

Finish Line

The end of any school year brings excitement, and stress. Major projects, culminating events, state tests, final exams, promotions, and graduations all come together in a few short months. It is important that all members of the family help students out during this busy time. Once Spring Break is over, the year speeds up and becomes a sprint to the finish line. There are some strategies that can make the stress of the final months of school more enjoyable, and help produce better results.

As “crunch time” approaches, make sure the bigger events are on a calendar somewhere so family members can share in timely support. Big performances, tests, or events should be viewed separately and spaced out accordingly, if possible. A visual document can help guide exercises to divide up the amount of work needed for each project. For example, if there are three big events, performances, or tests happening in the same week, you will have to start two weeks before an event to allocate the correct amount of time needed for each project. Planning on how to distribute your limited time beforehand helps with lowering anxiety and gives permission to say “no” when other options arise.

Breaking future tasks into manageable parts lowers anxiety and increases confidence to complete the objective successfully. One of the most difficult mental exercises for secondary students is to see themselves in the future. Helping your student break down large projects, exam preparation requirements, or overpowering events into smaller increments helps them with a valuable life skill.

One of the best learning preparations for daunting exams or projects is to teach it to someone else. Explaining to others what you know is a great test of the depth of your knowledge. All a student needs is an engaged listener that will ask guiding questions. This exercise sends a message to your student that you are interested in their learning. Be careful not to overly correct, but make a concerted effort to help guide their learning.

Lastly, the learning environment is vital for success. If a student can find a quiet spot at home, next door, or at the community library, the learning will be maximized. Today’s students love to bring phones and music to their study environment. Research does not support this multi-tasking practice when it comes to learning, especially if the distraction makes the learning disjointed. It is better to study, work, learn, and focus on difficult topics for a 20 to 25-minute period, then take a short break to rest the brain. Breathing exercises will increase blood flow to your brain as well. These approaches increase focus and aid retention.

The day of the big event is also an important step. Simple practices like a good night’s sleep prior to the event, adequate hydration, a good breakfast, positive visualization, and arriving early can help lower anxiety. Preparation for success is almost as important as the actual event. The finish line is approaching. You can see the tape - lean in! All of your preparation has paid off!

Dr. Finch can be reached at superintendent@dvusd.org