

Excerpts from

Tips for Teaching Your Struggling Student

(from a homeschool mom who has survived to tell it!)

Do you have a child like this?

He (or she) sits down with a page of problems or questions in front of him. Two hours later he has done only three of them (and two of them are wrong!) You have tried everything to get him to do his work. Rewards work only for a day or two, and now all you know to do is punish him and take away privileges—and you find you must do that daily, if not hourly. People have suggested that he has a “learning deficiency,” but you can see that he is very smart and that he has a very logical mind—in fact, he often shows a great deal of common sense. He can figure things out or fix something that is broken. He can sit for hours doing something he wants to do (so much for the “attention deficit”). You know there is no problem with his brain. So you conclude that he must be either lazy or rebellious. Yet when you talk to him, he really seems like he wants to try, and you are certain that he wants to please you.

I had a child like this! And I have spent many hours talking to other mothers who have one. I would like to share some tips with you that I believe will make a big difference for you and your student. Below are just a few of my tips for teaching and motivating your child. **You can view and print the entire document free at www.statehistory.net.**

- Your goal is learning, not busywork. Copywork can be used as a “punishment” because it takes time and effort away from things he wants to do, but it will not be a learning tool with this child. He can copy pages upon pages without ever engaging his brain.
- Your goal is mastering a skill, not doing a certain number of problems or pages. If he can master the skill in five problems, why make him do twenty? (Remember, though, that he will need to reinforce the skill by review work on successive days. You cannot assume that learning it on one particular day means that he has mastered it forever.)
- Your goal is to make him engage his mind. If he is not learning, then he has not engaged his mind. If he does not engage his mind, he will not learn. Unless he engages his mind, you are both wasting time.
- Start by giving him only what you know he can do and gradually increase the amount he can do until he can work independently.
- Competition should be directed toward competing against himself and seeing his own progress. Otherwise, it will just intimidate and discourage him.
- His greatest motivation will be saving himself work and getting finished more quickly. This may appear to be laziness, but it can be turned into efficiency and diligence. Make him see that by applying himself diligently to something in the beginning, he saves himself work in the long run. What better life lesson could there be than this?
- Never “settle” for less than mastery. You may lower the level temporarily if you see that he is unable to master it, but after you back up to a simpler step always return to the harder step. Every time he says “this is too hard” and then actually accomplishes it, make a big deal of it. It will give him encouragement the next time he faces something that he thinks is too hard.

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