

## News & Announcements

Happy Canada Day Everyone!

I know not all of you are Canadian, or even in Canada for that matter; indeed, we have interested and interesting readers from around the globe! For those of you who may not know, July 1<sup>st</sup> is Canada Day, a day when Canadians celebrate our country and the great diversity it represents.

Summer Language Lessons

Summer seems like such a natural time of year for language learning. It's a time when we (hopefully) relax a little and focus more on ourselves and our interests. People are contacting us for private language tutorials and small group tutorials for French, Spanish, Japanese, German and more.

Study Tips Links

▶ <http://sf.factmonster.com/homework/studyskills1.html>

Straight-forward tips about maximizing your studying.

▶ <http://www.kidzworld.com/site/p2666.htm>

Study tips, games and more.

▶ <http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/>

Tons of tips and information

## Helping Elementary School Age Kids

by Maureen Bouey

*"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."*

W. B. Yeats

This issue is the first of two issues focussed more towards parents than students. We'll look at how you can best support your child in becoming a successful student during his/her school experiences. In particular, we'll discuss how to help your kids with their homework.

The elementary years are when your child can learn to love to learn. By creating a positive and encouraging learning environment at home, you are providing the optimum environment for school success. Let us consider the following suggestions:

▶ **Let your child have some freedom around deciding the logistics of where, when and how they do their homework.** Even if you have provided a lovely desk, chair and reading lamp in their bedroom, and they seem to prefer lying on their stomachs in the kitchen or living room, don't worry. As we have learned in doing our Learning Styles Assessments, kids all work in very individual ways, and have distinct preferences for such things as temperature, body position, environment, and so on. So if your child happily starts their own homework without any prompting, DON'T fuss about how, when and where YOU think they should be doing it. As much as is possible, you want to encourage independence, and have them understand that homework is their responsibility, not yours. This is critical for future success.

## With Homework

▶ **Leave them be.** When they are working on something, stop yourself from interfering and trying to help – even if you see that they're doing something wrong; unless you are asked, stay out of it. At the most, you could gently, and very generally, ask if they'd like any help. This helps them develop independence and, importantly, an ability to focus on their own. If a pattern of difficulty begins to emerge for your child (for example consistently low scores on spelling tests for example), you will want to step in to suggest they seek help (either from you, another text or from another knowledgeable person).

▶ **Avoid lecturing to them.** When they do ask for help, try to make it look as though you're learning from them, rather than the other way around. You could even play dumb a little; pretend you've forgotten how to do it. Allow them to 'refresh' your memory. This is a good way to approach helping your kids because teaching someone how to do something is one of the best ways for kids, or anyone, to learn something new. Of course, this doesn't always work; sometimes you will need to provide more direct help, and a little bit of this is fine, just as long as it doesn't become a nightly habit. (This becomes a different issue for homeschooling parents who will need to do some more formal teaching with their kids.)

▶ **Be as patient and adaptable as your life circumstances allow.** (I know that this is easier for some than others.) Be as supportive as you can in providing them with all the materials they need. Be aware that this sometimes means being flexible and spontaneous when it's

## About Us

### Our Mission Is:

▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents of students through:

Superior private tutoring matched specifically to each student's needs *and* stimulating, small group classes.

▶ To enhance students' skills and increase their learning confidence through individualized support, recognizing each student's unique abilities.

▶ To improve quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals. All of our tutors are carefully screened.

We will help you to reach your goals, no matter your level.

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inconvenient: "Oh! - I need to make a collage for my social studies class. Tomorrow!" Of course you would have preferred more notice, and it's fine to say so (without sarcasm). But, you might just let go of being 'right' about their not having planned this very well and pop out to get the supplies anyway, if you can. This shows them that they are important, and their projects are important. My experience is that this improves with time. (Time management is an important skill which should be incorporated in as many ways as possible - on an ongoing basis.)

▶ **Avoid criticizing;** instead look for ways to encourage and support your kids. It's okay to stretch the truth a bit when you praise your child's work – what you say should be true – but be generous. Sometimes you have to look harder than others – but there's always something positive you can say about whatever assignment or project they're working on. "Wow – beautiful drawing/great handwriting/that's an interesting idea/ that's the perfect word", etc. In other words, focus on whatever positives you can find. Soon, there will be more and more of them.

▶ **Encourage independent reading** – in whatever way seems to most interest them. In some ways, this

is probably even more important than their homework. Allow them to use a computer for fun, communication and research, but put a limit on it. Likewise with TV, it is now well-documented that kids who watch hours and hours of TV (especially unsupervised) wind up having short attention spans – even as adults. When they get to the higher levels of school, in particular, a love of independent reading will really pay off.

▶ It's also a good idea to **encourage independent writing**. It doesn't really matter what they write, it could be letters, stories, poems, even grocery or 'to do' lists – anything is good, because it's the process of writing which helps to develop fluency. They could write and 'produce' little books of their own (computers have made this easy!), songs, or newspapers. Perhaps you could see about getting them published in a children's magazine.

▶ **Avoid putting a lot of pressure on kids about grades**, especially if they're clearly doing their best. In the worst case scenarios, this has even been known to lead to cheating. Perfection should not be the goal.

*"The great aim of education is not knowledge but action."*

Herbert Spencer (1820 - 1903)

## Contact Us

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## Learning Styles Assessments

Understanding your learning style is understanding how you like to learn and express yourself. Knowing yourself as a learner, you can optimize your learning in the classroom and in life.

Smart Tutor Referrals uses an online Learning Styles Assessment tool developed by teachers and used by professionals for over 15 years. One great thing that many students really appreciate about this assessment is that the results are available immediately and can be printed off or emailed to another person (like a teacher, tutor, or parent, for example). The assessments are suitable for anyone over the age of 8 with an intermediate English level.

This assessment tool provides feedback on your: disposition, modality, optimum study environment, talents, and interests.

The cost is \$40. Please contact us for more information.