

10 proven ways to help your child thrive within the NCEA years:

1. SUBJECT SELECTION: Check that the school subjects they are taking are relevant to THEIR interests (not yours!) – make sure the subject has a clear path, in that it can be taken in subsequent years and is required for their potential tertiary course or work field. The old adage of “everyone should take Maths, Science and English to Year 13” is no longer relevant.

2. KNOW HOW NCEA WORKS: Ensure you understand the NCEA system – how the credits are allocated, the distribution of internal/external credits for each subject (if exams are stressful to your child, ensure he/she can build sufficient internal credits to take the pressure off the externals). Some internals can be resubmitted, some subjects require a project-based external rather than an exam, etc.

3. USE NZQA TO HELP YOU: Ensure your child has a login code for the NZQA site so you can sit with them at least once a month and review their NCEA progress, check the credits are entered correctly and talk about how they are progressing towards their subject/level/endorsement targets (see the NZQA website). You can't just rely on your child's school giving you this information or assume it has been recorded accurately.

4. BUILD GREAT STUDY HABITS: As your child completes an internal, have a quick review of how they approached it. Identify what they could do better for the next internal. A big part of success at school is your child building systems and habits that they can take through to tertiary studies or the workplace, so identifying poor practices like procrastination/disorganisation early can allow you to nip the behaviour in the bud).

5. SHOW YOUR SUPPORT: Have a discussion with your child about what you can do to support them – make it clear you won't be doing the internal for them but can help give advice or work through a problem with them. Your support may also come in enforcing an agreed bedtime/waking time, ensuring healthy food is available and that exercise and relaxation is part of their day. Be 'available' to hear their concerns, without judgment.

6. DON'T BE A SUCKER: Set clear boundaries on what you will NOT do for your child – for example, you won't do their project for them, you won't rush to school to drop off something they have forgotten, you won't ask their teacher for more time on an internal when they could have realistically met the deadline, you won't praise them for a result which involved minimal effort.

7. PRAISE EFFORT BEFORE RESULTS: Keep an eye on the amount of EFFORT your child puts into an internal or external, in preference to the result. Some children can get an 'Excellence' for an internal with minimal preparation or work, but this happens for few students and won't always happen. Learning that effort brings rewards is the key here, and sets them up for the future.

8. THINK BEYOND ACADEMICS: Make sure your child looks for other opportunities outside the academic sphere to be part of, do well at and feel good about themselves – even just participating in a social team for sport is better than not playing at all. They don't have to be perfect at everything; it's about participation, trying new things and making the most of the opportunities that schools provide.

9. CHECK THEIR FRIENDSHIP GROUP: Keep an eye on your child's friends and get to know them (volunteer at the school cafeteria, manage their sports team, have their friends over to your house, for example) – you can tell a lot about their state of mind and self-esteem by the type of friends they have and how they treat each other. If you see any negative behaviours, don't lecture your child; find ways to role model better behaviours.

10. INTROVERT OR EXTROVERT? Identify if your child is an introvert (they re-energise by spending time on their own) or an extrovert (they re-energise by being with other people), shy or outgoing (this is a measure of their comfort in new social situations). Help them understand that whatever they are, it's OK and they shouldn't try to be someone they are not (it's exhausting!). Schools mostly prefer and reward outgoing extroverts, so shy people or introverts can feel invalidated. But 50% of the world are introverts and introverts generate ideas!