



ELMWOOD  
SCHOOL

# A Successful Start!

Knowledge Cafe • Middle and Senior School  
October 3, 2024



# Session Goals

- Elmwood Essentials
- Setting the stage for academic success
- Setting the stage for developing independence and accountability
- Question and Answer Session





# Elmwood Essentials



# Elmwood Essentials: *General information for families*

- Parent Zone @Elmwood.ca
- MyBackpack
- Toddle
- Email, Phone or In-Person Teacher meetings



# Elmwood Essentials: *Parent School Communication*



## **Stay Involved:**

- Attend parent-teacher conferences, information sessions, and school events.
- Communicate with Teachers, Principal and/or Director of Wellness or Director of Student Success if concerns arise.

## **Support Self-Advocacy:**

Encourage your child to communicate with teachers and staff independently when they need help, but stay engaged as a backup if needed.



# Setting the Stage for Academic Success

# Setting the Stage for Academic Success:

## *Never underestimate the power of ROUTINES*



- Consistent sleep/wake routines
- 'Home from school routine' on school nights
- Weekend family work time
- Family dinner
- [Family calendar](#)

### **\*Important considerations\***

- The power of modeling
- Balanced, predictable and supportive approach
- Make time for fun!



# Setting the Stage for Academic Success:

## *Organization, planning, prioritizing, procrastination*



- Promoting the use of a system/routine for keeping track of school work
  - Agendas; [Google Keep](#); [Todoist](#); [Notion](#)
- Helping break tasks into manageable chunks and encouraging the [Pomodoro technique](#)
- Help tackle *procrastination* by encouraging approaching the most difficult task first





# Setting the Stage for Academic Success: *Managing Distractions + Improving Focus*



- Provide a space to work at home with minimal distractions and all the tools needed for a productive work session!
- Suggest a self-imposed block of distracting sites on your child's device/computer
  - [Leechblock](#); [Self-control](#); [Freedom](#)
- Reduce auditory distractions and improve focus using [Soundscape](#): *Focus Music*, *Timer app* (linked to Spotify and Apple music), white noise or noise cancelling headphones/loops

# Setting the Stage for Academic Success: *Leveraging Technology*



- [Khan Academy](#)- Video tutorials for almost every subject!
- [Crash Course](#) (on YouTube) - Fun, educational and helpful videos on a variety of topics including; science, literature, economics and more!
- [University of Waterloo Courseware](#) - Middle and High School Math tutorials
- [OWL at Purdue](#) - writing, editing and citation support
- [Quizlet](#) or [Anki](#) - online flashcards to support learning





# Setting the Stage for Fostering Independence and Empowering Accountability

# Understanding Middle and High School Transitions



- Differences between **middle school** and **high school**:
  - Increased responsibility and independence (Builds executive functioning )
  - More complex academic demands.
  
- Parents should offer **guidance**
  - allowing their child to take on more responsibility (sometimes kids benefit from feeling the consequence of their actions)
  - “Feel the Floor” way easier in Middle School so the earlier you start the better
    - Support vs Solving the Problem

Scenario- Mary did not finish her homework. Mary wants to stay home from school or asks you to email the teacher. Natural Consequence: Mary goes to class without work done and discusses a solution with the teacher. These consequences teach responsibility and accountability by showing the direct connection between effort and results.

# The Parents Job



- **Is not to Fix the Problem**
  - just to be there to guide and hand them the tools
- **Overhelping and hand holding deprives children the ability to develop self advocacy and efficacy**



# Self-Efficacy



# Understanding Middle and High School Transitions



**Do you want to stop repeating yourself over and over???**

- help your child problem-solve :  
“What are two or three ways you could solve this?”
- Structures in place, scaffolding
- Routine, routine, routine are the training wheels of executive fun
- Creating independence doesn't mean sink or swim
- Still need supportive people to help along the way



# “Routine” is a Magic Word



## How Do I Help My Disorganized High School Kid?

- Importance of Routines  
<https://drlisadamour.com/resource/how-do-i-help-my-disorganized-high-school-kid-2/>
- as parents, you do as little as possible but you do help them
  - Kids should set reminders on phones, notes in agendas, make a list to reference each evening
- Empowering accountability



# Routine is NOT A Checklisted Childhood



A checklisted childhood leaves no room for  
Free play. We want our kids to be happy  
But often our first questions at the end of  
Day is “ How was the math test? Whats  
For homework?  
By the end of high school these kids are  
Burned out and withering.



# Building Emotional Resilience and Independence



## Support Emotional Well-being:

- Discuss the importance of recognizing **signs of stress** or anxiety.
- Encourage open conversations about how they're feeling about school and friendships.

## Be Available and Present



- **Create Opportunities for Conversations:** Engage in casual conversations during shared activities, like cooking, driving, or taking a walk. These informal moments often provide great opportunities for meaningful discussions.
- **Avoid Multitasking:** When talking with your teenager, give them your full attention. If they feel like you're distracted, they may not share their thoughts or feelings openly.

## Emphasize a Balanced Life

- **Avoid checklisted childhood**

3 stars - 2 lemons



# Building Emotional Resilience and Independence



## Encourage Independence and Responsibility CHORES!!!???

- **Assign Age-Appropriate Responsibilities:** Give your child small tasks to manage, such as packing their school bag or preparing their lunch. This builds independence and accountability.
- **Let Them Make Choices:** Allow your child to make decisions about certain things, like what clothes to wear or which book to read. This helps them build decision-making skills.
- **Foster Decision-Making:** Allow her to make decisions, whether about school activities, extracurriculars, or how to manage her time. This builds her confidence and independence

## Foster a Growth Mindset:

- Encourage students to see challenges as opportunities to grow.
- Parents can encourage a growth mindset by praising effort, persistence, and the learning process rather than fixed traits like intelligence. Modeling resilience and a positive attitude toward challenges can influence how children view their own abilities.

# Building Emotional Resilience and Independence



## Peer and Social Support:

- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities or clubs where students can build relationships and explore interests.
- Talk about **healthy friendships** and maintaining positive peer influences.

## Support Self-Advocacy:

- Encourage your child to communicate with teachers and staff independently when they need help, but stay engaged as a backup if needed.



# Parent Questions



**UNDER  
ESTIMATED**  
CHELSEY GOODAN  
**THE WISDOM  
AND POWER OF  
TEENAGE GIRLS**



# Coming Up:

The Teenage Sleep Conundrum: What you need to know  
about the child's brain



# When Kids “Get It Right!!”



## Here's what parents can do to respond effectively:

### 1. Celebrate Effort and Progress, Not Just Outcomes

- **Praise the Process:** Focus on the hard work, persistence, and strategies your child used to succeed. Instead of simply saying “Great job!”, say something like, “I’m really proud of how hard you worked to achieve this.”

### 2. Be Specific in Your Praise

- **Acknowledge Specific Behaviors:** Rather than giving general praise (“You’re so smart”), highlight the specific actions they took. For example, “I noticed how well you stayed focused on your homework even when it was hard.”
- **Recognize Positive Character Traits:** Point out qualities like responsibility, kindness, or creativity. For example, “I’m really impressed by how responsible you were in keeping up with your chores this week.”

# When Kids “Get It Right!!”



## Here's what parents can do to respond effectively:

### 3. Provide Positive Reinforcement

- **Affection and Encouragement:** Physical affection, like hugs or high-fives, and words of encouragement can be powerful reinforcers.
- **Rewards for Success:** While intrinsic motivation should be the goal, occasional tangible rewards (a special outing, extra screen time) can reinforce positive behavior in a balanced way.

### 4. Encourage Reflection

- **Ask Them to Reflect:** Encourage your child to reflect on how they achieved their success. Ask questions like, “What do you think helped you do well?” This helps them develop self-awareness and internalize the learning process.
- **Discuss the Challenges:** Help them recognize the challenges they overcame, which reinforces the idea that obstacles are part of growth. Ask, “What was hard for you, and how did you push through?”

# When Kids “Get It Right!!”



## Here's what parents can do to respond effectively:

### 5. Stay Consistent

- **Provide Consistent Praise:** Be consistent with your positive reinforcement, acknowledging their efforts regularly, not just during big accomplishments. This helps children feel supported continuously.
- **Follow Through on Encouragement:** If your child has worked towards a goal you set together, make sure to acknowledge when they meet that goal. Consistency builds trust and motivation.

### 6. Stay Balanced

- **Avoid Overpraising:** While praise is important, avoid overpraising or focusing too much on every small achievement. This can create pressure or lead to a sense of entitlement. Aim for genuine, balanced acknowledgment of their efforts.
- **Celebrate Failures Too:** If they didn't get something right, praise their effort and help them see how failure is part of learning. This keeps them resilient in the face of setbacks.

# Resources



White, Elizabeth M. MD\*,†; DeBoer, Mark D. MD, MSc, MCR†,‡; Scharf, Rebecca J. MD, MPH\*,†. Associations Between Household Chores and Childhood Self-Competency. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics* 40(3):p 176-182, April 2019. | DOI: 10.1097/DBP.0000000000000637

- In this longitudinal cohort study, performing chores in early elementary school was associated with later development of self-competence, prosocial behavior, and self-efficacy.

**Harvard Grant Study**, part of the **Harvard Study of Adult Development**, which is one of the longest-running longitudinal studies in history. This study, along with other research on child development, has examined various factors that contribute to success in adulthood, including the role of early responsibilities like household chores.

How to Raise Successful Kids -- Without Over-Parenting | Julie Lythcott-Haims | TED,  
<https://youtu.be/CyEIHdaqkjo?si=tjhi1mQvm4Rj80Mz>