Research on Learning and Achievement

A researcher named John Hattie, examined thousands of studies, experiments, data and research involving 300 million students, to determine what factors most influence student achievement. He has written at least 12 books detailing "visible learning." You can check on-line for a listing of 250 factors and to what degree they influence achievement. Two topics that were proven to accelerate student achievement were Vocabulary Programs and Prior Knowledge.

There has been a lot of segments on the news and online about the "gap or loss of learning" students will suffer due to the changes in the world right now. I absolutely believe that learning takes place everywhere every day, especially in the early years. We have the gift and joy of being with young learners. Play is learning!! Be sure your kids play a lot. Now add the vocabulary component. Talk to your child and ask about what they are doing or what they did. Then expand on their words.

"I just ran around the yard." "Nice! Now can you hop, skip, jump, trot, shuffle etc.?"

"Look at that blue car!" "I see it. I also see a huge, long, silver, shiny truck. Trucks are sometimes called 18 wheelers, or big rigs. Wheels are made out of rubber."

The prior knowledge component involves your child being able to relate their experiences and learning to the new information being introduced. A strong knowledge base is created by reading a lot and having "being there" experiences. That means trips to the zoo, park, store, library etc. I know at this time, some of those experiences are restricted, but if you have internet access you can look up virtual field trips and watch informative videos on many topics. In class, I demonstrate to the children how to connect what we have read or experienced with new leaning. I use the literary terms "text to text and/or text to self". I tell them that learning is all about making connections. I talk about the brain having file folders of topics and when we were about to discuss a topic, we go to our brain and get out the folder (prior knowledge and experiences) and add our new information to the file.

I also read a book called Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance by Angela Duckworth. It discusses high achievers and what it takes to become one. She studied military personnel, athletes, scientists, CEO's and more. She interviewed subjects, created questionnaires and compiled the data to see if there was an observable trait—natural talent, High IQ, etc.--or a method or formula to be able to predict who would succeed.

The short answer is **perseverance!** The ability to learn and succeed **increases with your efforts**. In other words, **the ability to learn is not fixed**. Even is cases when an individual showed a

gift or talent for a certain subject or skill, it was the individual that studied or practiced daily that achieved high levels of success. Individuals that stuck with the work--hour after day after week after month after year succeeded. She says greatness is doable and that wanting something without putting in the work toward the goal is simply positive fantasizing. I tell the children all the time, "The one who does the work does the learning." (Quote from Harry Wong.) She suggests that whatever goal you want to achieve, that you make it a daily ritual to engage in deliberate practice. Doing the practice at the same time and place daily helps you to get into the rhythm automatically so there is less "warm-up" time needed. Deliberate practice means taking the time to do it right and challenge yourself. In reading for example, it doesn't mean reading 50 easy, simple books you already know but instead maybe read 20 pages in a book containing a lot of new vocabulary. In handwriting, it doesn't mean writing 2 pages of letters but maybe make 10 perfect letters.

Kindergarten is an important time to build the foundation for your child's school career. Read to and with your child daily. Talk to and listen to your child daily. Children learn by doing—let your child play a lot. This gives your child a strong prior knowledge base and a vast vocabulary.

(There is a tidbit of information in the book about students that succeed in college. It was determined that students who

participated in two years of the same extra-curricular activity in high school were likely to graduate from college. I enjoyed reading the book.)