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OPTIONS: HOMEWORK and SCHOOL SUCCESS

This outline includes thoughts assembled by Dr. Kemp. A balance of sleep, nutrition, exercise, fun, and school are significant facets of structure to generate preferred performance. First, students always write their name and date on each page of each learning activity/assignment. Master students do their best: complete all class work and homework assignments, check the work for accuracy, turn in the assignments on time, and briefly review the returned assignments to take responsibility for learning accountability in the form of grades and possibly future test preparation.

Please make your own notes as a student or parent/monitor to customize ideas within your environment and preferences for accomplishment in school including home dynamics. Some students require more specific organization than other students. Various subjects require different forms of organization. Fortunately or unfortunately, grades, including various tests, are a measure of student information and skill attainment. The mechanics of taking different tests are important to apply. Some schools offer “test taking skills” classes, “homework clubs”, “learning strategies” classes, and/or tutors.

Successful students spend TIME with ATTENTION on assignments to insure accuracy in completion and becoming more proficient in the various subjects, whether “favorite or least favorite”. All subjects are important whether preferred or not. Although teachers, parents, and other people can help, students are responsible for their own learning. Through the process of becoming more proficient or learning independently, typically the student internally senses success in accomplishment following challenges or hard work. This fulfillment (e.g., balance of life including with wisdom, optimism, and resilience) within self can motivate an individual to . . .”be all she or he can be”.

- Work Place
 - Best Place
 - Avoid distractions (e.g., nearby television, telephone, computer)
 - Central where all students study under supervision (e.g., table in center of home)
 - Private where individual studies in quiet without distractions (e.g., desk in bedroom)
 - Experiments of which works best
 - Several options for one week
 - Rate and quality of homework

- Time to finish
 - Subjective (i.e., how liked) and objective (i.e., quality/grade) response
- Collect Necessary Materials
 - Paper, pencils
 - Stock study area (e.g., dictionary, various color highlighters, pens, scissors, glue, tape, colored pencils/pens, staplers, paper)
 - File folders for each subject
 - Long term assignment directions
 - Tests and homework that have been passed back (i.e., study for test)
 - Perhaps retain in organized storage at home to prevent overloaded back pack
 - Perhaps separate file folders for home work from school to home return to school as assigned – place completed homework in backpack, trapper keeper, notebook when completed and checked for accuracy by student
 - Plastic bin may be orderly place to store study materials (i.e., separate for each student)
 - Second container for “dumping stuff” in upon arriving at home from school to avoid last minute frantic searches for permission slips, library books, messages from the principal, notices of meetings and other communication from school to home to be reviewed by parent and in some instances returned to school
- Organization: Homework Setting Priorities
 - Review assignments from agenda/planner/calendar
 - Could list assignments for the evening on a separate sheet of paper
 - Set the necessary books, worksheets or whatever home in preparation for homework assignment
 - Break longer tasks into subtasks
 - Check to determine other tasks expected (e.g., long term assignments, tests later in week for pre-study, add to homework list)
 - Order to complete work
 - Begin and end with “easier” or assignments of high interest

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- More difficult work between
 - Estimate time to complete
 - Allow enough time and include brief break time as necessary
 - Schedule Changes/Obligations in life schedule (e.g., sport events, doctors' appointments, scout meetings, chores, family events)
 - Weekly calendar
 - One time weekly sit down and list for monitoring as well
 - Plan for homework time for the week
 - Reference weekly calendar as needed
 - Begin
 - Maybe most difficult task (i.e., get it over with) unless this strategy encourages difficult time getting started
 - Specific time for beginning (e.g., reinforcement for begin within 5 minutes of that time)
 - Perhaps parent or monitoring adult sit with student initially for the first 5 minutes for good start
 - At times monitoring adult could talk with student about assignments before beginning (e.g., writing or open-ended tasks for “priming” the student)
 - Monitoring adult could orient student to assignment (e.g., walk through first 1 or 2 problems or tasks to check for understanding)
 - Working to Complete
 - Adequate breaks
 - Better to plan a 2 hour homework session with breaks opposed to cramming homework into 1 hour no-stop session
 - Kitchen timer for breaks (e.g., exercise, Nintendo game) of reasonable length (e.g., 5 or 10 minutes)
 - Breaks scheduled when tasks are accomplished not set period of time (i.e., caution of daydreaming)
 - Television during the week of intense school demands may/may not be in best interest of students
If television and homework time are consistently followed, television may be used as an reinforcement or break
 - Example unrealistic for some students due to length of time every day

4:30	Math	6:30	Social Studies
5:00	TV	7:00	TV
5:30	English	8:00	Science
6:00	Dinner	8:30	TV – Then Bedtime

- If above schedule is followed, task will be finished prior to television or student misses television program or tapes it to watch another time

Make game of homework completion (e.g., time one math problem with accuracy)

If stuck, (i.e., even if task is broken into smaller steps), student will switch to another assignment rather than stop working altogether

Student attends

If trouble attending or getting off task without so realizing, “beep tape” can assist with focus

Audiotape sounds electronic tone at random intervals

Students checks self “was I paying attention”

Monitoring adult or student can construct such tapes with messages

- Long Term Assignments
 - Due when
 - Agenda/Planner clear and accurate records
 - Note when assigned, implementation step to completion schedule, completion date
 - Teacher may monitor periodically if student difficulty
 - Monitoring adult may review randomly
 - Student checks each school day
 - Break long assignments into subtasks
 - Read directions or think about nature of assignment, perhaps with monitoring adult
 - Steps to complete
 - Outline
 - Inclusion in each step

- Example of writing assignment
 - Taking notes
 - Generating an outline
 - Writing introduction
 - Sections of report
 - Summary
 - References
 - Maps, Charts
 - Proofreading
 - Preparing final draft
 - Making title page or cover
- Create Reasonable Timeline
 - Review developed outline
 - Each subtask due date recorded and on agenda/planner
 - Adequate time for each step
 - Example to visit library, museum, collect information from outside sources, including transition time with dates recorded
 - Materials to be purchased also identified by scheduling
 - Initially student may need extensive help breaking down assignments and developing realistic timeline
 - Ultimately the student will acquire increased responsibility leading to independence
 - Time management and responsibility are skills of life span importance

Developing increased independence in planning for and executing long-term assignments is an early opportunity for a student to acquire the valuable skill of independent responsibility (e.g., wisdom, optimism, resilience)

- Reinforcement/Incentive Systems
 - Make assignment completion attractive
 - Earn points for task completion and demonstrating other appropriate behaviors required for successful homework completion
 - Points traded in for daily, weekly, or long term reinforcers
 - Steps

- Create list of privileges or rewards student would like to earn
 - Daily example
 - Extra one half hour of television, a special snack, chance to stay up an extra half hour before bed (i.e., with caution)
 - Weekly example
 - Trip to mall, McDonald's, to video arcade, or rent a video, get pizza delivered, get ice cream
 - Longer term reward examples may be attending a movie, inviting a friend over, chance to buy something small
- Create list of "jobs" for which the student can earn points
 - Related to homework
 - Writing down homework assignments
 - Bringing home necessary homework materials
 - Getting homework started on time
 - Completing work within the specified homework time
 - Finishing homework without reminders from adult monitor
 - Finishing homework without constant parental or adult monitor supervision or assistance
 - Completing work with an acceptable standard of accuracy
 - Proofreading written work/checking math problems
 - Handing in homework completed and on time
 - Successfully solving homework problems (e.g., contacting friends or teacher helper when an assignment is not understood (i.e., preferred prior to conclusion of school day)
- Decide how many points each homework "job" can earn and how much each of the privileges or rewards will cost
 - Add up possible number of points the student will earn each day
 - About one third of points will remain free to save up for special privileges
 - Use a notebook or calendar sheet to record date, item, deposits, withdrawals, and the running balance
 - About one time each month review the list of "jobs" and privileges to revise as preferred
- Above system is somewhat extensive designed for students who are highly resistant to doing homework or completing school responsibilities
- Establish system within reason that the student and the adult monitor can consistently maintain

- If problem is not extreme, informal system (i.e., opportunity to earn a small reward after all the homework is completed each day)
- Important to keep the system designed with the student as simple and manageable with consistency as possible to accomplish the task of accurately completed turned in homework
- The rewards or reinforcement are faded as the student shifts his or her responsibility from external to internal
- One fading process is to change the point system to enable bonus points for clusters of student completion
- Students can be taught to reward themselves for completed tasks, both major and minor tasks
- Students can adjust the reward depending on the size or difficulty of task (e.g., half an hour of reading could be worth a 10 minute break to shoot baskets, completing a term paper is worth a bike ride, walk, or car ride to the store to buy a favorite snack)
- Natural or logical consequences (i.e., positive, negative) alone could be sufficient (e.g., no TV program if homework not completed in time is a consequence for “dawdling” over assignments, a failing grade is a natural consequence for failure to complete homework)
- Fear of a failing grade alone may not be sufficient to induce a student to complete homework

A note for monitoring adult is to resist temptation to simply punish students for failure to complete homework, although at times reducing number of outside activities or amount of time with friends is beneficial

A system designed with incentives for homework completion will likely be more effective than a system of negative consequences alone

Most students who have problems doing homework are not happy about their situation or the fights they draw their adult monitors into because it appears to take these students considerably more effort to begin and complete work with sustained attention than it does other students and therefore it makes sense to reward these students for the extra effort it takes

- Parent/Adult Monitor Supervision
 - Struggle could be how much help to give students on homework
 - Discuss nature of difficult assignments to check for student’s understanding

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- Guide through first one or two items
 - Not remain by students side during entire session
 - If problem, perhaps work in an incentive for independent working by student to fade reliance on support
 - Kitchen timer for student to wait for ring to show work or ask questions may assist to increase independence
 - At random times adult monitor could review homework assignments to check for neatness, accuracy, handwriting, proofreading (e.g., “please check math problems 9 and 10 for accuracy”, “please look for spelling errors”)
 - If student is not ready for above possibility intervention, the adult monitor can point to the specific mistakes and request correction (i.e., without giving the correct answer)
 - The typical purpose of homework is to give students independent practice with a skill they have already been taught
 - Adult monitors typically do not teach the skills necessary for successful homework completion
 - A “rule of thumb” is the student can complete at least 70 percent correct while working independently within appropriate instructional range
 - If student is unable to be successful at this rate, perhaps an appointment with the student’s teacher or guidance counselor to request assignments to provide practice for the student or if sustained difficulty overtime, a tutor could be engaged
 - If student is spending inordinate amounts of time on homework, even if successful, the adult monitor may want to discuss the condition with the school teacher, school guidance counselor, or a psychologist

- Appendix A

Example of Weekly Calendar

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
Assignment							
Chores							
Activities							
Other							

- Agenda/Planner/Calendar

- Write Class and Homework Assignments Briefly/Clearly
- Record Grades
- Write Cumulative Tests
- Record Grades
- Record Grades for Unexpected Tests
- Pre-Study for Tests
- Pre-Study for Class Expectations

- Include Plan for Long Term Assignments (i.e., perhaps include on calendar/agenda/planner or Separate Table Example)

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
	Select topic	Research books or web	Take notes			Make outline
	Write introduction		Write first one-half	Write second one-half		Make charts, map, cover, presentation
	Make reference list	Revise report	Prepare final report			Edit or make final corrections
	Report due					

- Appendix B
 - Homework Agreement 1 Example
 - Terms of Contract
 - Jim will write down all assignments in planner/agenda/calendar.
 - The daily television schedule will be:
 - Jim watches _____ at 5 o'clock.
 - In order to watch any evening television shows, homework will be completed.
 - If homework is not completed, the show will be taped for later viewing.
 - Jim will not be allowed to play video games during the week unless all of his homework is completed. He can play no more than 1 hour per day at any time including weekends.
 - On Fridays, Jim will have teachers sign a sheet indicating that he has turned in all homework assignments for the week.
 - Points can be earned for: Points
 - Handing in all homework assignments for all classes each week. 5
 - Grade of B or better on quizzes or tests. 3
 - Grade of B or better on a report or project 5
 - Grade of B or better on report card in academic subjects 5
 - Points can be traded for:
 - A contribution to the Super Nintendo fund - \$30 120

○ Homework Agreement 2 Example

▪ Daily Homework Tasks	Points	Privileges	Cost
All assignments written down	1	Daily	
All materials brought home	1	Extra half hour TV	3
Finish homework by 9 pm	1	Extra snack	3
		Practice soccer with dad	3
		15 minutes video game	3
		Weekly	
		Rent video game	12
		Rent a movie	12
		Have a friend over	12
		Go to Friendly's for ice cream	15
		Long Term	
		Eat at a Chinese restaurant	75
		Take a friend to a movie	75
		(Supervision)	
		Go bowling	75
		Earn a new cassette tape or a CD	75

• Point Accountability

Date	Item	Deposit	Check	Reminder

Note: Any system or contract works most effectively if designed with participants, particularly the student. Simplicity and management are important with an appropriate balance of consistency and involvement.