

EXTRA SPECIAL EDITION

PARENT NEWSLETTER

FALL 2019-2020

Welcome to the **Fall Extra Special Edition Newsletter** for 2019-2020. Each issue contains information for parents and caregivers regarding children in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program in our district.

Homework Strategies By Pam Myers, BSED

Homework Strategies for Students with Learning Disabilities by Pam Myers, BSEd

Homework presents a challenge for all parents. If your child has learning disabilities, it can require extra thought and attention. With a strategic approach, you and your child can achieve homework success.

Clear Communication with the Teacher

It's important that assigned homework is clear and appropriate for the student. If homework is too difficult or too easy, it can cause challenges at home. If the homework assignment is unclear, then it makes things frustrating for children and adults. It's important for parents and teachers to work together to monitor homework assignments and their completion. Stay in touch with your student's teacher/teachers.

Structure

All students need structured time for homework. It's important that they know what's expected of them and to have a designated study time. Make sure a parent or tutor is available during study time to monitor the student and help if necessary.

Organization

One of the challenges for many students with learning disabilities is getting and staying organized. Checklists, homework notebooks, and other systems can help a child write down the necessary information for each assignment. They need to learn to document the details as well as when the assignment is due. In the designated homework area, consider creating an environment that is organized to support your learner. It might include learning tools like calculators, pencils, and file organizers color coded for each subject.

Teach Self-Monitoring

Help your student learn to manage responsibilities for themselves. Create an accountability chart that helps them stay on track. The chart might give stars for days with completed homework, blank marks for days that homework was not completed, and a checkmark if the homework was done but late. This type of system can also alert parents to potential issues.

Make It Fun

When possible, make homework something that your student doesn't dread. Provide snacks, allow them to listen to music (if it isn't distracting), and let them take breaks. If your child has a positive attitude about homework, it can reduce their resistance and potential struggle.

Most Important

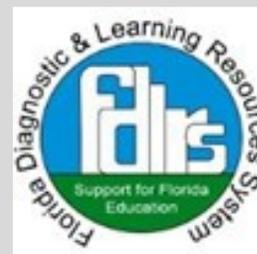
The most important homework strategy for parents, especially parents of students who have learning disabilities, is to have an open line of communication with teachers. When parents and teachers work together to create appropriate homework, students benefit.

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"It takes a person with a mission to succeed."
~Clarence Thomas



School Routine adapted from article by Pam Myers, BSEd

A Good Day Starts with a Good Night's Sleep!

Most experts agree that children need between 9 and 10 hours of sleep each night to be at their best, while 8 hours is the absolute minimum. Explain to your children the importance of getting a good night's sleep. Tell them that it is during sleep that the body heals itself. Getting enough sleep will give them the energy they need to stay awake and alert during the school day. A good night's sleep also lessens crankiness and irritability which makes them easier to be around!

Establish an Evening Routine

Get your children in the habit of following a routine every night. If they choose their clothing for the next day, take a bath, brush their teeth, and get into their pajamas every night before they go to bed, you're transitioning them into settling down. Having a set routine will give them a strong sense of consistency and help them wind down. This process can also reduce complaining from your kids about bedtime. Older children are often allowed to stay up later than younger children, but this doesn't mean that they should be permitted to stay up too late. Have them follow the same routine – choosing their clothes, taking care of their personal needs, and going to bed on time so that they will get a good night's sleep. Since they've taken the time to choose their clothing the night before a school day, you won't be faced with questions like, "Mom, have you seen my blue shirt?" or "Mom, where are my sneakers?" Preparing like this makes the next morning flow much more smoothly. Once the children are in bed, dim the lighting in their room to a comfortable level. Take this time to enjoy one-on-one time – depending on their age, read them a bedtime story or have a chat about something that happened that day or about something that they want to talk about. Talk to them about the next day. What activities are planned? Do they have a doctor's appointment? Will you pick them up from school at an unusual time? What do you have to do after they get home from school? Do you have to run to the store or take care of other errands? Anything you can do to prepare them for the next day will make things easier for the whole family. When it's finally time for bed, tell your child that you love them, kiss them goodnight, and turn out the lights. Older children may be allowed to sit up and read quietly for a little while before lights out. Take this time to prepare for the day ahead and relax.

Morning Routines are Equally Important

One item you may want to purchase for your children is an alarm clock. By giving your child an alarm clock, you're giving them some of the responsibility in getting up on time. Does this mean that you won't have to nudge them to get them out of bed when school first starts? Most likely not; in fact, chances are you'll have to remind them over and over to get up, get dressed, and eat so that they can get to school on time. Remember, you want your kids to have ample time to get dressed, eat breakfast, and gather their things before they head out. If they ride a school bus, they need to be ready when the bus comes. However, if you take them to school, they may have a little more flexibility in their morning routine. For younger children, it's a good idea to create a chart of things that they need to do each morning. You may want to use pictures to create a "to-do" list with the following items: • Get dressed – picture of clothing (shirt, pants, socks, and shoes) • Eat breakfast – picture of food • Brush teeth – picture of toothbrush and toothpaste • Get ready to go – picture of backpack and lunch bag. Older children may not need pictures, but having a list of what they need to do each day is still helpful. Post a list in several places around the house, such as their bedroom, the bathroom, and the refrigerator so that they don't have to keep running through the house to figure out what's next. Place the list in a sheet protector so that they can cross or check the items off. Medical experts and nutritionists embrace the benefits of eating a healthy breakfast every morning. Not only does breakfast give the body the energy it needs, but it also helps with focus. Eating breakfast improves a child's concentration and allows them to perform better in school. If your child doesn't want to eat a full breakfast, find foods that they can eat quickly, but that will still provide the nutrients their body needs. Most experts recommend eating a serving of protein first thing in the morning. Scrambled eggs on toast, yogurt and fruit, or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on whole wheat bread are good options for breakfast. Be creative!

****Remember: Routines help us to know what to expect every day, stay organized, and prepare for the next day. ****

FIN Tip: Communicate Clearly & Positively with School Staff

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Reminding people of your child's strengths.	"Please remember the disability is just a part of who my child is. He/she has many strengths and unique characteristics."
Listening to others with an open mind and offering your ideas.	"I agree that my child needs to improve in reading comprehension. Can we adjust his/her schedule so that intensive instruction can be provided during the regularly scheduled reading block in an inclusive setting?"
Taking a step-by-step approach to problems and offering your ideas for solutions. Express your understanding that things can change over time.	"I'm not sure this strategy will work with my child, so let's try it and talk about this again in a few weeks. If this doesn't work, I have another idea that we could try."
Jotting down notes before, during, and after you meet with your child's individual educational plan (IEP) team members. Use concrete and specific examples when you share concerns.	"I'd like to share some concerns from our last conversation. I think there may be some misunderstanding about my son's/ daughter's communication support needs. He/ she needs to have a special switch in order to communicate his/ her choices. He/ she uses this device at home to make choices about foods, activities, and clothing."
Asking questions to understand both sides of an issue. Get a second opinion from other teachers or the school administrator.	"I'm not sure I understand why my son/ daughter has been placed in a different reading program. Can you explain what you are basing this decision upon? I think I would also like to hear about the new reading program from the reading coach."
Make a Plan	
Looks Like	Sounds Like
Contacting your child's school as early as possible.	"I'd like to meet before next school year to plan for my child's transition to grade and his/ her support needs."
Making special appointments to talk about specific concerns or problems.	"I'm concerned about some homework assignments my child is bringing home. What would be a good time to discuss this?"
Agreeing upon a common system of communication.	"What's the best way for us to regularly communicate throughout the year?"

FIN TIP Continued

Show Your Support and Willingness to be a Partner

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Recognizing the teacher's expertise.	"I know you are a highly able teacher who has a lot of things to juggle every day! Please let me know how I can help you."
Participating in the School's Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) self-assessment process, family- school activities and/or committees.	"I'm available to volunteer for the BPIE, PTA, School Advisory Committee, Booster Club, Family Resource Room, etc."
Sending positive messages to staff. Let them know you care about their efforts to educate your child and want to build a positive relationship between school and home.	"We really think your extra efforts are paying off for my son/ daughter. He/ she has never enjoyed going to school until now!" "I'm thrilled with my child's progress this year, but would like to know how I can do more to help at home."
Keeping your child's behavior in perspective.	"Is what my child doing typical for kids his/her age or is this something to do with his/her disability?"

Words and Tone of Voice are Very Important

Adapted from: **How What You Say and How You Say It May Affect Your Child's Temperament** by **Robert Myers, PhD**

The results of a recent study found that not only what we say, but how we say it, may affect the development of emotional traits of a child starting at a very young age. We once thought that how a person's temperament was genetically determined, but this study indicates that environment plays a big role as well. The results show that what we say and how we say it effects not only a child's behavior now, but how they react to future situations that are similar. By using a positive tone and positive statements while a child observes and experiences various situations, we help them to react positively. Parent/child communication is key to carrying out the basic tasks of a parent which include forming a close bond, understanding your child's point of view, providing appropriate limits and guidance and teaching them skills, knowledge and values. Start being aware of how you communicate with your child and how it affects them. Modify your communication style based on what you learn and begin to filter and formulate what you say and how to say it before you start. These modifications will "rewire" your parenting style and you will find that you will begin to respond to your child spontaneously in a very positive and effective style.



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Serving Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Walton, and Washington counties

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