

## **Giving Your Child the Excellence Edge Discussion Guide**

### **Introduction**

What do the words “success” and “achievement” mean to you?

How does your perspective on “success” and “achievement” differ from your child’s perspective? How are they the same?

What results do you hope to achieve by reading and applying the principles in this book?

### **Chapter 1: Your Child’s Best Teacher is You**

Think back to your parents’ attitudes toward education and learning. What messages did you receive from them about the importance of your education? Are these the same messages you’d like to pass on to your own children, or do you want to do things differently?

What are some of the obstacles that cause parents to hesitate getting involved in their children’s education? Have you experienced any of these obstacles?

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the following:

Public schools

Private schools

Charter/Magnet schools

Homeschooling

Which of the above schooling options do you prefer for your own children? Why?

### **Chapter 2: A Quality Producer**

Think about a time when you were impressed by the quality of a product or service. Describe the hallmarks of quality that impressed you.

Now think of a time when you were disappointed by a lack of quality. What was missing?

In what ways will your child benefit by learning to produce quality work?

Do you feel that setting high standards for quality puts too much pressure on a child? Why or why not?

What are some practical ways that you can motivate your child to improve the quality of his or her work, at home and at school?

Optional: Try the Family Activity on pgs. 30-31 and share your experience with the group.

### **Chapter 3: An Independent Learner**

Why is it important for parents to help children connect what they're learning to life beyond the classroom? What are some practical ways to do this?

Do you agree with the author that your role as a parent is to work yourself out of a job (pg. 37)? Are there any hidden "payoffs" to keeping a child dependent on you?

What are some ways you can encourage your child to set goals, monitor his progress, accept constructive criticism, work with diligence, and respond to problems? Is your *own* performance weak in any of these areas? How can you and your child work together and support each other to strengthen the weaker areas?

Is your child a leader or a follower? How has he or she demonstrated this tendency? How does it affect their willingness to shoulder responsibility?

Optional: Try the Family Activity on pg. 46 and share your experience with the group.

### **Chapter 4: A Creative Thinker**

What comes to your mind when you hear the word "creative"? Would you call yourself a creative person? How does your definition compare to the author's description of creativity (pgs. 48-52)?

What's the difference between being creative and being artistic?

Which of the four elements of creativity (fluency, flexibility, originality, sensitivity) have you observed in your child?

What is the biggest barrier to creative thought (pg. 52)? How has this barrier worked in your own life, and that of your child? What can you do to overcome it?

Optional: Choose a problem or challenging situation with your child (either from real life or the Family Activity on pg. 58) and help him or her to work through it using the creative problem solving techniques listed on pgs. 53-54. Were there any places where you got stuck in the process?

### **Chapter 5: A Critical Thinker**

This chapter opens with a story about the author's son, who was just starting to learn how to reason. Have any similar conversations taken place in your house?

Do you recognize any of the following examples of flawed thinking in yourself or your children?

Either/Or Thinking

Avoiding the Issue

Using Absolutes

Using a Double Standard

Shifting the Burden of Proof

## Irrational Appeal

If so, what are some ways to counteract these sloppy kinds of arguments?

Review the “five fallacies” listed on pgs. 66-67 (anecdotal evidence, *argumentum ad hominem*, *argumentum ad misericordiam*, *argumentum ad verecundiam*, *argumentum ad lazarum*). Have you ever seen these fallacies at work in the news media? In books? During an election year? Watch the media with a critical eye toward discerning these fallacies when you hear them. Discuss them with your children.

What are some ways we can recognize and believe that something is the truth?

Optional: Introduce your family to the joy of reading with the Family Activity on pgs. 72-75, and share your experience with the group.

## **Chapter 6: An Information Manager**

What are some of the factors that make information-gathering such a daunting task these days?

As an adult, are you adept at acquiring, analyzing, recording, organizing, and synthesizing information? Are there areas where you could improve?

What are some practical ways you can help children manage the information they need?

What are some cautions should we give our children about finding reliable sources of information?

## **Chapter 7: A Cooperative Learner**

What are the essential qualities of a cooperative learner? Have you recognized any of these qualities in your children?

What are some situations where cooperation is might be important than leadership? And vice versa?

In what ways will learning to work cooperatively benefit your child in adult life?

What are some things you could do as a family to develop a cooperative working and learning style?

Optional: Try the Family Activity on pg. 105 and share your experience with the group.

## **Chapter 8: An Effective Communicator**

On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your effectiveness as a communicator? Why?

Why is it so important for parents to use a respectful tone of voice in front of children?

How can we improve our listening skills?

What are some practical ways you can give your children practice in spoken and written communication?

Some say that the art of healthy debate is being lost in our culture, as people who disagree with each other resort to insults, name-calling, and accusations of intolerance instead of respectful, reasoned debate. Why do you think this is? How can we encourage our children to debate instead of arguing or avoiding confrontation?

Optional: Try the Family Activity on pg. 122 and share your experience with the group.

### **Chapter 9: A Confident Leader**

Do you consider yourself a leader or a follower? In what situations do you tend to lead? To follow?

According to the author, what are some of the marks of a good leader? Do any of these surprise you? Are some of them different from what the media or the culture portray a “leader” to be?

How can we help our children develop the qualities of a strong leader?

Optional: Try the Family Activity on pgs. 132-133 and share your experience with the group.

### **Chapter 10: An Efficient Time Manager**

What forces “conspire” to keep us from managing our time effectively?

Why must effective time management begin with determining and prioritizing your family’s values?

Review the steps to setting priorities listed on pg. 138. Which are you already doing? Which can you commit to do?

What are some ways we can help our children learn to meet deadlines?

What role does entertainment play in your family’s schedule? Would you like to make any changes in this area?

Optional: Try the Family Activity on pgs. 148-149 and share your experience with the group.

### **Chapter 11: A Self-Assessor**

What are the causes and effects of the self-fulfilling prophecy in a child’s development? Have you observed self-fulfilling prophecies at work in your own life?

What are some signs that a child is becoming adept at self-assessment?

What are some obstacles to self-assessment, and how can they be overcome?

How will being a skilled self-assessor benefit your child in adulthood?

Optional: Try the Family Activity on pgs. 161-162 and share your experience with the group.