

#11

Thinking Out Loud

Enthusiasm is contagious. Start an epidemic.
~Unknown

Did you know that talking to yourself not only helps you organize your thoughts but also helps your child? When you are working through a problem, make it a point to say what you are thinking out loud. Look for opportunities to do this. For example:

"I need to make 100 cupcakes for the bake sale. If each muffin tin makes 12 cupcakes and I have 2 muffin tins I can make 24 at a time. So, let's see... how many batches will I need to bake? I will divide 100 by 24...."

Your child will realize that adults, like children, must go through a series of steps to conquer a problem. If you're enthusiastic about learning and are willing to take the time to really think something through, then chances are, your child will be, too!

#12

Language is More Than Reading and Writing

We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.
~Epictetus

Parents are usually very aware of how well their children are doing in reading and writing. You may set aside time to help them practice and make an effort to show them that they are valued. There are two other components of language that are also very important, and these skills are often overlooked. They are *listening* and *speaking*.

You do not need to set aside time in the day or week to practice listening and speaking to show your child that these are important life skills. Just make an effort to show your child you are really listening to her when she is speaking. She will know she has your attention by your body language, eye contact, and relevant responses. Show her how to do the same when *she* is listening. Try to remember that these, too, are important skills for life.

Try this website for Active Listening Games: <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/active-listening-games.html>.

#13

Get it Together

Beginnings are always messy.
~John Galsworthy

Is your morning routine chaotic or calm? Do you hear these panicked cries in the morning just as the school bus pulls up: "Mom, where is my back pack?" "I can't find my homework!" Here are a few suggestions if your morning is more hectic than relaxed:

- Have a specific place for your child's backpack that everyone agrees upon. When he comes home from school, help him make it a habit to put it there every day. After homework is completed, practice putting everything back into the backpack and place it in its special spot the night *before* school. Now, even on mornings when everyone is running behind, he can just grab his backpack and know that everything is in it, done, and ready to turn in.
- Buy or create a homework folder or notebook. For younger children, get one with a dual pocket folder. Have him keep his assigned homework in the left pocket. He can transfer the work to the right pocket once it is completed. He should bring home the folder every day whether there is homework in it or not so that it becomes a habit.
- For the older elementary child, an assignment notebook may be best. The notebook can be used to record assignments for the day and whether they were finished. If your child tends to be forgetful about doing his homework or bringing it home, a habit could be made that you check his assignment book every day. At first, it may mean a trip back to school to pick up forgotten books or assignments, but if that extra time needed to go back to school cuts out his play/free time, you may start to see a less forgetful child.

#14

Getting There Is Half the Fun

It's good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters in the end.
~Ursula K. LeGuin

When you are working with your child on a project, it is tempting to focus solely on *finishing* it, but that may actually send the wrong message. The steps your child takes in order to complete the project are often equally as important as the project itself.

For instance, if your child needs to write a report, the process involved might include brainstorming, researching, reading, note-taking, drafting, revising, and editing. Each of these skills is important in and of itself and should be emphasized along with the completion of the project.

You could divide the overall project into steps and concentrate on one step a day to emphasize its importance and avoid your child becoming overwhelmed. The steps and effort she

contributes toward completing a task are very often more important than the final product because she is learning *how* to do things, not just to get them done.

#15

Just do it!

*I hear and I forget,
I see and I remember,
I do and I understand.
~Confucius*

Did you ever say to someone, "Could you just write it down for me?" Have you ever been somewhere ten times and yet cannot get there again on your own because you hadn't actually driven the car there yourself? Did you tell your child the fire was hot several times, but it took his burning himself never to touch it again?

As the saying above goes, *telling or showing* someone something may not be enough. When children (and adults, too, for that matter) are told something, they may or may not remember it. If they can see it written down, they may retain more. When they do it, when they are part of the discovery of learning about it, chances are they'll never forget it.

You can take this even one step further by having your child teach learned information to someone else. (Alternatively, it can write about it for himself in his journal.) You cannot teach something or journal about it without knowing enough about it.

#16

Break it up!

*Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it up into small jobs.
~Henry Ford*

Many tasks, from homework assignments to chores, can seem overwhelming to children. No matter what the job is, if your child needs help, perhaps you could help her *before* she even starts. See if you and your child can work together to break the entire task into smaller, more manageable parts.

For a younger child, it may be helpful to write the steps down for her to check off as she accomplishes them. For older children, a verbal discussion may be all that is necessary to get them off to a good start. Your child may be more willing and able to take the whole project on herself once she sees a clear way to get there.

#17

Having a Homework Policy

*How doth the little busy bee improve each shining hour
And gather honey all the day from every opening flower!
~Isaac Watts*

If your child is like most, he is probably as busy as a bee. Whether he has homework every day or seldom, truckloads or not much, it is important for your family to have a Homework Policy. This may include rules for when homework is to be completed, where, and how.

Many fights stem from kids trying to put homework off until later in the evening or even for another day. If you establish rules that must be obeyed, your child will feel no need to argue. Choose a time when you or another responsible adult will be around to help out if needed. You could try first thing after school, just before or after dinner, before any TV/ video games, and the like. Just make sure that he has time to finish before bed.

Your rules may differ for long-term homework projects. Perhaps you could use the idea of breaking the project down into smaller parts here, too, and create a timetable for when certain steps need to be completed.

Having a homework policy will not only alleviate endless requests for postponement, but it will also let both you and your child know that homework doesn't have to be overwhelming.

See our workbook at www.365TeacherSecrets.com for a sample timetable.

#18

Creating a Study Area

*If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be.
Now put foundations under them.
~Henry David Thoreau*

Giving your child a special, well-equipped study space is a good foundation for quality accomplishments. When your child has a designated spot in which to complete homework, it will not only help her to be better organized, but also will offer her a welcome and ready place that is just right for producing her best work. It should be an area with enough space for her to spread out the things she will need to be working on. It should be a well-lit, relatively quiet area with no distractions (such as the TV, phone, or little siblings) so that she can concentrate. Some things that would be helpful to have in the study area include:

- a dictionary and thesaurus;
- pens, pencils (with erasers), colored pencils, crayons;
- a pencil sharpener;
- a stapler, paper clips;

- a ruler;
- a calculator;
- a globe;
- a comfy chair.

With these supplies readily available to her, your child may be more apt to use them to complete, or even *enhance*, her work.

#19

Creating a Life Long Learner

*The important thing is not so much that every child be taught,
as that every child should be given the wish to learn.*

~John Lubbock

As your family takes the journey toward academic success together, there is something very important to keep in mind. Try to remember that your goal is not to fill your child up with information. You want to awaken his sense of curiosity, ambition, and desire to learn on his own. It's not so important *what* you teach him but that you teach him to think.

If you can instill in your child a sense of wonder and a love of learning, your efforts will surely be rewarded. You will create a child who is not afraid to question, to try, to take a risk, and to think for himself. These are qualities that will last him a lifetime. After all, as Malcom S. Forbes said, "Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one."

#20

"Hidden Treasure!"

An accomplishment sticks to a person.

~Japenese proverb

Learn how to play Hidden Treasure! In a never-ending effort to make learning fun, we have created this game to be used with just about any area of the curriculum to help kids learn reading words, spelling words, definitions, and more. We haven't met a kid yet who didn't like to play (and beat us at) it! Basic play consists of theses few steps:

1. Gather some note cards, a box, and two different kinds of counters (pennies and dimes work great!).
2. Write all words to be learned on index cards. Also create a few that say "Treasure!"
3. Place all cards in a box, mixed up, upside down. Take turns drawing a card and reading/spelling/defining it.
4. If the person gets it right, she earns a counter worth 1. If not, no counter is earned. Once a player earns 10 single counters, she can trade it for a counter worth 10. (If a "Treasure"

card is drawn, the player can trade in her single coins for one worth 10 regardless of how many she has.)

To even it out if you are playing with your child, you can also let her read/ spell/ define your words, too; this lets her have the chance to earn more points!

5. Play continues until all cards have been drawn. The winner is the one who has the most points.

Here are some different things you could put into the Hidden Treasure Box:

- reading words;
- sentences containing those reading words;
- vocabulary words with definitions on the back;
- spelling words;
- words from a story she is learning to read;
- challenge words (to read or spell);
- definitions for content words she is learning about in school (science, social studies, etc.);
- dates in history and their importance;
- basic math facts (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division); and
- math facts in other areas.

Note: The workbook at www.365teachersecrets.com has more detailed instructions for the game.