



"We're all in it together" Gresham's provides revision tips for parents this exam season

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Gresham's School

As the May exam season draws closer, parents and guardians will be thinking how best to support their children to make the most out of their revision time – particularly during Easter break and study leave, when students will be spending the majority of their time revising outside of the school gates.

Mark Seldon, Director of Studies, Gresham's School, shares his advice for exam success, and explains why parents, teachers and the student are "all in it together" when it comes to revision.

One size doesn't fit all

One of the most common questions I am asked by parents is "how should my child be revising?" Often to much disappointment, but not to any real surprise, my answer is that a one size fits all approach to revision isn't the solution. The most effective methods for revision will vary from student to student, but parents cannot, and should not, assume that their child knows what the best process is for them. It is important parents are equipped with some encouraging advice on different ways they could be revising. A few tried and tested methods are:

Bin the highlighters, stock up on paper and pens

My number one piece of advice for effective exam preparation is to bin highlighters, and focus on re-writing notes as many times, and in as many ways, as possible. Just reading a text book or watching a video is not enough. In order to fully digest information, students need to read the text or watch the film, and then write it down – first, in long note form, then condensed into shorter notes, and finally transferred to memory cards containing key pieces of information only.

Be their coach, their supporter and their number one fan

When it comes to revision, there is often some confusion in where the role of the school ends, and where the parent's role begins. But the truth is that we are all in it together, teachers, parents, siblings; we are the coaches and supporters, getting our star player ready for their very own FA Cup Final. During busy home revision periods, it is important that parents make themselves as available and are as encouraging as possible. Is it possible to give a quick-fire quiz at the breakfast table?

Can half an hour be allocated after work for students to give a presentation on the topic they have gone over that day? Parents should be their audience, be their quizmaster, and encourage students to present their knowledge effectively and confidently because, after all, this is what they will need to be doing when they enter the exam room.

Show us what you've learnt

It can be overwhelming for a student to consider how they will refresh and remember everything they have learnt over two years, but one way to overcome this is to break topics down into bite-sized mini exams to make revision less daunting. When a student finishes revising a unit, it is good practice for them to either write themselves a mini test or design a presentation on the topic. Then, a few days or weeks later, they should go back to the topic, and use these revision methods to test their knowledge ahead of the main exam. If they can present the information effectively, or score highly in the test, then well done - the information has been clearly digested and understood, the student should be feeling exam confident.

How to switch on and when to switch off

If parents feel their child needs some extra encouragement to engage with their revision, it is good practice to set them small, achievable goals that can be celebrated, rather than looking at the big battle ahead. Simply telling them to "revise" isn't overly effective – because what does that actually mean? Instead, parents should give them a task, an achievable, quantifiable goal: "Do five mini-tests.", "Re-write two pages of notes from earlier.",

Another question I am often asked by parents is "how long should my child be revising for?". Of course, this again will vary from student to student but, if they are maintaining a similar pace as term time, then, during study leave, eight hours a day - comprising 8 x 45 minute study sessions, each followed by a 15 minute break – should be plenty of time spent revising at home. During the Easter holidays, there should, of course, be time allocated for study, but remember these weeks are important for relaxation and rest too.

Students can get very bogged down by the weight of exams and it is important to keep encouraging them to do the things they love as well, to get out and enjoy some fresh air and some exercise. At Gresham's we are very fortunate to be located on the edge of the beautiful North Norfolk coast – perfect for coastal walks, climbing or even occasionally a swim. But a stroll in a park, or even just a walk to the shops, will equally give your child some much needed headspace and a break from the desk. Encouraging children to take care of their health and wellbeing is so important, and hopefully these revision tips will help alleviate the anxiety that might be felt in the run up to exam season.