

Independent Learning Newsletter Tips

The Issue of Perfectionism in Students

Expectations on secondary school students can create a very competitive environment. Students in this age range are inundated with information about the significance of academic performance, and the result, in many cases, is that these students develop unhealthy propensities for perfectionism. Perfectionism may not sound like much of a problem in a school atmosphere - after all, parents and teachers want children to develop strong work ethics and sound study habits. The problem is, true perfectionism actually tends to lead students away from these healthy developments. When a student becomes upset over a score of 98 out of 100, or can't handle coming in 2nd out of a class of 30, etc., schoolwork will often suffer as a result. Perfectionism of this degree usually results from a fear of failure, rejection or disapproval, or insecurity about meeting a given standard. Students feeling these pressures quickly fall into inefficient work patterns, focusing on proving themselves, rather than on doing individual assignments effectively. So - how can such patterns and thought processes be avoided? Here are a few specific suggestions for coping with perfectionism.

Separate Work From Personal Feelings - This is a huge hurdle for many students. The fact is, an evaluation of your work often feels like an evaluation of you personally, and the pressure of making that evaluation positive can lead to perfectionism. Students must learn to treat work feedback as evaluation for a specific assignment, and nothing more.

Set Incremental Goals - Many students tend to set unattainable, or at least extremely difficult goals. Instead, students should focus on setting goals based on past achievements. If a student gets an 85 on an exam, the goal for the next one should not be a 100 - it should be an 87. Incremental goals are more reasonable, and most long-term improvement occurs gradually.

Recognize Stress - This can be easier said than done, but it's crucial in battling perfectionism. Students need to be aware of the fact when they're stressing over a project (spending extra unnecessary hours, re-writing pages exhaustively, etc.). Learning to recognize stress can help students to reevaluate work methods.

Explore Efficient Work Methods - Often, newer or easier work methods can assist in efficiency. Students shouldn't get lazy, but should allow certain technologies to make work easier. That might mean downloading Evernote for easy electronic note-taking, or it may mean investing in Sharefile as a means of cloud storage and computer organization - whatever the case, perfectionists can often find their workloads lessened by these steps.

Put Things In Perspective - It's incredibly important for students to have proper perspective on schoolwork. Being able to stop and think about the worst case scenario can help students to realize that an individual assignment - while important - should not be a source of unnecessary stress or excessive workload.

Ultimately, dealing with perfectionism can be a long and tricky process. But implementing these habits and thought processes can help students to develop a healthier approach to schoolwork.

So learn more this year about how to improve your results and be more efficient and effective with your schoolwork by going to the links section in your portal and opening the ELES handbook:

