

School and Stress

by: Sandra Schmidt

Have you thought about the stress in your student's life? We often think that the pressure of school causes these stresses. I recently ran across something that caused me to reaffirm my belief in the necessity to reevaluate a student's life. Please review the information from the link below, it is taken from a high school entrance exam from 1885.

Beginning in the early 1960's our nation began a systematic lowering of the standards of our state and national tests. The minimum requirements for graduating from High School were lowered to what had previously been required of a fifth grader. This was all that is necessary for a current graduating senior!

It seems that academic expectations are not the source of our student's stress! Yet repeatedly, we see evidence that stress is really there. This stress is definitely affecting their academic achievement.

I am proposing that we can help our students experience much higher levels of achievement. Let's examine what I see. Students that we experience as academically sound, have good study habits, are happy with themselves, and are secure in their surroundings are not stress free. Everyone in our society has stress. The secret lies in how well each one of us deals with it. Parents, teachers, clergy, friends and relatives can guide the growing child to form a clear picture of daily routines, tasks and goals. Establishing consistent expectations during these developmental years enables the child to enjoy a higher level of security. For example, we can arrange a set study time and an appropriate area for study. Early in life, establish patterns of taking care of obligations first. This allows the child a less stressful study environment and an opportunity for an unburdened recreation time. If each parent has a different expectation of the child's capabilities or understands their interests differently; conflict results, putting stress on the child. You may think the greatest thing in the world is your child's interest in baseball, but they may prefer to play the guitar. Also, if homework is not valued by a parent, remember the child faces it at school the next day. Talk to your children and help them express their feelings. Coping with all the decisions that life throws at them can be stressful. We often put our children in a position to make decisions they are really incapable of making at their level of development. If they have us as a sound board for their ideas and are able to benefit from our experience, it can provide them with needed stress relief. In addition, coping with the rules of separate households can produce added stress. If rules are consistent and fair within a given household, most children can better deal with differences.

A parent who begins early in a child's life to establish these kinds of patterns and routines has a much easier time, but it really isn't too late for older students. It simply requires much more open and honest communications and a great deal of courage! Your teachers at the Montessori Academy of Upland want to help with this to, so let's talk!

Prevention of stress is one thing; helping to alleviate is another. Exercise is one of the greatest stress relievers. Together, enjoy a regular exercise program. Well balanced nutrition and eating habits are essential for mental, emotional (emotional productivity!) and physical productivity, and in turn reduces stress.

In conclusion, please look again at the 1885 test. Our kids are not less intelligent, they have replaced work and study with play and inertia. Perhaps together we can examine our priorities in order to ensure a better balance, thereby inspiring our children to reach higher.