

Knowledge: Learning something new so you can be better at whatever you do

PARENTING WITH KNOWLEDGE:

This month, the word and definition (or application) probably feel very "school" - the teachers have this one covered, right?! You can take a month off! Not so much. While the teachers in your child's school are certainly building the knowledge base of the kids they see each day, some of the application of this Big Idea falls to you at home. Let's look at three ways this Big Idea needs some support at home.

Thought #1: Knowing more about a topic or subject. Reinforcing for your student(s) that what they learn at school can be applied in various ways does several things. First, it aligns you with the school and teacher as a team. Your student can hear from you how you applied things you thought you'd "never need" when learning them, and they will look at learning in a different way the next time the subject seems obscure. Second, it lets them learn more about things that may be outside of their narrow field of interest, which can lead to different career or hobby choices in the future.

Thought #2: Knowing more about yourself. Learning something new might not be about a particular school subject - it may be something new about who your child is becoming. Talking through each day and considering the deeper revealings of the choices your student makes will reinforce something they already are acutely aware of - every day, something about them changes. Ask questions like:

*What do you think that decision shows about who you are as a person?
How did that conversation show what you believe to be true?
How could you have handled that better to show who you are as a person?*

Every reminder that they are showing who they are on the inside by what they do and say on the outside helps them develop those inner voices for use when mom and dad aren't there.

Thought #3: Letting them learn. This one is tough. We as adults know that the best way to learn something new is to experience it, but we also know that learning something new can come with failure, pain, embarrassment, or consequences. Our natural reaction at times is to want to protect our teens and pre-teens from these things.

However, there are volumes and volumes of research that shows how adults stepping in to protect young people (or "help" them), even with the best intentions, isn't always good for them in the long term. For example, you might want to rethink getting too involved in science fair projects, some of their peer relationships, the electronic grade book, or playing time in this season's sport.

Doing all the work on a science project shows them the truth of how much hard work goes into presenting something you are proud of. Navigating peer relationships prepares them for healthy adult relationships. Over monitoring their grades strips the responsibility from them. Getting too involved in speaking to coaches or other leading adults doesn't give them a chance to learn agency.

This month, as you watch your child learn new things, resolve to learn new things about and with your children as well.

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT KNOWLEDGE:

For parent reflection:

- When was the last time you learned something new?
- How do you intentionally apply new knowledge to situations in your life?
- What do you know about that you could share with others?

For discussion with your child:

In the car conversations:

- What did you learn today that you'd like to know more about?
- What helps you learn the best? Is there a certain setting or atmosphere that you find inspiring?

In the morning conversations:

- What are you looking forward to today?
- What will you do if you are learning something hard for you?
- Why is learning important?

Over dinner conversations:

- What do you think is the purpose of school?
- When do you have chances to share things you know about?

In the evening conversations:

- How do you think you "got better" today?
- Who do you need to thank for helping you acquire new skills?

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For parents to read:

<https://www.wgu.edu/heyteach/article/5-student-skills-parents-want-their-children-learn1808.html>

For families to watch together: October Sky (1999)