



Hyndland Secondary School

Supporting your child as they prepare for SQA exams

You may find a few things may have changed since you were at school.

As we all know, being a parent or carer can be a daunting challenge at times, particularly when dealing with teenagers. And even more so when trying to get them to study!



Wouldn't it be great if we could just sprinkle them with some magic dust and they would do whatever we told them?

Bear in mind that experts state that many children do not fulfil their potential, **not** because they lack ability or are not capable **but because** they simply do not know how to study. They just have not learned the skills.

Simply nagging them will probably make them rebellious and confrontational and turn the whole issue into a constant battle of wits or battles.

Being available, supportive and encouraging will go a long way to help build their confidence and contribute to alleviating any worries, concerns or anxieties they may have.

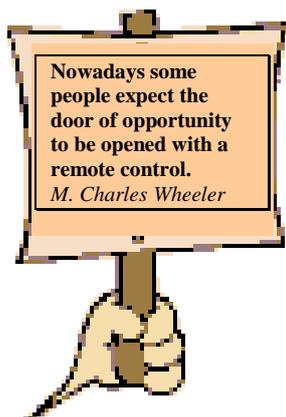


There are no quick fixes, just hard work on your part to get them to establish some good study habits.

So How Can I Help?



Start by getting them organised. This is a vital area.



- Discuss with your child how he/she intends to organise their study leave and revision programme.
- From the SQA exam timetable, find out which exams they will be taking and on what days, dates and times.
- All candidates will be issued with a copy of the exam schedule.
- Note and highlight these in a calendar, diary or timetable.

Pin up a copy of the exam timetable in a prominent place with the exam dates highlighted to act as a reminder.

- Help them to draw up a weekly study schedule/revision plan for their subjects in conjunction with the exam timetable.

(A blank timetable is included in this booklet.)

- Make sure they allocate enough time to study for each of their subjects and they vary what they study.

- Try and get them into a routine and habit of studying on a regular basis.
- Teachers usually provide *study notes* and *past papers* for their subjects, make sure these are available.
- Get them to tick off the topics or areas they have completed and make sure they have taken notes and made a summary of the information for quick revision. Coloured index cards are good for this. Easily carried around and the colours can be categorised for each subject.
- Offer to test them or ask them to explain to you what they have learned.

A goal without a plan is just a wish

Thomas A. Edison.

Time Management



With the exams looming, isn't it amazing that our students become busier than ever. They somehow manage to be able to find a million and one other things to do and constantly put off revising until the last minute..... leading to higher levels of stress and panic! We all lead busy lives and even we may find it difficult to manage our time effectively at times.

Teenagers need a lot of help and support in this area if they are to use their time wisely.



Remind them that there are an *incredible* 168 hours in the week. Obviously you have to subtract time for sleeping, eating and leisure time



Be realistic about how much time they should devote to studying.



As a general rule, short study periods of 30- 50 minutes are best with regular 10-15 minute breaks.



99% of the failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses
George Washington Carver

Help build their confidence by ensuring that they are well prepared, with a planned revision schedule. Keep praising and encouraging their efforts!



Motivation is like food for the brain. You cannot get enough in one sitting. It needs continual topping up.
Peter Davies

Motivation – Keeping them on track

This is a challenging time for you and your child, particularly if they are not used to studying. Some students may appear uninterested or in 'couch potato mode' but with some persuasive tactics, we can get them to make a start on their revision.

Start with a reminder of the opportunities available and the impact that a good set of grades can have on their future life and career.

- Perhaps it could result on being accepted on a college course that they want.
- This could be the first steps to get further qualifications that will help get them career that they are interested in.



- It could provide them with more choice. Wider job opportunities and career or further education options with good prospects
- This could be seen as a challenge that they can overcome and be satisfied and proud of their achievements.



Some of us are like wheelbarrows, only useful when pushed,.... and easily upset.

Jack Herbert

There's a fine line between positive encouragement and pressure. So we need to tread carefully.

Every child is unique and some may need more 'cajoling' and gentle persuasion more than others.

However, many of us tend to forget that we have several powerful negotiating tools at our disposal and sometimes we just don't use them often enough.

- Who cooks the meals?
- Who provides the taxi service?
- Who washes their clothes?
- Who provides them with pocket money and treats?
- Who pays the mobile phone bill?
- Who pays or provides them with???????

Keeping Them on Track

Believe it or not, research and studies have shown that many teenagers prefer having clear limits and boundaries with consequences for breaking them. Withdrawal of certain privileges may work but you could also adopt a more positive way to encourage them without the lectures, constant battle of wits and nagging. A two-pronged approach might be more beneficial. You may wish to consider:

- Always reward or praise your child for sticking to their study plan.
- Give them additional incentives or treats for their efforts.
- Reassure them that they are more than capable of learning.
- Discuss any difficulties that they have and try to come up with a solution together.
- Leave them a note wishing them good luck.
- Make a phone call, text their mobile or email to find out how they are getting on.
- Remind them that exams are there not to highlight what they don't know but for them to 'show off' what they do know.



The more positive you are, the more positive they will become and increasingly less stressed as their confidence and self-esteem grows.



Success comes in cans, failure in can'ts
Anonymous

Create a designated study space/area

Whether it is the kitchen table, dining room or bedroom, it should preferably be a dedicated space where the student can work as required, free from the usual distractions such as the TV, radio, games consoles etc. This is crucial for effective studying and learning to take place. Of course, other family members' views and assistance may be required.

Try and provide them with files, boxes or plastic wallets to keep all their resources, such as past papers, revision notes so that they are readily available.

Also include paper, index cards, pens, pencils, erasers, rulers etc. as well as reference materials such as dictionaries etc.

Good investments are 'highlighter pens' and 'post-its'. Research has shown that any texts or notes, which are highlighted, tend to be easier to remember. Post-its are handy for a variety of tasks.

All of the above saves time and does not give them any opportunity for making excuses and **NOT** studying. It also provides them with a fixed space or area which becomes associated in their mind with work and study.

Even a little space can go along way

Of course, in a busy home, this may be easier said than done, particularly with a young or large family.

However, you may want to investigate the possibility of setting up a study area at a relative's house e.g. grandparents/aunt's if they live close-by.

If you are worried about them being left unsupervised at home during the day, it may be better to encourage them to attend school or the local library.

Consider allowing them to revise with friends on the understanding that they show what they have done or it will just turn into a 'chat' session.

Friends can be great a source of knowledge and help and of course, can share revision notes and they can also test one another.



He who asks a question is a fool for a minute; he who does not remains a fool forever.
Chinese Proverb

What about them playing music?

Difficult one this! Music may be beneficial or it could prove distracting.

Studies have shown that some elements of music - and in particular soft classical music - can help to stimulate the brain and increase the chances of the information being absorbed into the memory. So letting them play music may prove to be a winner!

Advantages

It blocks out other noises in the household.

Background music may help to relax them.

A lot of students like listening to music on their Mp3 players.

It can help to sustain learning.



Disadvantages

Loud music can be a distraction and intrusive at times.

Students pay more attention to singing along with the music rather than concentrating on their task.

They begin daydreaming and 'doodling'

They become more interested in organising the 'play list' and sequence of tracks.



There is little difference in people.....the little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.

W. Clement Stone



Computers

Not everyone has access to a computer and although they can be an invaluable aid, they can also prove to be a distraction. There are some good educational software packages available and some excellent interactive websites specialising in revision for and help for specific subjects, coupled with study and exam strategies. However, a lot of time is sometimes wasted by searching for suitable sites.

The concern is the temptation for students to be emailing their friends, playing games or simply surfing the net with no real study or learning taking place.

Don't worry if there is no computer available. All pupils should have their coursework, teachers' revision notes and of course, course books - so they already have a wealth of material to work from.

Dealing with Stress – Healthy Lifestyle = Healthy Body and Healthy Mind

Some students are able to handle the pressures and challenges of studying with no major problems. They may get nervous or slightly anxious at times, which is only natural, but they have learned to cope. Others become agitated, bad-tempered, over-anxious, moody or even become ill. That is why it is so important to try and adopt a healthy lifestyle. A few changes to their diet will pay big dividends.



- Try to ensure that they eat sensibly. Unfortunately, too much junk food, sweets chocolate and sugary drinks sap energy levels affecting concentration and may also disturb sleep patterns.
- Avoid too much caffeine-rich drinks such as coffee, tea and fizzy drinks. Although caffeine is a stimulant and can keep you awake, it has also been linked to an increase in nervous tension and stress levels.
- The best drink by far for maintaining a healthy lifestyle is water. Or a milky drink at bedtime.
- Make sure that they exercise on a regular basis. A short, brisk walk would suffice. Stress is eased by any form of physical activity. Exercise helps to release nervous energy and lowers anxiety levels. It makes you more alert.
- Encourage them to have a set pattern for bed in order to get enough sleep. 8 hours should be enough for most people.
- Chewing sugar free gum can also help them to relax and improve concentration levels.

You may be feeling just as nervous as they are, but you have to stay 'Cool Calm and Collected.' Don't panic if they panic! It can be contagious!

Remind them that it will all be over shortly and '**that**' is something to look forward to and perhaps celebrate.

Should they show signs of nervousness the night before an exam, reassure them that they can only do their best and that some of their fears are probably unfounded.

If you would like to find out more or have any concerns or worries, please contact the school or

www.childline.org.uk/Examstress.asp

www.stressbusting.co.uk

www.scdc.org.uk/scarf/past-projects/youth-stress-centre

www.youngminds.org.uk/



The night before the exam

- Double check the time of the exam and remind them that they need to be there at least 15 minutes before the official starting time.
- Get them to lay out the clothes they are wearing. Nothing worse than trying to find a clean shirt or one that need ironed in the morning. That will only add to their stress.
- Help get them organised by packing their bag with



Extra pens, pencils etc.



Calculator (if required)



Revision Notes



Bottle of water.



A suitable watch or timepiece for checking the time.



Finally, make sure the alarm clock is set and that they manage to get a good night's sleep so that they are fresh and alert for the next day.

Feeling organised about the little things will ease the pressure and help to cut down on stress.

SUMMARY/CHECKLIST

- ✓ Organise and help them to plan and prioritise their workload.
- ✓ Have the exam timetable on display.
- ✓ Create a designated study space and have a supply of materials on hand.
- ✓ Reassure them that they **can** do it!
- ✓ Minimise distractions and interruptions.
- ✓ Provide plenty of encouragement and praise and rewards.
- ✓ Make sure they get enough sleep
- ✓ Help by testing them on their revision.
- ✓ Encourage them to eat properly, exercise and rest when appropriate.
- ✓ Make sure they are well organised the night before.