



VERTUS WARRIORS

Our students have been out of school for nearly a semester. The way we function as a community has changed drastically. By now the structure you created, (or may not have created) may seem a little ragtag by now, but the good news is you have almost made it to the end of the school year! **However, Vertus is a year round school for all students** and with all the instruction we have missed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, summer learning is imperative to make sure your student stays on track and graduates on time.

The question a lot of our Vertus families are asking is, “Now what?” Current events have had a unprecedented effect on our lives but especially your students' education. As a parent and an administrator I can say that **clarity, consequence, and communication are key to your child’s success**. Some kids refuse to do their work while others claim that they don’t have work. Nevertheless, when you talk to your Preceptor or teacher, it’s another story. **The key to Vertus academic success is steady, consistent progress.**

So why is getting academic progress so difficult during these times? In my opinion, one of the major reasons is that it’s hard for kids to focus at home. Look at it this way, when your student is in school, he’s in a classroom where there aren’t a lot of distractions. How many kids want to do something that isn’t particularly exciting or pleasant like school? Most would prefer to be playing video games, riding their bikes, or driving around with friends. **So the focus of this newsletter is how to get academic progress from, and for, your student.**

Step 1 - Clarity: Be Clear. The goal is to make academic progress. Not stare at the computer.

There are three parts to making yourself clear: The Goal, the Expectation, & the Consequence.

Do you set a daily academic and/or behavioral expectation for your student? Are your expectations clear and easy to measure? Does your student know exactly what you want them to do? Below is an example of a clear and an unclear way to request your student to make progress.

I want you to get some work done today. If you don't there will be trouble.	Vs	I expect you to complete a quiz or test in Math, ELA, and Earth Science today before you look at a TV, cellphone, or go outside. If you don't, you can't go out with your friends later today.
No clear expectation is hard to measure		Clear expectation, easy to measure and consequence has been set

It’s hard to be upset when you and your student are not sure what you need to be consistent about. Did you want him to work for 5 minutes, 15 minutes, until noon, or later? If your student works for 5 minutes and watches television, technically he has done what you have requested (teenagers think like that). This

is where the power struggle begins. The second expectation sets a goal (a quiz or test in math, ELA, and earth science) and an expectation (it should be done before you use a TV or a screen), the only thing left is the consequence (**if you don't, you can't go out with your friends later today**).

Step 2 - Consequence: It's not a punishment.

You can't punish your child into better behavior. Forget about over-the-top punishments or ineffective rules because you'll just end up in a power struggle. The right consequences actually motivate your child to good behavior. They put you back in control and teach your child how to problem-solve, giving your child the skills needed to be a successful adult.

1. A consequence is not intended to "get back" at someone for something they did, with the goal of hurting that person. That's a punishment.
2. Consequences are task-oriented.
3. Consequences are time based.

You can't change someone else, but consequences might help them get some homework done. You can't "program" your child to care about their work, but you can create a work environment that promotes a good work ethic. Kids who get their work done now will not be behind when we return to school and will put themselves in a great place to graduate. **Ask your Preceptor to be added to the Edgenuity parent portal to get monthly, weekly, even daily updates.**

Step 3 - Communication: If he can't finish what you're going to say before you say it, you didn't say it enough.

Be clear, concise, and direct. Your simple message to your kids, which does not require lectures or big sit down conversations is, "Your job is to take care of your responsibilities, which includes getting your school work done and helping out in the house. That's my expectation for you, once you've done that each day, you are welcome to do what you'd like." Remember, as a parent your job is to essentially help your child do *his* job. Talk to your child in terms of "problem solving." Focus on what your child needs to do to get through the problem situation. For example, is he behind in math, does he owe three writing assignments, or is he just not working at all? You can help him by first naming what's going on: "You haven't completed any of your ELA assignments that were due last week." Then, ask him about how he'll handle it. You can say, "How are you going to solve the problem of getting back on track?" If he can't come up with an answer, you can help: "Finish the 3 assignments today and call your preceptor to see what you should do next. Maybe he'll be able to give you some credit, and at least you've shown him you can do the work." You may have to play the "Coach," encouraging him by telling him that he can handle it and the work can be made up, the "Limit Setter" who reminds him that he can't use the car if he has failing grades, or the "Teacher" who sits with him and helps him find the right solution to the problem. In fact, it's important for you to play all three of these roles as a parent. Your approach may change depending on the seriousness and type of situation; be flexible in order to match your child's needs.