

Visit With the Utays

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School Psychology and Education Specialists



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Memory Key: First Learn, THEN Memorize

Trying to memorize information before first getting a good overall understanding of the topic is like putting together a puzzle without first seeing a picture of the finished image. It can be done, but what a waste of precious time and brain power! An often overlooked key to helping children memorize information is to start with helping them understand how all the information fits together. This actually helps the brain remember the individual bits of information later.

Consider this typical assignment: memorize all the state's capitals. Children will enhance their memory if they first understand what a capital is, what function they serve, and their value not only for individual states but nation as a whole. For older kids, first understanding why a battle was fought and its place in the overall war, will help them remember the names, dates, and places associated with a specific battle. In other words, putting what is to be memorized into an overall context, instead of being just more to memorize, actually makes remembering details easier. Building such a foundation offers the brain a platform on which to build all the little bricks that will make up the overall structure. Heaped in a pile they are still bricks (important bits of information), they just don't serve the purpose nearly as well as when put together in a cohesive way.

It's easy for adults to forget how stressful memorizing is for kids in school. Samuel Butler may have put it a

bit strongly 100 or so years ago: "Memory and forgetfulness are as life and death to one another. To live is to remember and to remember is to live. To die is to forget and to forget is to die." Still, memorizing is one of the most stressful school requirements children face.

If, in spite of your help, your child is having a stressful time either memorizing while preparing for a test with you (short-term memory) or, more often the case, your child remembers the night before the test but not during the test itself (long-term memory), there is hope! The child's stress often becomes the family's stress which then increases the child's stress, etc. but you can stop that harmful pattern. Total Learning Centers have a memory-boosting program of fun – yet seriously effective – "brain exercises" proven successful for strengthening memory. So, if needed, you have a great back-up resource in the community to help your child prepare today for success tomorrow.

For more information about starting the school year right, including professional assessment of strengths and needs as well as a great list of positive ways to collaborate with teachers, contact Total Learning Center at 724-940-1090 (Wexford, Fox Chapel, and now Murrysville areas).

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