

## **Parents can sabotage their children's success**

Most parents dream of high achievement for their children in school. Whether its success in GSAT or attaining ones in CSEC or CAPE, parents want children to excel. Sometimes parents are unaware of actions that are sabotaging the success of their children. Some common mistakes are discussed below.

### **Not Establishing Goals**

Parents must encourage and set realistic goals for children. This means not setting too high or too low expectations. Assess your children's ability and then challenge them without placing them under unhealthy pressure. We cannot say to our kids that we simply hope that you pass your exams. A clear goal must be set. Instead, depending on the student's ability, parents need to encourage and expect an "A" in that exam. On the other hand, if your child is struggling, then expect a letter grade above the grade previously attained. Make your goals known to your children and praise them when goals are achieved.

### **Not Establishing A Bed Time Routine**

Sleep is essential for proper functioning of the brain. Make sure your child is getting adequate and consistent sleep. One should not allow the "sleeping in" on weekends or holidays. A teenager who is allowed to sleep until 11 am on a Saturday morning will have difficulty falling asleep Saturday night and this will carry over to the next day resulting in a disrupted sleep cycle. This will create inattentiveness and loss of focus in classes. Establish a bed time routine and stick with it.

### **Not Establishing Balance Between Extra Curricular Activities and Academics**

Be extra careful not to overschedule children of any age. Emphasizing extra curricular activities such as sports over academics will usually be to the detriment of good grades in classes. While sports and other activities are important to health and well being of the child, it cannot take precedence over homework, study time and sleep. Ensure there is balance by teaching time management skills. If a child skips classes because of sporting competitions, ensure that the child catches up even if it means arranging extra time with the teacher. This must be done as soon as possible so that the child understands the material as the teacher moves forward in lessons.

### **Not Establishing Boundaries With Electronics**

Students have trouble limiting their use of electronics such as tablets, laptops and cellular devices. It is the parents' responsibility to impose restrictions on their use. Electronics, in particular social media, can literally take over a students' life leaving them with little time to focus on academics. Electronics also serve as a distraction which can lead to inappropriate activities such as cyber bullying and sexting. Social media may contribute to depression in your child.

Monitor your child's time spent with electronics and place limits on their usage. For example, there can be a cut-off time for electronics, where the small devices are returned to the parents at bedtime to ensure that the child actually goes to bed. Establish unplugged time periods where no technological devices are allowed, for example, breakfast and dinner time. Computers are best placed in public areas of the home to reduce the chances of inappropriate content being accessed.

### **Not Establishing Rules**

Family rules is all about structure. Its purpose is to help children understand the behaviors that are acceptable or unacceptable. Rules at home help kids to accept and follow rules in other places such as school which will translate to greater success. Make sure your rules are realistic and age appropriate. It is imperative that the consequence of breaking rules are made clear in advance. If the rule is broken, then the effect such as extra chores, removal of electronics for a week, must be enforced. Depending on your child's age, a reward system could be used to promote positive behavior.

### **Not Establishing A Relationship With Your Child's School**

It is important to form a congenial relationship with your child's school. Try to attend all parent-teacher conferences. Get to know your child's teachers. This is a more favourable way of discovering details of your child's performance in classes than a simple report card. It also allows one to inquire about ways in which you may assist your child to improve test scores. This is applicable for students both at the primary and secondary level. If possible, get involved with the parent teacher association.

As parents, our mistakes are never intentional. Often times, they are made due to our eagerness to make our children happy. With this new awareness, pay attention to what we are or are not doing and let's move towards assuring our children's success.