



HomeLife

Focus on
Home

Create A Study Space

BY MARY ANNE DUGGAN

Does your child have a space available for the sole purpose of completing nightly homework? If not, you may want to take a tip from the "Kyoiku Mamas" of Japan.

Kyoiku Mamas are mothers in Japan who devote their lives to ensuring their children's school success. Even if you are not ready to join their ranks, you can learn a tip from them that will help your child in school, by creating a homework study space.

Japanese schoolchildren have an area set aside at home for the sole purpose of studying. By simply having a place for homework, Japanese parents communicate to their children the importance of education.

The drama of assembling materials for homework is eliminated by having a regular homework spot. If all the tools a child needs for homework are in one place, no time is wasted looking for a sharp pencil or piece of lined paper.

As a school teacher, I often counsel students and their families on homework. When I ask a student who is not

completing homework if there is a special study space at home, the answer invariably is no. Often, the creation of a home study space will help that same child turn in homework more regularly. Here are some tips for helping your student set up a homework and study space.

Personalize the Study Space

Your child will feel more motivated if he has a hand in designing the study space. Allow him to add special touches. One child might like to have posters of dogs nearby; another might want personal artwork to surround the area.

Find the Spot

All students are different. Some must have absolute quiet when studying; others need the din of the TV in the background. For some, music can be a homework enhancer. Think about your student's study style while locating the study space.

The space should be isolated from people-type distractions. Background noise is one thing—having brother Tommy blowing raspberries in front of the student is

another. The study area should be away from family traffic patterns.

To Sit or Not to Sit?

Should you insist your child sit in a chair at a desk? It depends on the type of assignment being completed. For construction projects or reading assignments, your child may prefer to be sprawled out. For assignments that require neatness, a desk or table is recommended.

When sitting at a desk or table, your child's feet should touch the floor, and his arm should rest comfortably on the desk while writing. Lighting should be adequate. These comfort factors contribute to completed homework.

Essential Reference Material

Reference materials to have on hand include a dictionary, thesaurus, and atlas at your child's academic level. Also useful is an encyclopedia, or an encyclopedia on CD-ROM if you have a computer. Best bets are Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia (Compton's New Media, 800-261-6109) and the Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia (Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc., 800-285-4534).

Supplies

To avoid procrastination, stock up on these items:

- For Younger Students

Four sharpened pencils, pencil sharpener, two erasers, set of markers, scissors, ruler, stapler and staples, tape, wide-ruled writing paper, plain white paper, paper clips, folder to keep paper fresh.

■ For Older Students

Note cards, tape recorder with blank cassettes, highlighter pens in various colors, colored pencils, graph paper.

The Assignment Calendar

High-achieving students know a secret—they keep track of homework assignments on an assignment calendar. Losing the calendar is a common problem. Purchase a small cork bulletin board to pin up the assignment calendar and any other important papers. A white dry erase board is also a good place for your child to write reminder notes about upcoming events and dates to remember.

The Computer Question

Your child may not actually need a computer, but having one might go a long way toward helping him with schoolwork. As computer use in schools increases, the computer-literate child has a greater advantage.

Software ranging from typing tutors to basic skill programs to creativity enhancers can be a great adjunct to your child's school day. And computers, like homework, are here to stay. ■