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PERFECTIONISM AND PROCRASTINATION

Some homework hassles are a result of procrastination or perfectionism. Children with perfectionist tendencies set incredibly high standards for themselves, and yet believe they will never attain them. Therefore, they decide not to even attempt the homework at all, or they can't complete it due to spending too much time trying to make one or two portions of the homework perfect. Experts at Scholastic Education recommend the following strategies to help a perfectionist child accomplish his/her homework:

- **Let perfectionist children know it is okay to make mistakes.** Many kids are so afraid to be wrong that they become frustrated when a project doesn't come easily. Share your own stumbles. Reassure your children that when they are really stumped, it is okay to leave the answer blank and ask the teacher for help the next morning.
- **Set a calming example.** Pay attention to how you react to daily hassles. When children observe your positive attitude and tenacity in the face of a challenge, they will be more likely to learn to take a deep breath try again.
- **Make time for play.** A study published by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research found that 75 percent of a child's day is tightly scheduled with activities that are parent-structured and parent-supervised. Balance your child's schedule by giving him/her time to do absolutely nothing.
- **Hold the criticism.** If your child asks you to review his/her homework, phrase your corrections gently, such as: "Why don't you look over this sentence again?" and "How did you find the answer to that?" Leave specific guidance to the teacher.
- **Remind your child that there is more to learning than grades.** Perfectionists are often anxious because they want to be the best or get a perfect score. Try to instill an intrinsic joy of learning.

TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

Educators are required to test children on their academic knowledge and skills. Testing helps teachers understand what skills students have mastered and where they may have learning gaps; testing helps students understand how they are doing in a subject and what they still need to learn; and test scores alert parents to academic areas in which their children may be struggling.

The U.S. Department of Education website presents many test-taking myths and realities that parents may find helpful, to increase their awareness of the various types of evaluation systems and their purposes. Visit www2.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/ayp/testingforresults.html

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Experts agree that parents can be a great help in boosting their child's testing skills by following these do's and don'ts:

- Do tell your child that occasionally he/she will take standardized tests; standardized tests require that every student take the same test according to the same rules. This makes it possible to measure each student's performance against that of other kids throughout the state or country, allowing schools to assess how effectively they are teaching.
- Do make sure that your child attends school regularly. When students miss too much school, they can easily fall behind or miss important test review sessions.
- Don't get upset because of a single test score. Many things can influence how your child does on a test. He/she might not have felt well on test day or might have been too nervous to concentrate or had other things on his/her mind. One test does not tell a complete story about your child's capabilities.
- Don't be shy about meeting with your child's teacher regularly to discuss your child's progress. If your child does well in school but does not test well, ask the teacher to suggest activities for your child to prepare for tests.
- Don't feed your child heavy or sugary foods the morning of a test; this can make him/her groggy or hyper – both can make it difficult to concentrate.
- Don't encourage your child to cram for a test the night before; this will likely increase your child's anxiety and can interfere with clear thinking. Instead, ensure that your child gets a good night's sleep.