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Thursday, October 6, 2022

Tips to help kids learn a foreign language

Bilingualism benefits children in myriad ways. For example, a 2014 study published in the *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* found that bilingual children have a higher vocabulary range than monolingual kids. In addition, a 2010 review published in the *Review of Educational Research* found that bilingual students typically have stronger working memories and attention spans than their monolingual counterparts.

The benefits of bilingualism are undeniable, but learning a foreign language can be challenging. However, that challenge could be less significant for youngsters. Though there are different theories regarding why children seem to learn languages more readily than adults, Dr. Eleonore Smalle of Tilburg University in the Netherlands indicates that adults tend to translate from their first language when trying to learn a new language. In an interview with the United Nations in



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Parents can try various strategies to help kids learn a foreign language.

Western Europe, Dr. Smalle said that adults' attempts to adopt language rules they already know results in a

"less stable consolidation of the new language into memory." Children, on the other hand, unconsciously

implement the new language rules and even use newly acquired words in everyday life. That, Dr.

Smalle says, benefits long-term memory consolidation.

It's important to note that researchers, including Dr. Smalle, feel that children may find it easier to learn a foreign language up to adolescence, at which time their conscious memory begins to develop more strongly. So parents who want to help their children learn a foreign language have a relatively long window of time to get that ball rolling before kids could find it more challenging. Parents also can try some additional strategies to help kids learn a foreign language.

■ Bring lessons home from the classroom. Children learning a foreign language in school or via a private tutor can be encouraged to bring those lessons home and continue to develop those skills in a fun way. Play games in a foreign language at home on family game night. Young children just beginning foreign language lessons can be encouraged to count to 10 when playing hide-and-seek

at home.

■ Shop for groceries in a foreign language. When grocery shopping with children in tow, parents can point to foods around the store and ask kids to say each item in the foreign language they're learning. Make a list before going to the store and reward kids who name all of the items on the list with a special treat at checkout.

■ Read books in the language the child is learning. This could be tricky if parents are not bilingual. However, in that scenario, reading books to children in a foreign language provides a great way to reverse roles and let children teach their parents everything they've learned from their teachers or tutors. Keep stories simple and even seek recommendations from teachers or tutors.

The benefits of bilingualism are significant. Parents can try various strategies to ensure foreign language lessons learned in the classroom are reinforced at home.

What are advanced placement classes?

In recent years, many school districts have diversified their course offerings for high school students. In addition to core education classes in key subjects required of most high schoolers, students now have electives that may rival college course offerings as well as classes that set interested students on career paths after high school. Indeed, it's not uncommon for high schoolers to enroll in classes in business administration, teacher/education or STEM.

In addition to these newer class options, many high school students have access to more advanced classes.

Despite the prevalence of the Advanced Placement program, some students and their parents may be largely unfamiliar with what the program entails.

The College Board, which oversees the Advanced Placement Program as well as the SAT, defines AP courses as "rigorous, college-level classes in a variety of subjects that give students the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school." Students who enroll in AP classes are not guaranteed those credits, however. Rather, after taking the courses, they must then pass an AP exam in each subject for which they

have taken an AP class and score at least a three out of five on that exam. That passing grade may entitle them to earn college credits, although some schools have limits on which AP exams they will accept.

The AP program began in the 1950s as a way to teach introductory level courses in high school. By taking such courses, students can experience the rigor of potential college classes and challenge themselves beyond standard and honor courses. AP classes were not initially widespread, and there were only 11 subjects in the pilot program. However, today there are

nearly 40 AP courses available, though not every high school offers every course.

Students eager to land coveted spots at top colleges and universities often take AP classes to provide that extra edge against the competition. Most academic advisors now recommend that students take these types of courses, not only as a way to later save money by eliminating the need to pay for certain college classes, but also to set themselves apart from other students during the application process. Many colleges consider AP classes in their decisions to award scholarships as well.

The College Board reports that, as of 2019, about 2.8 million students take AP exams every year. It's quite common for high schoolers to take multiple AP classes during their time in high school.

It is possible to take an AP exam without having taken the coordinating class prior, but it is strongly recommended that students take the corresponding class to prepare for the test.

Students and their families can learn about the Advanced Placement program by visiting <https://ap.collegeboard.org/> or speaking with a high school guidance counselor.

DID YOU KNOW?

The percentage of students with disabilities who had a specific learning disability declined by a significant margin between the 2010-11 school year and the 2020-21 school year. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that 32.7 percent of students with disabilities had a specific learning disability in 2020-21, which marks a 4 percent decrease from a decade prior. That decrease occurred despite a steadily rising student-teacher ratio in special education. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education reports that the current student-teacher ratio of 17 to 1 in special education is higher than the overall student-teacher ratio in general education. {/span}

study tips for high school students

Assessments such as quizzes and exams help educators recognize areas where students are excelling and where they might need a little extra help. In addition to tests in the classroom, high schoolers generally take standardized testing for state or provincial assessment purposes.

Testing may come easier to some students than others, but having solid study techniques can improve students' performance on a wide range of exams. In fact, research by Stanford scholars, whose data was published in Psychological Science, found that applying a strategic approach to studying helped college students improve their exam scores by an average of one-third of a letter grade.

The testing preparation resource PrepScholar says it is important to build and maintain strong study habits to help students avoid undue stress and last-minute cramming. The following are seven techniques

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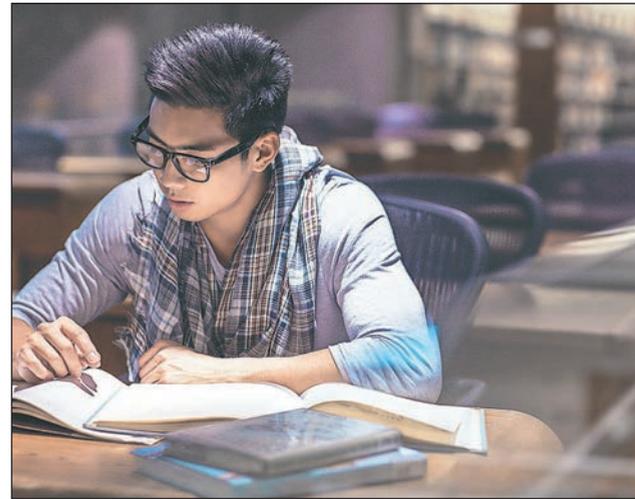
that may help foster good study skills.

1. Find value in the lessons

Many students lament that what they learn in school just isn't relevant in daily life. That can make the subject matter feel less important and uninteresting. Finding value in what one is learning and seeing how it can be applied outside of the classroom may make a student more inclined to learn and retain information.

2. Avoid distractions

Study time is time to take a break from social media, video games and any other



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The following are seven techniques that may help foster good study skills.

distractions that can pull a student away from studying. Constantly checking notifications can interrupt thoughts and make it hard to learn the material.

3. Establish a study schedule

Develop a system and a schedule for studying. Students should establish a fixed habit of studying each day or week — whatever is best for him or her. Over time, studying will become routine.

4. Establish dedicated study spots

Students should locate places that work best for them as study and homework stations. Certain individuals may need the quiet of a library or a bookstore. Others may do best with the hum of conversation around them or in a group. There's no right or wrong study spot. Maintaining consistency will help the mind associate a place with studying.

5. Use grades as benchmarks and motivators

Blaming a teacher for a poor grade won't get a student anywhere. Rather, grades should indicate how well one is learning the material, and in turn, the effectiveness of students' studying habits. Students can tweak their habits if they find their grades are not where they want them to be.

6. Rephrase material

Textbook language can be dry and unappealing. Students can try putting the material into their own words or rephrase passages to make them easier to remember and recall. Similarly, teaching or sharing the material with another person also may improve retention.

7. Make a formula sheet

Depending on the subject, having a sheet with shortcuts, formulas or diagrams can put the material into smaller bursts of information that are easier to digest. Along this same vein, writing information down can help improve recall.

These are a few study tips that high schoolers can utilize to improve their grades so they can be more successful in school.

College application facts and figures

The college application process involves several steps, many of which begin well before an applicant is ready to sign on the dotted line. These facts and figures can help applicants and their families gain a better understanding of what goes into the college admissions process.

■ College admissions teams view a potential applicant as more seriously interested in the school if they know he or she has visited. Interested parties can go above and beyond taking the Open House tour by auditing a class or even spending a night in a dorm.

■ Due in large part to COVID-19 disrupting SAT and ACT testing schedules and potentially setting an uneven playing field for those who tested and those who could not, many colleges are now test-optional

schools. Despite that, guidance counselors may urge students to test and submit strong scores to test-optional schools because those scores can help unlock merit-based aid.

■ The College Board indicates the average financial aid award per student is \$15,000. And the National Association for College Admission Counseling says 43 percent of all institutional aid funds are merit-based.

■ The Common App is one tool used to apply to colleges in today's digital age. The same application can be used to apply to more than 400 schools. However, some schools may still supplement the application with essays or questions as part of their individual admissions processes.

■ The Huffington Post reports that students who have a first-choice college

should apply to it early decision, as early decision has been shown to increase an applicant's chance of admission by up to 25 percent over regular decision admission rates.

■ Applicants should seek recommendations from people who know them best and can provide detailed reasons as to why they are the right fit for a school.

■ The Princeton Review says the top admissions factor at schools is a student's GPA, underscoring the importance of getting good grades.

■ College applicants feeling the stress of the waiting game can rest assured. According to the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, more than three-quarters of college applicants get into their first-choice schools.

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How the arts benefit academic performance

The cost of products and services continues to rise and organizations everywhere have increasingly been feeling the pressure to reevaluate budgets. It's no different in school districts nationwide, with school boards making difficult decisions about which programs to keep and which will have to go in order to save money.

Music and arts programs often are the first to be cut when school budgets are tightened. The organization Save the Music says that, during the Great Recession in 2008 and 2009, per-pupil spending in public schools decreased by approximately 7 percent across the country. This led to a

Art program cutbacks are rarely met with open arms, and that resistance has a lot to do with the positive effects such offerings have on students' academic performance.

trickle-down effect that resulted in the cancellation of art and music programs. Since then, many districts have continued to cut arts programs due to budget limitations. COVID-19 also did little to help the situation.

Art program cutbacks are rarely met with open arms, and that resistance has a lot to do with the positive effects such offerings have on students' academic performance.

Better test performance

Numerous studies have found a correlation between early introduction to music education and a number of benefits for children. Music education can help develop communication skills, brain plasticity, language, and motor skills. A study conducted by the University of California,



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Art program cutbacks are rarely met with open arms, and that resistance has a lot to do with the positive effects such offerings have on students' academic performance

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Los Angeles used a database of more than 25,000 middle and high school students. The researchers found that students involved in arts performed better on standardized achievement tests than students with lower arts involvement. Furthermore, data from 2015 from The College Board, which produces the SAT, found students who took four years of arts and music classes while in high school scored an average of 92 points higher on their SATs than students who only took one-half year or less.

Improved emotional states

In addition to better performance on tests, a review in *Frontiers in Psychology* examined several studies linking arts and aesthetic experiences with "broad improvements" in people's emotional states. Those improvements included greater psychological and physical well-being.

Community involvement

Participation and even appreciation of the arts can have an impact as well. Researchers from the Department of Public

Administration at the University of Illinois Chicago found that being an art curator or audience member leads to high levels of civic engagement and social tolerance.

The support and therapy company Evolve Treatment Centers reports that involvement in music and arts leads to overall higher GPAs, higher scores in math and reading and a reduced risk of behavioral problems and suspensions.

Music and arts education are important to students' development. Keeping these programs alive in schools can benefit students in many ways.

Strategies that can improve reading comprehension

Strong reading comprehension skills are one of the foundations of a successful academic career. According to the Institute of Reading Development, students with strong reading comprehension skills get a big boost in all subjects, including math and science.

Though the benefits of reading comprehension are well documented, many students are struggling in this area of their academics. Officials with the National Center for Education Statistics note that, over the last decade, students have made no progress in reading performance. That likely comes as no surprise to seasoned educators, as data indicates students are reading less outside of school than they have in years past. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates the percentage of public school students who said they read 30 minutes or more a day declined by 4 percent between 2017 and 2019, dipping below 50 percent overall in the latter year.

There's likely a multitude of reasons why students now read less than they used to. Parents concerned about their children's reading comprehension can try these strategies to bolster this highly valuable skill.

- Let kids read what they like. The tutoring professionals at Oxford Learning® report that 73 percent of students indicate they would read more if they found books they liked. Parents can address this issue by taking children to their local libraries and letting them choose which books to check out. The more practice kids get with reading, the more their comprehension skills develop.



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Parents concerned about their children's reading comprehension can try these strategies to bolster this highly valuable skill.

- Read aloud to children. Various studies have found that reading aloud to children significantly benefits literacy development. One study from the National Association for the Education of Young Children found that listening to others read helps children develop key understanding and skills, including how stories are written. In addition, the Reading Rockets project, which aspires to bring reading research to life in the hopes of helping young children develop into strong, confident readers, notes that children can listen on a higher language level than they can read. That makes complex ideas more accessible.

- Ask questions when

reading to children. When reading to children, parents can compound the benefits of this activity by asking youngsters questions about the book. Asking what, when, where, why, and how can encourage children to look for answers to these questions while they're being read to. As students advance and then read more on their own, parents can encourage them to ask these questions of themselves (if they're not already doing so on their own). Asking and answering these questions is a great way to strengthen reading comprehension skills.

Strong reading comprehension skills can help students reach their academic potential. Parents can employ various strategies to help children bolster those skills.



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Art-based extracurricular activities

Students looking to expand their extracurricular horizons need look no further than the arts. Art-related extracurricular activities can enhance lessons learned in the classroom and provide a way to explore creative pursuits to help relieve stress and improve focus.

Art-based extracurricular activities are easy to find. Consider these ideas to get started.

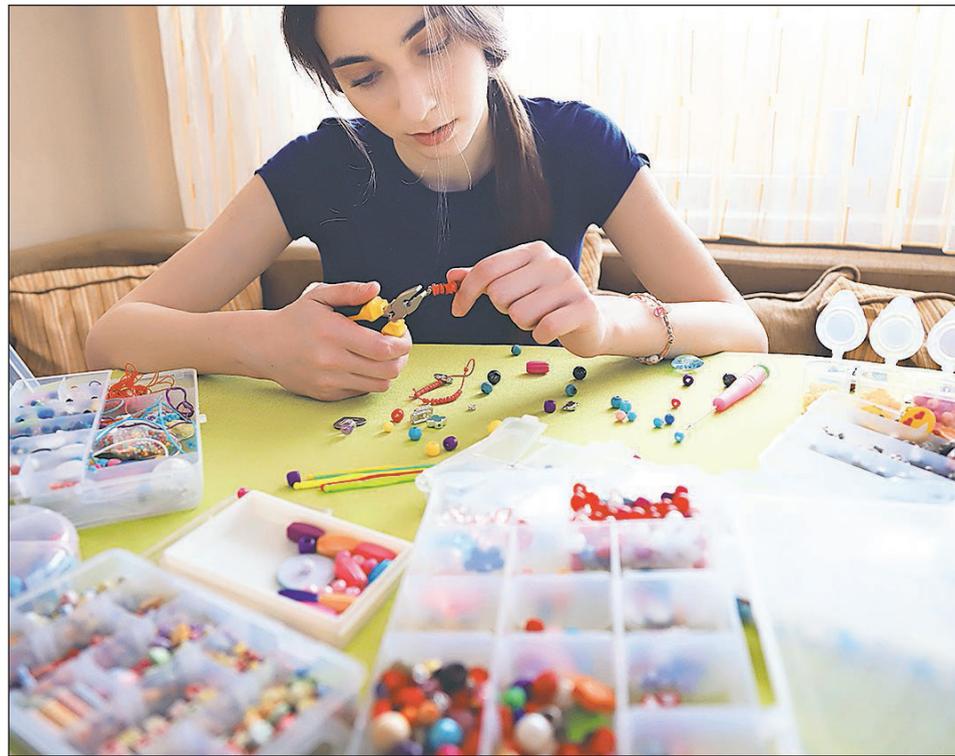
Visit an art museum

Those lucky enough to live close to an art museum can wander through the past or get artists' interpretations of the future. Many museums sponsor extracurricular activities for young artists, but even periodic

visits using a student pass can provide all the inspiration creative young people need. Museums showcase everything from paintings to sculptures to historical artifacts, so it's possible to find a specially curated collection that appeals to any artist's interests.

Enroll in an art course

Students who enjoy art can improve their skills by taking art classes and courses that extend lessons learned during the school day. Perhaps a student wants to hone his or her skills in a particular medium? An art class can do that and even expand on lessons learned in the classroom.



Art-based extracurricular activities are easy to find.

COURTESY PHOTO

Attend arts-related camps

Summer camps come

in all shapes and sizes, including ones geared around artistic endeavors. When school lets out for

the summer or other breaks during the year, students can hang around with like-minded peers in specialty

art camps.

Try other artistic activities

The arts include everything from music instruction to acting in a play or musical to participating in a choral ensemble. Some children like to experience art through culinary endeavors. Students should not limit themselves to one activity. Dabbling in all sorts of activities may inspire students to pursue new interests.

Find art in daily life

One does not need to be enrolled in a regimented program to enjoy art. Children can engage in art-related hobbies on their own at home or in the community. Find art in collecting leaves and flowers, building sand castles, taking photographs, or just about any other creative endeavor.

Arts-related extracurricular activities can be the perfect way to pass time outside the classroom.



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Guide to preparing for college admissions

Junior year is a pivotal time in the lives of high school students. Junior year marks a transition to upper classmen, and students begin to ponder their post-high school academic careers around this time as well.

The college preparatory process can seem daunting, particularly if a student does not have a sibling who recently went through the steps and can offer advice. Well-meaning parents may want to share their own experiences, but much has changed since parents were looking ahead to their own college experiences. That doesn't mean parents can't offer important assistance, particularly when they learn the ropes of today's college preparatory process.

Speak with a guidance counselor to plan courses

Parents and students can

meet collectively with a guidance counselor to talk about goals and coursework. Many high schools offer Advanced Placement classes or dual enrollment courses that enable students to earn college credit.

Discuss extracurricular activities

Colleges and universities do not just look at grade and test scores; they consider the entire applicant. Therefore, high schoolers should dabble in various clubs, organizations and sports to make them more appealing to admissions departments.

Enroll in a test preparation course

Though a growing number of American colleges and universities have abandoned ACT and SAT scores as part of their admissions process, many schools still require those scores. Students can benefit from taking test prep



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Parents can offer important assistance, particularly when they learn the ropes of today's college preparatory process.

classes either in school or through outside tutoring businesses. Learning strategies for the tests as well

as seeing sample questions can remove some of the anxiety associated with the tests.

Visit schools and attend college fairs

Parents and students should make appointments to visit several college campuses that offer courses students are interested in. Getting one's name in admissions departments' databases also opens up students to emails about upcoming events and application deadlines.

Learn about The Common Application

The Princeton Review says most schools will use The Common Application as part of the admissions process. This enables students to enter all of their information and apply to multiple schools using the same account. However, schools will typically have different supplemental essay topics or test score requirements. Essays typically are required to be around 650

words.

Get financial paperwork in order

Applying to college and applying for financial aid (which every student should do regardless of income) are two separate processes. In the United States, students will start with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The FAFSA will help determine eligibility for grants, scholarships, federal work-study, and student loans. The FAFSA requires information taken from federal income tax statements.

Parents can help guide their students further by following up on school transcripts, teacher recommendations and providing application cost fees, which vary from \$50 to \$100 per school. The road to college may seem confusing, but a few simple strategies can make it easier to navigate.

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