

Developing Academic Potential

From "An Allowance is Not a Bribe" by Allan M. Gonsher, LCSW, RPT-S

Many parents ask themselves, "How can I develop my child's academic potential?" There are several steps that a parent can take to help each child work to the best of his or her academic abilities. The first is to know the child's learning capabilities. While labels such as average, gifted or learning disabled can be detrimental to a child's self-esteem if improperly used, it is important for the parent to be realistic about the level of success that the child can attain.

The second step is for the parent to offer positive reinforcement in those areas where the child is successful. This means that if the child is a one or two student in English or History the parents should find ways to help the child become even more proficient in that subject. This could include encouraging the child to take on extra credit projects which will enhance his or her knowledge.

The third step is to realize that most children are not proficient in all subjects. The same child who earns a one in English may receive a four in math. A parent can devise ways to help the child such as working with him or her on flashcards drills or purchase work books that the child can use for independent study. Most importantly, the parent should not put undue emphasis on the lack of proficiency in math while ignoring other academic success.

Taking all of the steps into consideration there is one more factor that each parent must keep in mind when helping a child to be academically successful. Children today are subject to many stresses including the expectation to succeed by teachers, parents and peers. Parents need to encourage their children to be academically successful in a loving, caring and stress reduced atmosphere.

Allan Gonsher, LCSW, is a registered play therapy supervisor with 35 years of experience, providing play therapy training across the U.S. and internationally. He is founder and president of Kids Inc. with child and family therapy offices in Omaha, Nebraska, and Overland Park, Kansas, and is author of An Allowance is Not a Bribe. Learn more at www.kids-incorporated.com.