

Hi everyone.

We just got back from our 2 week vacation to California and it was great. Unfortunately, I spent all of the time relaxing, re-centering my life so I just couldn't find the time to update my website. For those who feared that I disappeared into the outer regions of cyberspace, fret not for I am now back in full website update-mode!

Now as some of you know, we actually moved from California to Texas about a year ago and it's amazing how someone can adjust to their environment so much so that I was amazed at how "cool" it was in California (specifically, at Disneyland waiting in line to ride Star Tours at a frosty 87 degrees) compared to Texas.

And of course, what Southern California vacation would be complete without a trip to the beach - we prefer Corona Del Mar, where Ryan and Lauren had fun wading through the tide pools to discover hermit crabs and sea urchin while also having fun at the "wavy" part of the beach trying to stay absolutely still while waves crashed into them. This last bit of fun is actually great exercise for me because I always end up being their anchor; and let me tell you, it's hard work keeping a hold of their hands while they are being thrown to and fro by the waves...but their carefree and spirited laughter are worth every bit of my effort.

Finally, I got to spend time with my parents, which is always good; though a part of me is saddened each time I see more lines on their faces and white hair on their heads...

But it is exactly this thought about my parents that got me thinking about what ingredients makes for a successful education.

You see, my parents are about as old-school as you can probably get when it comes to education. They believe in rote memorization of facts via constant drilling.  $2 \times 3 = 6$ . Why? Because  $1 \times 3 = 3$  and  $2 \times 3 = 6$ , that's why!

Like I said...old school.

### Here's the Secret

But approaches aside, whether it's old school, public school, or homeschool, I discovered there's one thing that can make them all successful - **an awareness in the child that there is heavy parental involvement in the family's overall success**. That means family finances, relationships, and yes, academics, too.

Now I know you've heard that parental involvement in the child's academics is a common reason for educational success, but I have to disagree with this because this reason, in and of itself, is incomplete.

Let me explain.

Now I don't mean to toot my own horn, but I believe that by most measures that I had a successful academic career (I graduated *cum laude* at a top tier university and earned my graduate degree at another top tier institution). Do you think my parents were breathing down my back 24/7 to get good grades? No way. As immigrants, they were too busy trying to make ends meet. Help in homework? They couldn't even understand English to explain what the assignment was asking me to do.

But here's what they did do: 1) Each grade that I showed my parents on assignments and tests was reviewed seriously (that means T.V. off with full attention on the graded assignment/test) and given feedback for further improvement, 2) Each time I achieved the highest score was a reason for extra recognition from my parents, whether it was a hearty "good job!" or on special occasions, a toy that I wanted, 3) As I went into high school, my parents continuously encouraged me to branch out and excel in areas other than just academics, and 4) As I went into high school, I was virtually given full license to determine my academic future as my parents' role changed from encourager-recommender to more of a counselor.

I guess I could say that even though my parents couldn't take on a larger role in helping me with my classroom lessons, I still understood and appreciated that they cared greatly for my academic success...and that's on top of the more central and pervasive role they played as bread-winners.

And that is why, although at first I virtually flunked out of early elementary school, by the time I was in high school, I never saw a grade below an A-. You see, at some point in my young life, punishment from getting bad grades was replaced by self-motivation to get good ones. This self-motivation was fueled by not only my parents' attention to own my academics, but witnessing for myself how committed my parents were in building our future here in this new country called the United States. Like a steadily growing drumbeat, each 12-16 hour day worked (weekends included) slowly became an unyielding repetitive reminder that, I too, had a role to fulfill and that my parents were heavily depending on my success. And knowing that my parents were depending on me actually made me feel more important (and smarter) than the other kids. Taken another way, getting good grades, even the best grades, didn't seem all too hard compared to what my parents were going through day in and day out.

### **But How About Now?**

Fast forward to now and not much has changed.

Young children see how their parents behave and they naturally attempt to fit into the mold, not judging whether that behavior is good or bad, but rather, just being happy and content when they are fitting into the behavior of their parents.

Now do you think your kids would be happy and successful if all we ever did as parents was to focus our energies into the academics of our children and only the academics of our children? You would then quickly see deterioration in family finances and other commitments, which I'm sure would lead to some sort of disaster. So instead of committing your energy only into the academic success of your child, what's key is to step back and understand that your commitment to your entire family's success is really what sets your child's academic success apart from the rest.

Take it from me (because I've experienced it myself when I entered 6<sup>th</sup> grade), families that have values focused on meeting family goals (not just financial goals or goals focused only on a particular member of the family, but real goals that benefit the entire family) have children that seem to understand at some point in their young lives that mom and dad actively decided to take another approach that made them different from other kids down the street (just like when my parents moved to the U.S. in hopes to secure a better life).

And it may not seem apparent at first, but as these homeschool students mature, they start to realize their parents actively chose this different path for them and took on the commensurate sacrifices. Since the hard work and effort into meeting these family goals do not go unnoticed by homeschool students, they become aware that they too have a role to fulfill (which their parents are depending on). And this desire to fulfill their role becomes the self motivation required to fuel a successful academic career.

So we owe it to ourselves, as parents, to ensure that we are committing to the highest principles of family achievement, whatever form that may take on for you. But no matter what family success means to you, I think that you'll find that your child's academic success is a part of that larger equation, and that all parts must be fulfilled to maximize chances of academic success.

A tall order, you say? Of course it is. But we're the parents now and tall order or not, we have our role to fulfill, just like our own parents did.

In the end, as long as you find your good presence influencing your child's academic success, whether it's in a public or homeschool environment, I believe that is one of the most important things (but not an easy thing) in helping to achieve academic success for your child.

See you next time.

- Sun