Homework Help for Parents Lacking Duct Tape

Local News

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SEATTLE - Homework does not have to be a battle between kids and parents. At a workshop in Seattle today, after-school care providers are learning strategies to help kids of all ages with their homework assignments. The trainer, Karen Summers with School's Out Washington, says parents can use the same tips. Adults can and should be involved in their kids' homework, as long as they do not do it for them, she says.

Part of the adult's role is to encourage a routine and good work habits that help the child learn responsibility, Summers explains.

"It's important to help children learn how to go about doing a task like homework - how to organize themselves, how to decide what order to do things in. The other critical piece is how much time it takes to do a homework task."

Summers describes her approach as "ask, listen and encourage," and she says it works - even with older teens. She recommends sitting down with kids of any age and talking them through a tough assignment. That starts by asking questions that don't have "yes or no" answers, she suggests.

"Sometimes those questions are reflective questions, meaning we're asking children to think about something, trying to find the thread. So ask 'What do you already know? Tell me what you already know and let's build on that.'"

Summers says it's too easy to complain about homework on a busy evening or weekend. Instead, she cautions adults to keep their comments positive and to not hesitate to contact the teacher for ideas. She says homework should be seen as part of a bigger picture, and making it more of a partnership can strengthen the relationship between parent and child.