



Families Should Set Academic Goals for Their Children

By Educator Barnes – March 27, 2021

As a family, my husband and I set goals and expectations for our sons. We know that we cannot put the responsibility of our children's academic success solely on their school. As parents, we should be working with their teachers to help them reach and exceed their academic goals. To make this a reality, we set expectations for them at the beginning of the school year and keep them prevalent as the year progresses.

First, we start with a reflection conversation during the summer. We ask our sons what they believe they did well during the previous school year and where they would like to improve. Then, we set goals. As a family, we decided that our boys are capable of earning at least a B in

all classes. They agreed this was an attainable goal. This school year, we added focus words. We had not done this in prior years.

Our sons did not return to school in-person this school year and will attend school remotely for the entire year. Last year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, they attended school remotely for the fourth quarter. We noticed they were not always honest with themselves about their work ethic and sometimes they would give up. We made integrity and perseverance our focus words.

The other component was checking in with them about their progress. Yes, we tried to keep an eye out every day, but it has been impossible to do this daily, nor do we believe we should. Our twin sons are in fourth grade, and we have to let them have more ownership of their learning, and we want them to learn how to advocate for themselves and communicate their needs to their teacher.

For example, we decided that having a B- was a warning zone. We would check their grades on Skyward, and we would have them check their grades on Skyward, too. When their grades began to slip, we would have them send a direct message to their teachers on Canvas, their school's learning management platform. This does not mean we do not communicate with their teacher, but it does mean that we want them to learn how to reach out for help.

They recently received their quarter three report card. One of my sons earned a C in math. We talked to him. He said, "I stopped paying attention." I thanked him for his honesty. His honesty resonated with me because it made me realize we had created a safe space to be honest and made academics achievement a conversation in our home and not a situation where fear of punishment was driving their achievement.

Now, they have one more quarter. We talked to them about how they would like to finish the school year. They both want more support with math, so we have arranged for them to have skills retaught by their teacher, and we have hired a teacher as a tutor.

Academic achievement is a journey, and children should have an active role. Families must be invested in showing their children they care about their academic achievement and will be there to support them as they learn academic skills.