

Celebrating your Child's Success

Which of the following statements do you feel will best motivate your child to improve in their learning?

“Wow, an A on your spelling test. You’re obviously really smart when it comes to English class. Let’s see if you can keep getting A’s for the rest of the course.”

“You really studied for your English test, and your improvement shows it. You read the material over several times, outlined it, and tested yourself on it. That really worked!”

It’s important that we celebrate each child’s success; however, how we do it can have an effect on their future achievement. In the first example, we’re focused on praising the child for their level of intelligence. Although everyone enjoys a pat on the back for something they’ve done, praising a child on their intelligence can have a negative affect as well. When a child is motivated by this type of praise they have a tendency to worry about their academic success more. This can make them more likely to choose less challenging tasks and not grow to their potential. In a society that is driven by achievement rather than effort and process this can be confusing for parents. Yet, we all know that hard work will often have more to do with success than intelligence.

When a child is praised for the effort they’ve put into their learning, their focus becomes less on how well they did, and more on how hard they will work in the future. Studies have shown that children motivated by praise for their effort will generally work harder and experience much more success academically.

With report cards arriving home soon, this is another opportunity for you to celebrate your child’s success. However, be sure not to wait for report cards to praise them for their hard work. Ask your child to bring home work samples and explain the process they went through to create them. Studies also show that, “When parents are invited to respond to their children’s learning, they deepen their relationship with their child, students understand that their learning is valued, and everyone understands the learning more.”

Just be sure to focus on their effort when you celebrate their success. And remember that success can only be measured (and never compared) one child at a time!

Sources:

- Davies, Anne. (2007). Leading the Way to Making Classroom Assessment Work.
- Dweck, Carol S. (Spring 2007). Boosting Achievement with Messages that Motivate, Canadian Education Association.
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