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**Ways Your Child Can Get the Best Out of School**

Adrian Piccoli, UNSW Sydney

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**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

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I try to avoid it because I'm a former education minister in a in a very big jurisdiction in Australia. So I had six years really embedded in education. But secondly, and probably most importantly, is on the parent to young boys. And what I realised was that even as a minister for six years, talking education 24 hours a day, virtually, there was so much as a parent, I didn't know about what happens in schools. So I thought I'd take this opportunity to write a book, to try and bridge some of that knowledge gap about what

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parents really wants to know about what's happening in school, and in really the best way that they can help their children get the best out of school. Certainly, the attitude that children take to their learning is really critical in terms of their performance at school and that attitude is almost entirely driven by very experienced with with their parents, with their friends with their, with their family and the community that I that I live in, why those expectations and why those attitudes towards education matters so much is because what's really important is, what's the child's frame of mind at nine o'clock or whatever time it is, when I turn up to school in the morning, if I have a positive attitude towards education, if they value it strongly,

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they are going to be in a position to gain so much more out of their experience at school. And as I said, that's driven largely by the experience that they have with their parents. Typically, parents speak positively about the role of education and its importance. But even if parents didn't have a positive experience at school, and many didn't, they can talk about they could certainly talk about how they would have liked to have had a positive experience in school. So I think that's really big. It's a really big issue. What was sort of attitude Children have about education and the value of an importance of education. Secondly, giving children a strong experience in education before they start school.

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So certainly the value of the value of early childhood and their experiences before they start school. So things like preschool along daycare or whatever they might have the opportunity to attend before they start school. But again, what happens is what happens at home before children start school, exposing children to lots of conversation, lots of complex conversation as much as possible.

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As stress free and environment as possible. And sometimes in the modern world that can be difficult but as stress free as possible. Those kinds of positive experiences before children start school are really important. And making sure that got those foundations before they before they start school. Again, all the evidence around the world. That's really important to determine not just how they do in the first few years of school, but actually determines how they do even after they finish school as as, as teenagers and young adults. And the third thing is trying to raise the expectations of students in terms of how they actually will perform at school, I think is a really critical is a really critical factor. Again, backed up by research around the world.

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If students have high expectations of themselves, if parents have high expectations of their, of their children. If teachers in schools have high expectations of their students, then we know the students are more likely to do to do better, then if they don't have those high expectations, they can be difficult to set because we don't want to create unnecessary stress.

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But we really want to send the message to children that not you have the potential to, to you have the potential to do well. We want you to do as well as you possibly can. And setting those expectations And having children believes in their own potential is really critical. So I would say, those three of many are probably the most important. When choosing a school and I look, I looked at this myself when my children started school, I used to look at the cost of school, look at the neighbourhood school and going to school with the children from the neighbourhood is a good social and community thing to do. But if it's not your nearest school, some of the other things that parents should look at, certainly is certainly the reputation of schools. Now, again, we have to be really careful here. Thankfully, what you read on social media, don't believe what you hear either the back fence from neighbours, because some parents do have bad experiences with schools when they can be good and bad reasons for those unfortunate altercations,

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but they shouldn't define a school. What you should be looking at which should be doing is talking to a lot of people, a lot of parents His children are together the schools you might be looking at, and to get a feel for how that school has the reputation of that school and the attitude of parents and others towards the school. Secondly, nothing really beats going into their school, meeting the principal, hopefully meeting some staff and getting a feel for the culture of that school, as well. It can be it can be difficult, but the more time you spend at a school, talking to the principal and others in the school, asking questions about it can ask detailed questions about the nature of the staff, are they Is there a mix of you know, more senior and more senior and experienced teachers? Is there a mix of junior staff, you know, we're coming in with sort of fresh ideas, particularly around you know, using technology and all of the kind of the new stuff that's, that's out there in education. That's what you kind of want to look at. I think he's a mix of staff, our staff generally happy the culture of the school one of a positive culture is focused on

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academic focused on sport, or is there a nice balance between the two and obviously adding music, art and, and other cultural pursuits into that mix? They're the kinds of thing and every parent should be aware that there's no silly question. When it comes to choosing a school, whether you're asking another parent or you're asking the principal of the school, the more you know about the school, you know, your child will you know what, you know what you want out of the school for them, and hopefully you know what they want out of the school, particularly in the high school shoes. But the more you know about the school, the more closely you're going to be able to align the type of school they they might go to, with actually what your what your children need. And there's certainly cases where people have twins or even triplets, and they go to different schools because the children lost their two twins or triplets that have different interests. And those interests are served by different schools. And that's a completely legitimate decision to make. Now plan is the National testing system that's used in in Australia, it's, it's done. Every year four, year three, year five, year seven and year nine students. It's a test of literacy and numeracy skills, pretty much interest in numeracy, basic skills. Parents in Australia do get quite anxious about it, schools get anxious about it, but I would say to parents, is only there's a couple of fundamental things that parents need to know about that plan. And they should not get stressed about one of the one of the issues, important issues is there's no such thing as failing. Your child's failing then Atlantis, and that plan test for a school is where, where the school is actually just assessing where students up to in literacy and numeracy. It's one of the tests they use. It happens to be the the national test that every Students in the second year does. But remember, schools are doing tests all the time every week, every second day, they're doing little tests here and there just to see where students are up to. So that plan fits into fits into the calendar of the year. Like, like every other test. It's just one example. One lit one assessment where students is, is up to, and again, it's not pass or fail. It's like when you go to the doctor and have a cholesterol test, you don't pass or fail a cholesterol test. It tells you what your cholesterol is. And if it's, if it's a problem, the doctor will hopefully tell you what you need to do

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in order to bring that cholesterol down. If it's not a problem, the doctor will say hey, you know you're progressing well could go to teach Stay Healthy Families NAPLAN when you get those results back, if your student if your child has weaknesses. Hopefully your school will be able to identify them and put in measures that they can target to actually improve some of those weaknesses. And then of course, they'll identify strengths. And it'll be a matter of you know, just keep going, and keep reinforcing those strengths. So there's no parcel file. It's one of many tests that students do throughout the year. The only other thing I'd add about it that parents need to know is looking at the Moscow website where those reports where those NAPLAN tests are reported online, is a very bad way to judge whether a school is a good or bad school. So I wouldn't rely on the my school website when choosing a school. I would look at the individual results when you when you as a parent, get the results back that from your child's NAPLAN tests, and have a look at where their strengths are and where their weaknesses are. So you know, and then you can also work with the school, particularly target those areas of weakness that your your child might have. high expectations are tricky to set because they're really important. It's important that students have confidence in their own their own ability or their own ability to influence their results. But at the same time, not causing stress. So we don't want to be saying to children,

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you must get 95 in that exam, otherwise, I'm going to be really angry. That's a very poor way of setting high expectations. A better way to phrase that might be to say, you know what, I think you are capable of doing really well in that exam. You I think you're capable of getting a really high score even higher than 90. But there are some things you're going to need to do. In order to achieve that you're gonna need to concentrate, you're going to need to work hard, you're going to need to do your homework, you're going to need to, you know, work closely with your teachers.

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You're going to need to, you know, set time aside, to do further study. If you do all of those things, then you have the potential to do really well. Why, why that's important, other than saying, I think you're really clever, therefore, you're going to do really well. Because cleverness is an innate thing that you kind of can't do anything about. So if that child doesn't do very well, they might think, Well, actually, I didn't do very well. Therefore, there's nothing I can do about it. Whereas some of those other things I talked about, like, if you set time aside, if you concentrate when you're at school, if you do your homework, if you do this assignment, if you really, you know, work out of this assignment, there are actually things that that children do have some control over and again, a decisions about that, that they make about their time. So they have some control over the outcomes that they're trying to achieve.

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And when we couch potential and expectations around things that students have control over, then then the outcomes are actually determined by the decisions that they make. Now, I think you're capable if you do all these things and an end point when students

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Do some of those things they will actually achieve to their capability. And then if they don't, or even if they do, as a parent, you can come back and say, Okay, let's have a look at the result. And let's have a look at whether we could have done anything differently in the last couple of weeks to change that result, you know, maybe you didn't put as much time into it as you could have. Or maybe we could, next time you've got a test, maybe we can change some of those things. So it's really important to focus on the things that should have control over because then the Paladin rests within to influence their results. But to say, I think you have the capability to do X, Y, and Zed if you do A, B and C, in probably the best way to set those expectations and to set them high without causing stress. But disappointment is a fact of life and I and I think it is true in the modern world that we as parents, and I say this to myself, we try and we try and help us to avoid disappointment but the best time to learn about how to manage disappointment is when we're at school because school is where you get multiple opportunities to to try again, you know, whether it's an exam or an assignment or sport. School is the best place to learn how to handle disappointment. So all children will face that disappointment of one sort or another when they're at school. And it's not something to dismiss and to say, Oh, don't worry about it. It's not something to get certainly not something to get angry about. It's an opportunity to teach children about how they how you handle it emotionally. And and and secondly, what do you do to actually avoid disappointment in the future? So if somebody is disappointed about a result, they got a school or or something on the sporting field, you can say, Okay, let's have a look at what happened in the lead up to that. What could we do differently to change the result, and that's a really important lesson for children. So the important lesson for adults, I don't We as adults do that enough. But if we're teaching children to do that at school, I think that's really important. It's really important lesson to parents to reinforce with children, teachers try and do that at school. But again, they've got, you know, 20 or 30 kids to deal with. They try really hard to do that at school. But when you're at home, the biggest influence on children is their parents. And when parents are reinforcing that message as children, the more likely they are going to learn it. And when they face disappointments, major disappointments in adult life, as we all do, and will, then they're going to be much more capable of dealing with parent teacher interviews are really tricky, because I find them tricky to I've written a book about them, but I still find sometimes getting information from schools can be can be tricky. So

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again, from the feedback I've got from principals, from teachers, from parents from experts in the field. There are there are essentially five questions one is, what was my child last time we had a parent We're going to do six or six months ago, where were they? Is the first question. The second question is, where are they now? And we're talking about, particularly academically here. Where are they now? Are they where they should be? So given their age? Well, given their where they are in school? Are they actually at the place where they should they are they are they? Yeah, they are currently what they what they should, what they should be doing? And then thirdly, what's the next stage of their learning? Because this is where parents can really help. So if we as parents know, what our children now at the moment, and what's the next thing you've got to learn, when you're at home, we can help them actually we can help the schools do what they're doing, which is getting get them to the next stage of learning. So if as a primary school child, and they're at a certain reading level, and you know that six months ago, they were at a certain level, now they've now their levels improved, and the next stage of that improvement is whatever it might be. Okay, now, we know what's Sort of books, we should be reading with our kids at home, not too easy, not too hard, the right level to get them to that next stage, really important. But the same applies in a more complex level for the high school students, but it's really important to know where they are, and what the next step is. And then then the other two questions are around their own. well being, you know, I think all parents want to know, does my does my child make friends? Well, do they have a good group of friends? Do they have a good peer group? And then the fifth question is, are they happy? Are they happy? Are they how's their personal well being? And I think if the parents can get a good answer those five questions in the parent teacher interview, I think that they're doing really well. I would always recommend that. The parents have a look at the national guidelines, set guidelines in Australia or on the Commonwealth Department of Health website. They do change as we learn more and more about screen But certainly for children under the age of one, it's zero hours. for teenagers, it certainly it gets to be more than that. But it's about two hours a day. But with that said, that website is getting updated. Different countries around the world have different recommendations. But I think what we know about the impacts of screentime now, in 2020, is probably what we knew about cigarette smoking in the 1930s. We use it, we knew that there's gonna be real problems, it's not probably great that people don't see much of it. So we don't really know the long term consequences on brain function, particularly for young children. We don't know the socio and emotional repercussions of of excessive screen time and and and the impacts of social media, etc.

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We know that there are consequences. Some research early researches is certainly pointed In a pretty, you know, harmful direction. But I think we'll look back in 10 and 20 years time and, and think, gee, we probably should have done a lot of things differently back in 2010, and 2020, particularly about how much for insomnia less very young children have. So I try and limit screen time for my children pretty severely with varying elements of success. It's really difficult as a parent, but I think parents really have to stick to, you know, pretty strict guidelines. I think routers can be pretty safe rather than sorry, in the future.

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pinball is especially good for everybody. We're doing this interview in the middle of the coronavirus lockdown globally. And while the consequences of that are very serious in terms of the health consequences, and certainly deaths, etc, etc. The lockdown is in itself going to be an interesting social experiment across the world, where people are actually required to stop for a minute or so questions like minutes, weeks, months, at home, stay at home

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with family. And actually there are going to be long periods of boredom. And again, the research already says that within the children boredom is important. And boredom for adults is important. Because this will actually when your brain has time to think, unstructured thoughts, some of the most creative minds in the world some of the most important creations that occurred when when that when the creators have said, You know, I was bored and my mind was just throwing bits of information together, and you know, coming up with new ideas. So I think it's really at the heart of creativity is when you're when you're when your mind is not being when your thinking is not being directed by something else, particularly not a screen. I think the research is pretty clear that not constantly being Having your attention taken by something else is good for your good for your brain good for your well being, but also good for creativity and, and all of the benefits that come from, from allowing your brain to be creative.