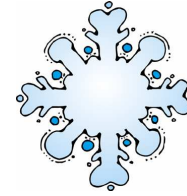




# Counselor's Corner

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January 2009



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## Increasing Your Child's Achievement

Some important factors to explore in order to increase your child's achievement are what helps boost achievement and what causes underachievement.

When looking for ways to encourage achievement, it is critical for parents to show that they value a child's efforts in school and that his or her schoolwork has great importance. When parents convey to their children on a daily basis that what they are learning is important, it helps instill the value that achievement in school is a priority. On the flip side, when parents do not check their child's work each night and discuss school, it indirectly sends the message that school and their child's achievement is not the priority. Focusing on a child's achievement at conferences and report cards will not be enough to sustain your child's effort to achieve his or her best.

Another key component of achievement is having the internal drive to persevere even when the work is challenging. Parents tend to try to build their child's self-confidence by praising their child and pointing out how good he or she is at everything. However, recent research has suggested that certain praise can backfire and lead to underachievement. A psychologist, Carol Dweck, discovered that telling students that they were smart negatively impacted their willingness to try future challenging tasks for fear of no longer appearing smart. In contrast, the students who were told that they worked

really hard were much more willing to accept challenges and persevere. Dweck also discovered that those who thought that innate intelligence was the key to success began to discount the importance of effort. In fact these students believed that having to expend effort was actually public proof that they weren't smart. Dweck's research clearly indicates how important it is to praise your children on effort. Instead of saying, "You are so smart;" try saying, "I like the way you kept working hard and you didn't give up." Praise is a positive, motivating force; but it is most helpful when it is sincere, specific, and intermittent. When children hear praise that they feel is unearned, they discount not just the insincere praise, but sincere praise as well. Specific praise gives your child something to grasp. Instead of saying, "You are so good at reading;" try to be extremely specific by saying something like this; "I like the way you work hard at your reading, sounding out words you don't know, and sticking with the story even if it is confusing at first." Finally intermittent praise is most helpful in developing the ability to persist through difficulty. A person who grows up getting too frequent rewards will not have persistence, because they'll quit when the rewards disappear. It is essential to teach our children to handle frustration and persevere by taking deep breaths and using positive self-talk.

Finally, a common area that leads to underachievement is when a child is not interested in the specific subject and appears not to care. When this is the case, we have to increase a child's motivation to achieve through external incentives (extra time with a parent, 10 extra minutes on the computer, etc.) and consequences until he or she is internally motivated.