

*New learning sometime requires us to restructure what we already know-Anonymous*

## Helping someone learn

As parents, we show concern for our children's health through providing nutritious food, plenty of rest, safe surroundings and medical attention when needed; in so doing, we are not only ensuring good health today but helping to develop good health habits for tomorrow.

The same applies to education. While good physical, mental and social health contributes to positive learning, we can support the learning process and help learners develop good learning habits for today and tomorrow. After all, there is much more to gaining an education than simply sending a child to school.

Parents and grandparents, in fact all of us, can encourage learning through:

- Creating opportunities for someone to do something they haven't done before.
- Teaching a new skill, how to play a game, sharpen a knife or make cookies
- Creating opportunities for practice; remember that practice makes permanent, although not always perfect
- Referring a learner to media reports about items of interest.
- Providing feedback.
- Recognizing achievement
- Encouraging learning
- Engaging learners in the learning process.
- Initiating conversations about new ideas, innovations and developments.
- Being a role model; being an active learner
- Encouraging self-assessment
- Demonstrating correct procedures
- Showing alternative ways of accomplishing an objective
- Encouraging discovery.

## The Secret Teacher

The Secret Teacher is a regular column in the Manchester Guardian; the following item is based on a column published August 24, 2013.

"Stop pretending our education system is about the students, it's all about manipulating data for survival" says The Secret Teacher. He/she laments the time teachers, head teachers and inspectors spend in "examining, discussing, inputting and presenting data" all to show that education is improving; the manipulation of data gives the illusion of change. It is a familiar story in Canada also as teachers report the amount of time spent on non-teaching duties.

## Word gap

Teachers are well aware of the impact of poverty on school achievement; I am sure that it impacts all studies although reading is mentioned most often in articles that come to my attention. One of the problems is known as the "word gap"; this results from the fact that children from poorer homes do not hear as many words spoken as children from better-off families. A recent item in the New York Times estimated that the gap may be as much as 3 million words by age three. The Lena Research Foundation has developed a digital language processor to provide feedback to parents on the frequency and nature of their verbal interactions with children.

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