

Whose Education is it?

To parents that have so many wonderful dreams for their children, who want them to have all the tools needed to survive well and gain the benefits and advantages to win at this game of life.

An education is certainly one of these tools. The more one knows that can be applied, successfully, to all aspects of ones life, the more competent and happy one will be. The more one can help others, the more valuable one is. Most of you have probably experienced this personally.

Now if we backtrack this all the way down to preschool age, what do we have? How do we help our children to learn to read, write, do mathematics, evaluate information, communicate well with others, solve problems, lead others to good solutions, etc. and how do we help them achieve this?

The first thing to consider is that it is the child's education. Although you pay for it, the education belongs to the child.

How does one unintentionally take an education away from a child? There as so many ways.

- Demanding a child practice a skill.
- Being concerned about whether the child is doing well in front of the child. It could be correct to be concerned privately.
- Getting upset or frustrated when teaching a child.
- Continually pushing a child to do more and more.
- Saying or intimating to the child: not good enough, you didn't do that right, pointing out that another is doing better than him, or you're wrong.

Let's say a child is just learning to read. He's proud of this ability and wants to learn more. Then an adult starts making the child practice reading. Or, continually correcting the child (which is saying "you're wrong"). Pretty soon the child is intimidated and is not learning for self or not learning at all, because the adult is bigger or more powerful.

Hands up pict

Another example could be a child just begged for dance lessons. So you enroll her in a ballet class. This is exciting for the child; she gets to learn more about dance. Then the adults around her tell her that she has to practice for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour every night, do it this way, try again, etc. Dance is no longer hers, it's been taken away.

Having been a teacher for over 16 years I have found many ways to get a child to want to learn and practice and have this be the child's decision. What is ideal is the child demanding to learn more or practice a skill. Of course I do have the advantage of bringing a new student into an environment where others around them are excited about learning.

Following are some tips that I have found to be very successful:

- If you want your child to practice some skill, ask them to teach you.
- Be interested in the work your child brings home from school. Don't quiz him on the work; just be interested in a way that he wants to share his skills and knowledge.
- Sit down and start writing letters and have fun doing it. Let your child be interested in what you are doing. When he then asks to do some let him. You can ask things like "do you want me to show you how I make a "C". Of the letters you wrote, which do you like best?"
- Ask if the child wants to play a letter game. Think fast and come up with a fun game.
- Purchase 2 fun and easy workbooks. You sit down and work on yours. When your child becomes interested, offer to share the other with him.

The more one knows that can be applied, successfully, to all aspects of ones life, the more competent and happy one will be. The more one can help others, the more valuable one is.

The first time you do some of these things your child may just watch. It may take days or longer for him to want to participate. Once he does start participating, make sure you allow the choice to be his.

Be honest with the child. If the coloring is messy, let him know that with practice it can improve. Color together—you one section, him one section. If the first letters he writes are crooked, fine. But over time ask him which he thinks is the best, so he begins to see differences and can strive to do it better.

Letting a child know that what he is doing is not good enough or wrong, will drive him away from that activity—or he may just tune out.



It is not unusual to have a child occasionally sit in my class and not work. I will let him know that is OK and he can watch the others if wants. Occasionally I will ask him if he wants to do _____. If yes I give him the work, if not I just say OK. Later or the next day the child will newly make the decision that he wants to learn and practice again.

What is the difference whether a child learns for oneself or because they have to?

A child learning for oneself is self motivated. This child has a purpose to learn and a personal use for what is being learned. A child learning because of fear, or have to, or because he will not be in the good favor of those around him has to be continually pushed and will often move very slowly through each task.

Another downside of the child that is not self motivated; he may spout the data back to you but cannot usually think with or evaluate the information. Alas, their problem solving skills and their ability to evaluate the data being learned will be low to non-existent. Here are a few ways this can manifest:

- The child can do a 25 piece puzzle, but not figure out how to do smaller puzzles.
- Can read several words in one setting, but cannot read those words in another.
- Can count to 100, but has no desire to sit down with a math book.
- Can read many words, but doesn't desire to look at books.

It is sad—the child that is not self motivated is missing the awe and fun of learning in one to many areas.

The self motivated child is enjoying the awe and fun of learning.

Sincerely,

Candy Mathews
Headmistress

