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8 ways to make sure your student has a great first semester

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School is back in session and it is important to make sure your student has a good start. Getting off to a good start can make the rest of the year run smoothly. Here are eight ways you can make sure your student has a great first semester.

Setting goals

Active and effective goal setting is the foundation for a clear path to the higher level of academic performance required to succeed in high school.

As they learn the discipline of goal setting, students begin to mature academically. They begin to take more personal responsibility for their ambitions, choices and decisions. They learn the skill of prioritizing conflicting demands and desires in order to create the outcome they are truly committed to achieving.

Guiding students in the development of goals is important for several reasons. Without the benefit of experience in setting goals, some students may set unrealistic or impractical objectives that serve only to overwhelm them and discourage the practice. Likewise, students that don't set goals often don't have an overall focus.

If you sit down with your student and talk about goals for the semester, you might be surprised at how seriously they take the challenge. Setting realistic goals will motivate your student to do well because they'll have something concrete to shoot for.

For a high schooler, as they learn the discipline of goal setting, students begin to mature academically. They begin to take more personal responsibility for their ambitions, choices and decisions. They learn the skill of prioritizing conflicting demands and desires in order to create the outcome they are truly committed to achieving.

Time management

Students will find it easier to accomplish tasks if they can visually see all of their tasks in front of them in a planner. Students will have fewer worries about remembering deadlines when they are engaged in the daily plan. In the end, this habit will free-up the brain so it can focus on the task



that must be completed.

Breaking down assignments into chunks and scheduling them over time is an essential component to time management. This requires the student to estimate how long it will take to complete each piece of the assignment, what materials will be needed, and to plan accordingly. Breaking apart projects, tasks and assignments aid in overall organization and ensures more productive time for the student.

Active learning and notetaking

Taking notes when reading, as well as listening, promotes active learning and engagement, yet many feel that notetaking is only for classroom/lecture settings. While it is true that middle and high schoolers should be taking notes in class, it is equally important that they take notes while

reading as well. The act of taking notes promotes interaction with the material and encourages better comprehension and understanding of what is being taught and learned.

Identifying main ideas, supporting details

Identifying main ideas and supporting details is key to effective notetaking. Tests and quizzes mainly ask for regurgitation of main ideas of a text. Therefore, being able to distinguish between the two is crucial, but understanding the full picture is essential to remembering and building knowledge.

Self-advocating

Self-advocacy is the idea of effectively communicating one's own individual needs and concerns. It is the ability and willingness to say "I have a problem and I need some help." The student that

self-advocates will have less stress and will be better able to learn new and innovative ways to approach their schoolwork because they will ask for it.

Doing homework

Another way to ensure success is to make sure your student is doing their homework. Homework usually is an important component of the final semester's grade so it is important to make sure your student does their homework and turns it in at school.

Particularly for middle schoolers, homework is a great way for your student to start to assume independence and responsibility. The best way you can assist is by making sure that a routine is established and a distraction-free environment is provided.

Distraction-free study space

It seems obvious yet cannot be stressed enough. Students should study in a quiet distraction-free space. This means no television, no texting, no online time — unless it's strictly for homework purposes. One effective technique is to remove all of temptations. For example, if your student has a cell phone, you might consider holding on to it until their homework is finished.

Using study skills

Learning study skills and applying them correctly are critical to the development of a student's confidence. There is no question that with a more organized, efficient and time-managed approach and application, students will be more successful. If students can learn effective study skills to apply to their academics, they will feel more comfortable and confident in their work.

Your student can have a great semester with the right support and motivation. Every student wants to succeed; they just need the tools and determination to achieve their goals.

More info: S4 - Successful Study Skills 4 Students, LLC, Southport; 203-30-5-K-I-I-L (203-307-5455), successfulstudyskills4students.com.