

## That's a Wrap!

5/26/2020

Most of the country is either finished with school or pulling into the home stretch. Here in the Jacksonville area, some kids are already done with school and others finish in the next week.

Congratulations! You made it!



Before you run off into the summer sunset, there's one more thing to do. Take a few minutes to record your observations about your child's learning.

Every year, you get a final report card that details not only your child's grades, but also includes some sort of indicator of overall progress that you can use to get a sense of areas to work on over the summer or during the next school year. You're not getting that this year, at least not in the way you're used to. You've been your child's teacher for the last few months, so you're actually the person who can best give that feedback.

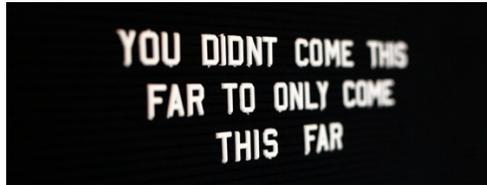
You've been in a unique position to observe your child's learning style. You've seen firsthand where they shine, and you've been the one to help them when they struggle.

You've seen their academic genius and you've seen them fail. You've now witnessed things that, in the past, you had only heard about, often days or weeks after they happened. You've been inside the vault and now there's no going back.

Whether homeschooling was a breeze, a nightmare, or somewhere in between, you've gained some valuable insights. You now have the firsthand knowledge you need in order to effectively advocate for your child when they go back to school. Yep, that's right, you're an insider.

BUT (yes, there's a but), your insider knowledge will work best if you record everything now while your memory is fresh, and you have all the evidence right in front of you. You need to document the areas where your child succeeded and the areas where they struggled. You've

had to be creative to motivate them and help them learn what they needed to learn this year. Now, write it down.



Write down what worked and what absolutely did not. Describe how your child responded to certain learning approaches or different subjects. Record how your child responded to taking breaks during the day, going outside or doing physical activity. Did these things affect their focus or motivation? Note how your child responded to your teaching style versus your partner/spouse's style.

Write it all down. Be specific and don't be afraid to include details. When it's time for your child to go back to school, share your observations with the school (teacher, guidance counselor, special education coordinator, etc.). If you feel that your child needs accommodations, you'll already have the data you need to advocate for the creation of a 504 Plan or IEP (Individualized Education Plan). What's more, you'll have ideas for specific interventions that you know worked for your child at home.

Of course, some things you did at home won't translate to the school setting. But, the ideas behind them will. For instance, let's say your daughter worked better when she was in her room alone than when she was around her siblings. At school, she won't be able to work in a room alone, but she may be able to wear noise canceling headphones during seatwork.

Your son may not be able to take a dance break after a particularly difficult assignment, but he can go get a drink of water to take a break at school. He still gets to stretch his legs and move around after a mentally strenuous task.

Your high schooler may be able to create her schedule so that her hardest classes occur at the time of day when she is most awake and able to pay attention. Your middle schooler may have gotten an attitude with you or tried to take a video game break when he was frustrated or when he just couldn't stay on task. Instead of doing that at school, he can receive intervention aimed at helping him advocate for himself when he is having trouble focusing or understanding a task.

Do you see why your observations are so important? You can walk into your child's school and ask for what they need. After being your child's teacher, you have more direct experience to back up your requests. You can give direct examples of learning tasks that caused problems and the interventions you used at home to address any issues.



As a bonus, you also have insider information to crack the code of the “How was your day?” conversation. Instead of asking that question and getting a response of “Fine” or “Good,” you now know specific questions to ask, like, “What class was easiest/hardest for you to focus in today?” or “What did you do in your reading intervention with Ms. X today?” or “Were you able to learn better before or after recess today?” Your child’s responses to these questions lead to easy follow up questions and may result in your child spontaneously providing more details. Do you see how those questions will give you a lot more information about your child’s day? You may actually have a conversation about school that leaves you with knowledge you can use.

So, you’re on board for writing down your observations, right? Great! To help you organize your thoughts, click below for a handy printable, Observations from the School Year, that outlines useful areas of observation. It also has space for you to include any observations that don’t neatly fall into categories. Feel free to answer all the questions, or just the ones that apply.