 30 minutes of play time as a reward for 30 minutes of reading time (you approve the books) then everyone wins and your child's overall academic performance will be positively impacted.

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STRATEGY EIGHTEEN

SCHOOL WORK IS MORE PALATABLE BY ANY OTHER NAME

What's in a name? Everything. In the documents you have been reading about promoting your child's involvement in DISTANCE LEARNING, I repeatedly use accurate but less than attractive names (to a child) for homebound learning such as School Work, Academic Time, School Time, Learning Time, etc. While you know exactly what that means, and a child does too, it simply doesn't have the appeal to a child as names that "you and they" create for their Learning Time. Names like: OWL ACADEMY, BRAIN BUSTER TIME, ROCKET SCIENCE, HOME COLLEGE, GENIUS HOUR, etc. are good examples. You may not find any of those appealing, but you can make up your own, and make up a logo so there's a CUTE factor involved. Kids are not adults. They will like this more than you might think. And it's a whole lot easier to say, "Time for BRAIN BUSTERS" than "Time for SCHOOL WORK". You can go online and find plenty of suggestions or examples where creative parents have named their school time to make school time more appealing to their children. If you come up with a good one, share it with us and we will post it on our parent page as we accumulate examples. Who knows, we might have to vote for the one we all like the most.

SCHOOL WORK IS MORE PALATABLE BY ANY OTHER NAME

School Time (the approximately 2 hours a day Monday-Friday) whereby you have your child sit down in the home setting to do what they typically would do in the school setting is NOT considered fun by you or your child. But we have to do it for a while during this period where we are all safely studying at home. So want to rename that educational time period at home something with a CUTE factor. Names such as Owl Academy (names after our mascot) sound better than School Time. You can go online and find examples which other parents have created. You can submit to us the name you might use in your home and if we get enough to make a list, we should probably have some fun and vote for the most creative fun SCHOOL TIME name that is offered. We know you may think the name is not that important but children actually do find fun names or names which include THEIR name as more appealing than technically accurate but unimaginative names like the one I keep using, SCHOOL TIME.

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STRATEGY NINETEEN

POST A PICTURE OF THE REWARDING ACTIVITY OR ITEM

If you applied (consistently) #4 and created a REWARDING ACTIVITY that your child can access if they complete their school work to your satisfaction during the SCHOOL TIME then you know it works to promote their engagement and completion of the assignments. To give you and your child's success an additional boost, ADVERTISE. Place a picture or a drawing of the REWARDING ACTIVITY which your child will receive when they finish their school work, and post the picture or drawing directly above their desk or work area or on their STORAGE BOX so they are constantly reminded that they have a reward following the completion of their school work. If your child is going to go outside and ride their bike as reward, draw a bike, have them draw a bike, take a picture of a bike from a magazine or take a picture of them on their own bike and POST IT. Provide an image of whatever activity they are working to earn: basketball, playtime, dog walking, art time, coloring time, hiking with you, playing in the sandbox, etc. etc. The "image" of the activity works to bridge the time between NOW (when your child is engaged in maybe a difficult or challenging lesson) and THEN (the hard to imagine playtime yet to be earned and experienced). If you have several options that a child can choose from on any particular day, post images of all of them (like a menu in a restaurant with pictures). And don't forget, YOU are a rewarding activity! If you will play ball with your child as a reward, then place a picture of you and the kickball above their desk. That may motivate your child to work more than you realize. Parents are often surprised, as are teachers, to find that their children and students will ask to spend time with them in free play, lunch, book reading and story time. So add yourself to the REWARD MENU and get a picture of you posted above their work area.

POST A PICTURE OF THE REWARDING ACTIVITY OR ITEM

After the two hours (max) of SCHOOL TIME at home, it is advised that you offer a one hour REWARDING ACTIVITY. To bridge the gap in time between the NOW (working on academics) and THEN (accessing the REWARDING ACTIVITY) post a picture or drawing of that activity as such will be helpful. It is easier for a child to stick with an academic lesson to earn a rewarding activity if that activity is represented in an image or drawing in front of your child instead of just an abstract image in our head. This is not just true for children. It is also true for adults. Imagery is powerful as a bridge between "now" and "then" for children but it is also an incredible motivator for adults in such areas as dieting, body building and healthier life styles.

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STRATEGY TWENTY

DO YOUR HOMEWORK AS YOUR CHILD DOES THEIR HOMEWORK

You have bills to pay (Math). You have books to read, magazines to look through and letters to read (Reading). You also have letters to write and maybe a journal to keep up (Writing). You can model all of these for your child and lead by example if you place your activities within the same SCHOOL TIME your children have set aside (the 2 hours a day M-F). If you take the same allotted time you are not only MODELING appropriate Reading, Writing and Mathematics skills, but you are also able to be in the same area as your child and while they work you work and everyone is learning to be respectful of the other person's need for a quiet environment so they (and you) can concentrate. Incidentally, social skills are developed when you and your children decide on "how" you would interrupt the other person to ask a question or make a comment. You become a student alongside your student, they look to you for guidance and when they look at you to see you being the student you ask them to be....well, you are much more likely to gain compliance with the SCHOOL TIME behaviors you have asked for.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK AS YOUR CHILD DOES THEIR HOMEWORK

During the time you have set aside for your child to complete their school assignments, you should try to pay your bills (Math), write letters or write in your journal (Writing), and/or read a book or magazine (Reading). You will then be modeling behaviors which you are asking of your child as they are engaged in DISTANT LEARNING. Your child will look to you and see the behaviors are adult behaviors and you (as their role model) are the most important role model in their life. They will "see" you doing academically styled task. Little do they know you are reading the #1 New York Times Best Selling Crime Thriller or Romance novel...it's still reading.

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STRATEGY TWENTY ONE

FREQUENTLY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

As teachers, parents and students we are all learning new ways to do things as we practice the Stay at Home or Social Distancing behaviors / restrictions which changed how we learn (at least until the situation changes). Until we return to the school ground classroom and forever more, remember: Communication is paramount in your child's making the academic gains we want for them. While your teachers have attached instructions to documents that come your way for your child's assignments, they appreciate hearing from you as to how well things are going. Of course you have several methods to communicate with your teacher, this entry in the parent support portion of our COVID response is to remind you that we are also learning how best to provide you and your child the educational experiences that provide the best and most academic gains for your child.

If your child finds a particular activity exciting and enjoyable, we really want to know that so we can add such activities and lessons to our tool kit. We also wish to know when things seem more difficult or even confusing for your child, so that we can make adjustments there too. Observe your child and ask your child how things are going, and let us know what they are saying. We are all learning together how best to keep your child progressing in the NC DPI Standard Course of Study while they are not in school on school grounds. To do this to your child's best advantage, communicate regularly with your child's teacher. Your child's teachers will provide you several methods to do this. Your input is welcome.

FREQUENTLY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

In this time of social distancing and stay at home restrictions we are all learning new skills. To do our best to keep your child progressing along the NC DPI Standard Course of Study, we ask that you keep us informed as to what lessons your child found enjoyable (that we may design additional lessons with those characteristics) and what lessons they found unenjoyable. We want to respond to what we learn from you regarding your child's approach or avoidance of certain types of lessons. We want your child to succeed! We want you to be able to be involved in their instruction and learning time with as little stress as possible. Your teachers have posted and will continue to post several ways to communicate with them. Teachers look forward to your feedback regarding their lessons and your child's response. It's the only way we know how things are going in the learning environment now at your home. Keep us informed so that we may respond accordingly to your child's advantage.

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STRATEGY TWENTY TWO

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS SUCH AS TV OR MUSIC

I'm sure you have addressed and worked to minimize the distractions of the phone or computer games but are their other people in the house who might (during SCHOOL TIME) be watching TV or listening to music? Unfortunately, while they may not be too happy about it, SCHOOL TIME is a house wide activity. Obviously, everyone doesn't have to be sitting at the desk working but everyone has to be respectful of the student you do have working during SCHOOL TIME. Everyone in the house needs to reduce unnecessary distractions. It's only fair that after all the work you have done in establishing a place for your child to learn, creating a schedule of when that learning will occur, established rewards for their participation and maybe even modeled SCHOOL TIME behaviors by your paying bills or reading a book while your child does their SCHOOL WORK that the other family members in your home honor and respect all that by not destroying the learning moments you provided for your child involved in learning tasks.

It may seem innocent, but the sounds of fun (TV, music, games or sports being played by children other than your child doing their SCHOOL WORK) are not just distracting but they offer a hard to resist REWARDING distraction...the fun sounds coming from the next room or the yard will pull your child's attention from their academics and demotivate them as they compare and contrast what fun they are missing and then mislabel their school work as "no fun". Try to do your best to have a whole house atmosphere that supports the SCHOOL TIME. It won't be easy if you have several children and they are not all school aged (remember try to have all school aged children in SCHOOL TIME at the same time). But even though it may not be easy, it should be recognized as counterproductive to have distracting noises in the background when a child is trying to acquire, practice or master a new academic skill during SCHOOL TIME.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS SUCH AS TV OR MUSIC

Distractions outside the SCHOOL TIME setting you have set up need to be considered and reduced if possible. Other children or adults in your home who are not involved in SCHOOL TIME need to be respectful and honor the SCHOOL TIME period so that they don't unduly distract the child engaged in learning. It is not only distracting but it is demotivating for a child to be attempting school work while noises of fun come from another room or outdoors. Your child who is completing a lesson will find it difficult to focus on the academic task at hand but they will also compare negatively the fun they hear in the next room and label the school work they are trying to complete as "no fun". SCHOOL TIME should really be an entire house quiet time if you are to take full advantage of all the work you have put into setting up the home based learning experience you have designed for your ACA student.

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STRATEGY TWENTY THREE

SCHOOL WORK IS YOUR CHILD'S RESPONSIBILITY

While it is absolutely true that your child needs assistance in gathering supplies, finding a place to work, finding the time to set aside other activities and settle in to do their school work, ultimately...it is your desire and ours that they not only develop these on their own. The ultimate responsibility is your child's and our student's to make these things happen after you assisted in the original design and implementation. The independence we wish to observe in their actual completion of their assignments is also an independence you want to garner in their entire set of school work habits.

As we discussed "fading" in an earlier item (#14) we wish to bring that topic up again in a bit of a broader since. After you find you have supported your child in the many ways we have discussed, and you have done everything you can to "get them started", "keep them on task", "reduce distractions" and support that they "complete their work" and "check their own work"...you want always be keeping in mind that you want to step back and explain that it's NOT your school work...it's actually their school work. You have helped and you will help (when truly needed) but you want one day to not have to be so involved. While you may be in the room, you wish that they might make it further and further in their lessons before calling on you. Finally, you want to simply be "available" to them but hope to be called on "rarely" if at all. This is a goal to keep in mind. It is NOT a goal to rush into. It is however to be kept in your mind as you monitor and make sure that you are helpful but not doing too much of their work. It is not a mistake to help your child. It would be a mistake not to monitor your assistance and not be aware that you should step back when it becomes possible.

When students realize they completed their work "on their own" it becomes a source of pride and a behavior much more likely to be repeated. You will then have taught "independence" and you get to step back with pride and know it happened because you supported until you found the opportunity to reduce or fade your support and involvement. It's not an easy call, when to help and when you are not needed, but do your best to observe for this and it will happen for you.

SCHOOL WORK IS YOUR CHILD'S RESPONSIBILITY

Ultimately you want to be able to step back and watch your child observe the clock, determine it's SCHOOL TIME, collect their necessary supplies, read their assignments, complete their assignments and ask for little to no assistance and access the rewarding activity you set up beforehand. It is not going to happen overnight. It is not wrong to assist your child at any time you think they need your assistance. What is important is that you know it is also NOT wrong to step back and ask them to try and do everything "tonight" without asking you for help. Praise their INDEPENDENCE if and when they are able to complete tasks without your assistance. It will be a source of pride for them. While future lessons might and in fact "will" need your involvement, it is rewarding for you as well to see your child who is confident in their ability to organize themselves, work on their school work without much if any help from you and complete their assignments. Praise this type of independence and refer to it in the future with your child if you feel that you might need to step back again and bolster their confidence by saying..."I feel pretty sure that you can do this on your own, but I am here if you need me".

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STRATEGY TWENTY FOUR

SCHOOL WORK IS NOT ABOUT GRADES

Grades are important. Grades let us know if we are approaching mastery of a skill or if there is still work to be done in helping a child master a concept. We have all fallen into the trap that we think it is “all” about GRADES. It is not. We are presenting a curriculum to your child in a sequence that is attainable and which builds upon itself so that basic skills can be used later for more advanced skills and critical thinking. This sequence is designed so that one day your child will (independent of you and of us) be self-sustaining and find the life they wish to live according to their passions. Yes there are plenty of lofty goals in written educational codes for the states, counties and individuals. These goals also talk about being a productive member of society, and that’s all very true. But no one has ever judged you unworthy of being a member of society or your worth as a human being because of a GRADE. The GRADE is nothing but a marker that lets you, us and your child know just how close they are to the target of mastery. The target being an academic goal. Everyone doesn’t “master” every concept they encounter. I still can’t do Algebra...I got a C...and I survived that.

I am saying this so that you and your children do not, as everyone does at one time or another, get largely focused on the GRADE instead of the “learning of a new skill”. We all have different abilities levels in different abilities. We all have different interests and we all have varying levels of satisfaction with our mistakes and successes. So rather than stress a child unduly, remember that an Average grade is C and Exceptional is A. We are all good at some things and not so good at others. No one is good at everything and no one is bad at everything. All we can do is aim for your child DOING THEIR BEST and provide educational experiences whereby they can DO THEIR BEST. If you remember this and speak it to your child it will take the false standard of thinking everyone has to get an A off of you and your child and allow you and your child to focus on your child’s gaining confidence in their best efforts and the results that reveal their best efforts. This is truly all we can do in the long run.

SCHOOL WORK IS NOT ABOUT GRADES

Children and adults all have various interests and abilities levels. We are good at some things and not so good at others. No one should be expected to make straight As in every subject. If your child does yield that type of results, that’s great. But if your child doesn’t, that’s ok too. The question isn’t “What grade did you earn?” The question is, “Did you do your best?” and “Is there a way I can help you if you wanted to learn more or do better next time?” It will work out. Do your best by your child, watch them do their best, and stop worrying about GRADES. They are only markers, not anything more. Our best is what we should all be striving for in life.