

The High Achievers' Post

Your ultimate guide to transforming your child's academic performance

September 2022

Take Action Tips!



September is the beginning of the school year, so naturally it is the ideal time to make a start on those new year resolutions with your son or daughter. **Do it right now! Why wait?**

- Come up with an action plan for the year ahead. The summer exam results have, for many students, been an indicator for what they now need to focus their energies on. If the results went as desired, then fabulous! Congratulations! If they did not go as well as expected, then it is time to brainstorm for some new ideas
- One of the things that I have seen transforming young students' lives is additional tuition out of school hours in the subjects they are struggling with. Starting early and having the time and space to ask the questions a child is struggling with in a disciplined, calm environment can really make a difference to results at the end of the year
- The key is to start early! Not a month or two before exams!

Back to school!

A-Level and GCSE results are out and now your teenager knows where he/she stands. What next?

Some students have moved on to focus on their admission to university and by now know where they will be spending the next three to four years of their lives. If your teenager has just completed their GCSEs, they have many options available to them, one of which is seeking to attain further academic qualification in the form of A-Levels.

They've worked hard to get to where they are. The summer holidays have come and gone, and it's time to gear up for the next phase of life. A new school year is always a good opportunity to start fresh. For many students, this means new challenges to overcome, bigger goals to achieve, and higher mountains to climb.

At any level, this is a time to rise to the challenge that academic life brings. To do this successfully, students need to learn to press the refresh button once in a while. In today's highly competitive world, life can quickly become a rat race, and it's easy to get caught up in it. It's important for students to pause once in a while to give themselves a mental reset so they don't burn out.

As a student, there are many ways to refresh your mind. These include;

1. **Read non-academic books** – Whatever academic path you have

continued overleaf



“If you want to know your past, look into your present circumstances. If you want to know your future, look into your present actions.”

– Chinese proverb

**Open Days
come and meet
our teachers**

10th September

24th September

1st October

See more detail on the back page

Editor:
Victoria Harrison

Excel
in Key Subjects

Teaching that guarantees results

chosen, you cannot possibly learn everything you need to know to become a well-rounded individual from strictly course work material. You might find it refreshing and enlightening to read non-academic books. At least one book every month. Of course, this is subject to how flexible your study schedule is. Pick a book that piques your interest and your reading time will become one to look forward to. Ideally, this should in no way take priority over your school work and, for the best impact, you should read books that teach important life lessons.

2. Learn a new skill – Staying as productive as possible while doing something fun has always been a good way to stay refreshed. Picking up a new hobby such as learning an instrument, drawing and painting, or even learning a sport is a good way to unwind and keep yourself in a good mood when you're not occupied with school work. Practising a sport not only

helps you keep fit, it also helps you build resilience and mental strength, which you will find very useful as a student.

3. Always stay grounded – For me, this means staying in touch with people who give off good energy. Those who encourage and motivate me in my academic journey and generally as a person. It means family and spirituality. Even in your academic pursuits, do not to isolate yourself. Have regular conversations with close family members and consider talking to your parents about your struggles. They have a wealth of knowledge and may be able to help you overcome those challenges.

In all, find out what works best for you as a student and always have a plan. Mentally prepare yourself for the new school year by setting attainable goals and drawing up a practical plan of how you intend to achieve them. This could mean having a reading schedule outside

your normal timetable. Make it as realistic as possible so the chances of it falling through are slim to nil. I've found that discipline and effective time-management makes life a lot easier for you as a student if practised successfully. You'll find that you are better organised and rarely under pressure when it comes to submitting assignments or revising for tests or exams.

Parents, you've been actively invested in your child's progress thus far: don't stop now. As the school year unfolds, talk to them about their studies, find out what subjects/courses they're performing well in and in what areas they might be struggling. Encourage them with words and actions where possible. Discuss plans with them on how best to succeed moving forward. Most importantly, whether they're off to university or not, be as present as you possibly can and let them know they are not alone.

I wish you and your family the very best ahead!

Start early this year

The Four Point Action Plan

is a unique opportunity to come up with a **Three Step Solution** that is manageable and overseeable and that gives your child the sense of direction and monitoring he or she needs early on in the year.

The first step is to sit down with your son or daughter, at least a few days before the new school year begins, and to identify the area that is causing the struggle. Is it algebra in Maths? Is it poetry in English? Is it genetics in Biology?

The second step is to come up with a Three Step Solution. This entails coming up with three concrete things you and your son or daughter will do in the next two weeks to combat the problem. For example, if the problem is algebra in Maths the **Three Step Solution** could be:

1. Organising a meeting with your child's Maths teacher at school and discussing options/brainstorming solutions together. This is also good as the teacher will pay more attention to your child's needs from the beginning as they will get the impression you are a caring, concerned parent
2. Dedicating a set number of hours per week on the same night each week to studying extra algebra at home. This could be working through the algebra section of a past exam paper for 3 hours every Sunday from 5-8pm
3. Signing your son or daughter up to extra tuition classes for Maths. It is always useful to try this earlier rather than later. This can be a massive confidence booster for many students as they

realise they are in fact adept at a particular subject but were just too overstretched to have the chance to get enough time with the teacher at school

The third step is to implement this plan with consistency and diligence for two weeks.

Then review and evaluate the progress made every two weeks and to come up with a new **Three Step Solution** for the next two weeks

I promise you that with consistent implementation, this plan will make a big difference to your child's performance in forty days.

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A Teachers Thoughts

The Qualities of a Good Teacher

I've often wondered after thirty years of teaching, "What actually makes a good teacher?"

Is it sufficient to stand in front of a class and simply lecture young learners? Why will this not produce memorable results for most of the students?

I've identified key aspects that in my opinion, underpin good teaching, starting with **empathy**. Long after students have forgotten the details of the course work that you painstakingly presented in class whether it is the structure of a sodium atom, how an oxbow lake forms, causes of the English War and so on; what they will remember with great clarity, is how you made them feel. A good teacher ought to be empathic; he/she should bond well with students and fully appreciate the barriers that may slow down learning in order to overcome them. Being empathic creates a platform for growing friendship which will produce good teaching. Empathy makes the teacher-student relations warm, making it possible for students to open up about vital things. Things like what should be done to improve their academic performance.

Every teacher has walked into a classroom prepared to deliver a lesson based on an idea of what students already know and the most productive ways of adding to their knowledge. That is until some unforeseen event takes place and a new plan is necessary. I remember a lesson I was giving on the solar system to some Year 7 students where everything seemed to be progressing favourably. That is, until one young man put up his hand and asked, "Sir, how many organs can you donate and still stay alive?" It's a fair question but possibly not in the middle of a Physics lesson. Clearly, a

modification was needed if everyone was going to make measurable progress in this lesson! A good teacher should be **flexible** and **open to change**. Teaching ought to be one of the most dynamic professions as it prepares students for a world which has never been static. By being responsive to students' interests as well as evolving technology, a teacher will always remain relevant to students.

Presentation skills in their various forms, are basic for teachers as they cannot teach without them. Lessons should follow an agreed format where students can recognise the aim of each lesson, where it fits in with their current understanding and how the teacher will develop the topic in subsequent meetings. In addition, teachers should aim to be as charismatic as possible as this will help them to hold the attention

of their students and to successfully pass a message across. Charismatic teachers instil confidence in their students and this makes it easier for students to learn. Charisma also makes it possible for a teacher to be viewed positively by his/her students as a role model.

Empathy, good presentation skills, flexibility, open mindedness and charisma make a teacher relatable and enhance the quality of the interaction between teachers and students. Interactivity brings students close to teachers, creating a platform where teaching can be customised to ensure high performance from students and to create the most productive learning experience for both students and teachers.

Clearly, teaching is more than just lecturing.

Dr. Gordon Esler



DO NOT MAKE THIS MISTAKE!

START EXAM PREPARATION TODAY!

The consequences of waiting until one or two months before exams before commencing preparation could be more damning than students realize. As a student, you don't have access to the course outline for nothing. A good student is expected to familiarise himself/herself with the topics for each subject and to read ahead of each class to avoid the trap of thinking there is more than enough time, only to end up putting himself/herself under pressure weeks to the exam and, worse still, having to cram.

A better student will seek to utilise their time early enough and read to understand important points that will enable them answer exam questions analytically and intelligently. The best way to stay ahead in your studies is to start early.

Mr Musty's Column

Sharing a thought or two with likeminded parents

Welcome to our first newsletter after a brief hiatus, the purpose of which is to connect and keep in touch with like-minded parents. In addition to helping to decipher certain complexities of the British education system, we are also using this medium to highlight salient truths, which will help your teenager get the most out of the education system.

For the first time in three years, GCSE and A-level students have just received exam results that were based on proper exams, as opposed to teacher assessment. One very important lesson that we have learnt from this is that a proper exam is the fairest and most hassle-free way to award qualifications. I happen to believe that it is also the best way, and I will explain that in a few minutes. Before I do, I'd just like to briefly share with you something about Excel and the exam results.

As usual at Excel, the results achieved by our students in the core academic subjects they studied with us are well above the national average, but that is not the most important thing. The key point is the value added – the improvement that our students made as a direct result of attending our classes. Apart from a couple of students who achieved lower grades than we expected, the rest obtained or exceeded the expected grades. My team of dedicated teachers are well aware that we operate in an environment where expectations are high, and they are more than up to the challenge. We are proud of the role we've played in helping young people achieve top exam grades at A-level and GCSE since 2004. Having said that, we never rest on our laurels.

One of our students, Basil, achieved results in his GCSEs which I believe he would not have achieved, had the grades been awarded by teacher assessment. He achieved Grades 8-7 (A*-A) in Combined (Double Science). This is a student who was only just placed by the school in the higher tier just before the exams. As he is a very quiet boy who is intelligent but does not speak out much, and has missed a lot of learning during the pandemic, I am certain that the best the teachers would have predicted for him would have been Grades 6-5 or similar. Now, that is not the worst part of this story.

The worst part is that teacher assessment would have given higher grades to other students who would not have done as well in a proper exam. If the whole grade awarding system was not a zero-sum game, one could argue that teacher assessment will benefit everyone but that is not how things work. Only a certain proportion of grades can be awarded as top grades. Basil is just one example of many young people and their families that I have spoken to in the last three years. In 2020/21, a group of parents were considering legal action against the exam board after their teenagers missed out on university places after being awarded low grades by teacher assessment. The tragic thing is that some of these young people actually scored higher grades in their mocks than what the teacher awarded, and some of them went on to take the proper exams in autumn and achieved two grade points higher than what the teachers had awarded them.

I would suggest that you visit my

blogpost at www.ExcelinKeySubjects.com/blog to read more about matters ranging from degree, A-level and GCSE subject options to other related topics you'll find useful.

One thing I'd like to bring to your attention is the major changes we have made to our GCSE classes. We have reduced the number of study minutes and increased the number of Saturdays a little. This serves two key purposes:

- A significant reduction in fees, making the investment more affordable for parents, which we hope will help with the increasing rise in the cost of living.
- A reduction in the length of Saturday's lesson period, so that a GCSE or KS3 student can do English, Maths and two Science subjects and be finished by about 1pm on Saturdays.

Please see more information at: www.ExcelinKeySubjects.com/2022-23-academic-year/

I wish your child a good start to the new academic year and look forward to speaking to you next month!



"Excuse me, what does that sign say?"

COME TO OUR OPEN DAY

Saturday, 10th September 2022 – 1pm at the Olympia Centre: St James Senior Girls' School, 6 Earsby Street, London W14 8SH

Saturday, 24th September 2022 – 10am at the Trinity School Centre: Trinity School, Shirley Park, Croydon CR9 7AT

Saturday, 1st October 2022 – 1pm at the Olympia Centre: St James Senior Girls' School, 6 Earsby Street, London W14 8SH

The Open Day and lessons for September and October 2022 will be in-person at each of the centres.

However, anyone who cannot attend can book an online call, which will be on video via Zoom.

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Teaching that guarantees results

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