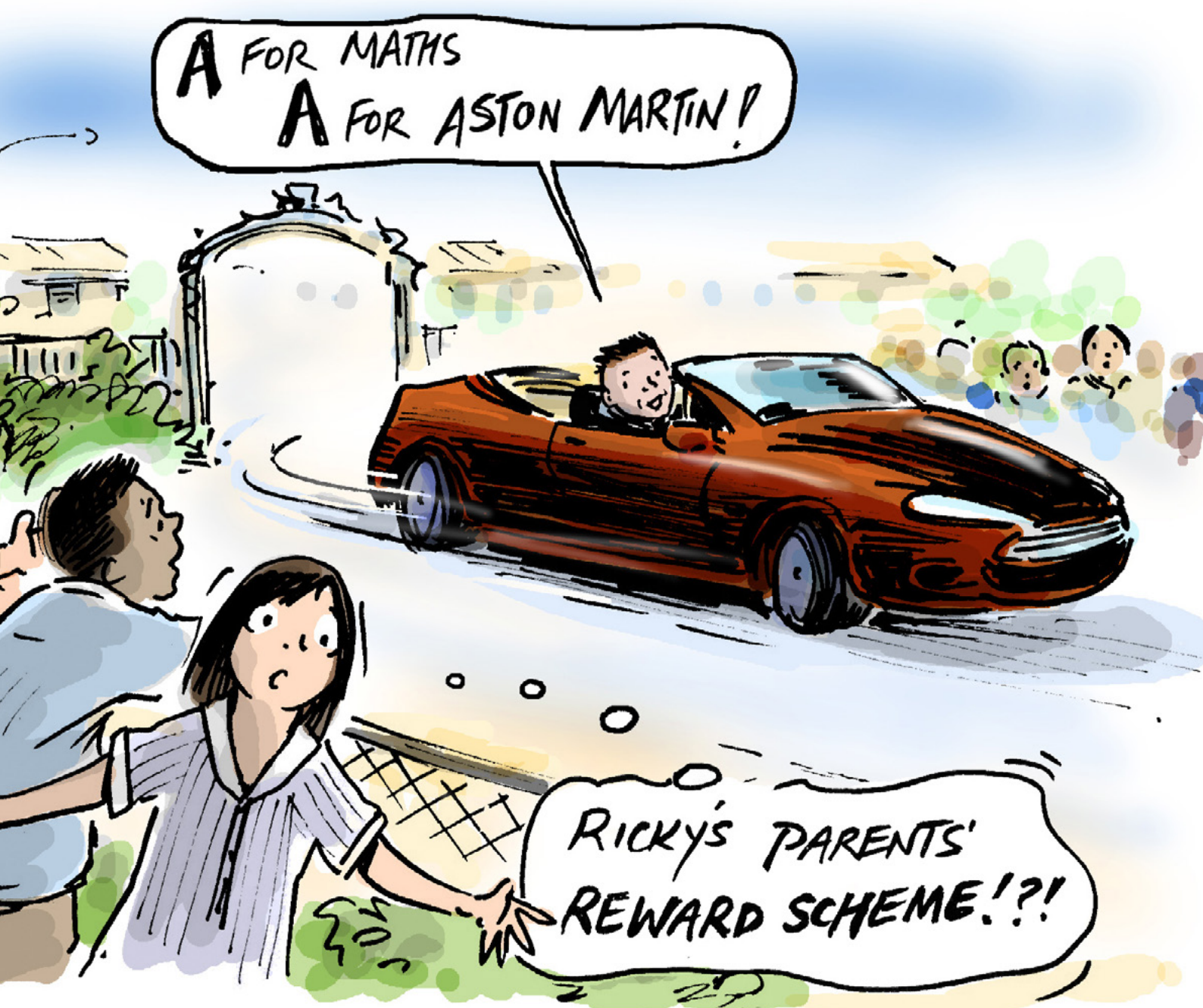


What Makes School Students Improve?



Student Learning is Complex

Improving student learning is a complex subject. The school education sector is awash with pedagogical theories, neuroscience findings and best-practice teaching strategies.

One study claims to have discovered 'the best' way to teach children, yet the next claims the exact opposite! How confusing ... for teachers and parents alike.

Most people with a business background cannot understand why the confusion exists. Surely there must be a tried-and-tested 'best way' since schools have been around for a very long time, they reason. If we can generate ever increasing efficiencies and profits in business, what makes schooling more difficult?

This is a fair question, what does make schooling more difficult? After all, schools input an unrefined product (i.e. young children) and output a polished final product (i.e. smart young adults). Right?

'Smart young adults' is an admirable objective. However, most parents also want their children to leave school happy, well-adjusted, socially-equipped, physically healthy, self-confident, resilient and future-ready. Now, the job of the school just became *much* harder.

In addition to this list of expectations, there are also external factors at play. Let's be honest, schools don't operate in a vacuum. Some families move during their children's schooling. Sometimes even overseas. Other times students experience socially destructive behaviours, such as bullying, which impacts on their learning. The extent to which parents support learning at home also impacts on a student's education.



Adding to the complexity, students are changing at different rates and at different times during their school years. One student 'gets' subtraction in Year 2 whereas another in Year 4. Yet by Year 6, this second student is the more advanced mathematician!

Students aren't products to be processed
- they're unique human beings, each with

their own quirks, idiosyncrasies and giftings. You can't put students into neatly defined categories for shipping into the post-school world. It simply doesn't work that way.

Having explained the challenges of educating students, let's now consider what doesn't make school students improve academically (before moving onto what does).

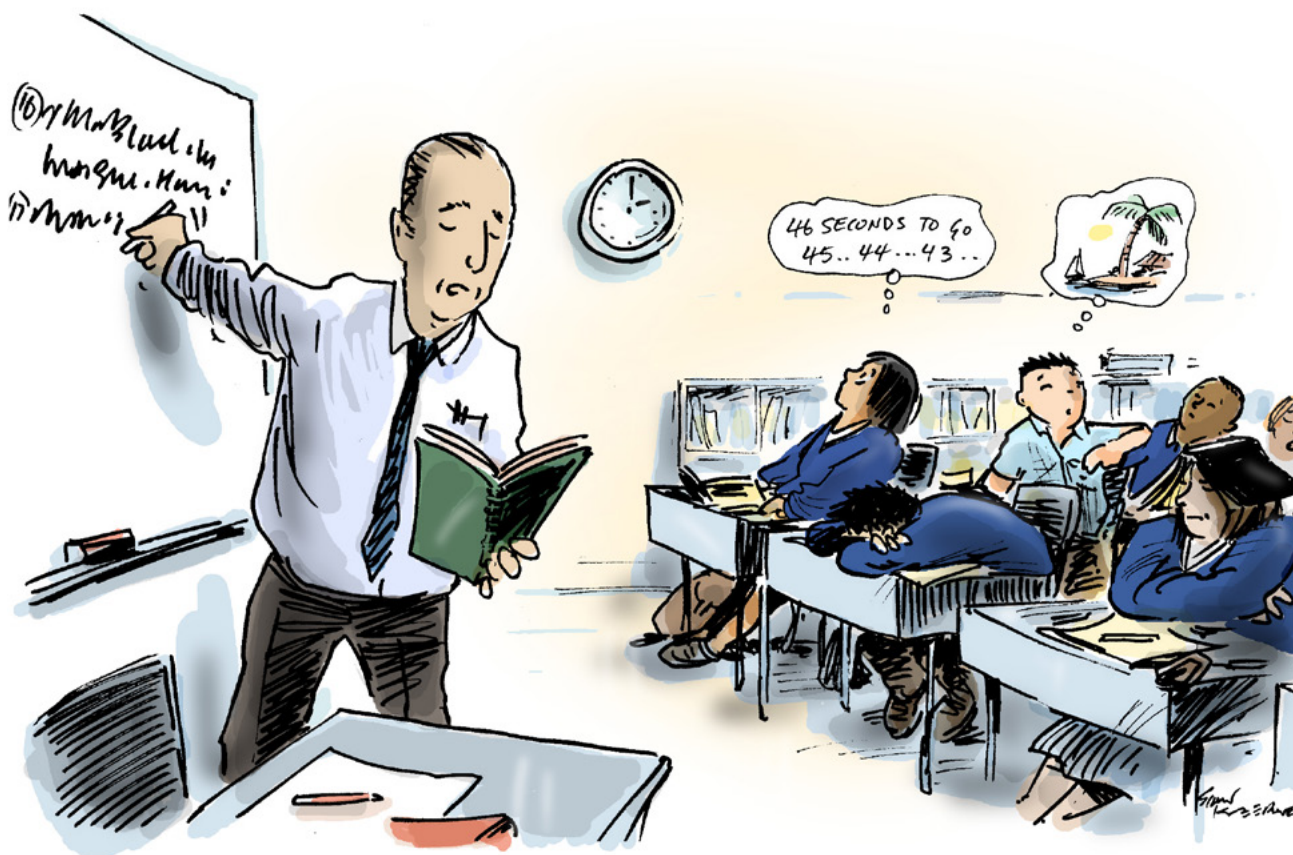
What Doesn't Make School Students Improve?

It helps to know what's been tried already and doesn't work before looking more closely at what does.

Teachers can actually *prevent* learning improvement. You see, teachers are the leaders inside a classroom. Leaders gain the support of their followers (in this case, students) through influence, inspiration and innovation.

Students typically don't learn in situations where their teacher isn't leading well. The best teachers use their influence with students to inspire learning while adopting innovative practices.

A teacher who doesn't have high expectations for his or her students will in turn encourage students to have low expectations.



On the flipside, a teacher who sets high expectations for students is implicitly saying to the students: “I believe in you”.

An innovative teacher will be constantly implementing a range of learning methods based on the needs of the students. They will teach outside some days, use technology in lessons where appropriate, move students seamlessly between individualised self-directed learning and collaborative group work.

Students struggle to learn when there is no variety in lessons. If the teacher stands out the front of the class and ‘chalks and talks’ everyday, students are snoozing. Mentally at least.

Likewise, students with limited parental support for their education will typically struggle to

learn. Parents who are reading with their children most nights, regularly asking about how their children are going at school and helping with homework when appropriate set their children up for success at school.

Lastly, a defeatist attitude by either the student, teacher or parents (think of the parents in the movie *Matilda*) will prohibit learning. In fact, a defeatist attitude will probably wipe out any prospect of learning completely. A defeatist says, “I can’t do it”, “I don’t know”, “It can’t be done”. If a teacher allows this attitude to fester, it will have devastating consequences for the student’s learning and the culture of improvement in the entire classroom.

Let’s now look at what actually makes students improve their results.

What Makes School Students Improve?

Most school students learn every day at school. Sometimes the learning occurs in the classroom, sometimes in the playground, sometimes in the library. But learn they do. Most days.

Learning improvement is most likely to occur in a context with the following features:

01 → PURPOSE

Students need to understand the purpose of learning at a macro and micro level. Is the purpose of school-based learning to get a good job after school? Acquire lots of knowledge? Become a better person? At a micro level, what is the purpose of this specific lesson? What does the teacher hope that the students will learn today in this lesson?

02 → EXPECTATIONS

Learning improvement flourishes in a context where the teacher (and parents) have high expectations for the students. Expect little, receive little. Expect much, receive much.

03 → GOALS & REWARDS

Linked to purpose, it’s wise to have students set goals for their learning and corresponding rewards for achieving those goals. This will be explained in greater detail in the next section because it’s particularly important.

04 → ENCOURAGEMENT

Students thrive on encouragement. As a handy rule, teachers and parents should speak positive affirmations 90% of the time and corrections the remaining 10%. So “You can do it”, “I believe in you”, “Great work” should be heard by students the vast majority of the time. Only when needed should the teacher say, “Not like that, like this” or “Try harder”.

05 → INTENTIONALITY

Good learning environments are intentionally designed to maximise student engagement. In addition, the teacher is intentional about lesson structures, use of resources and student relationships. They turn up each day with intention instead of simply going through the motions.

06 → VARIETY

As the overused saying goes, “Variety is the spice of life”. And this is evermore true when it comes to education. Teachers should be changing contexts, lesson formats, resources and timings to mix things up and keep the students engaged and working hard to improve on previous results.

07 → PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Parents working in partnership with teachers is the ideal context in which learning improvement occurs. Parents play a major role in supporting their children to be enthusiastic learners. A positive attitude shared by teachers and parents toward learning is quickly ‘caught’ by children. Parents and teachers are powerful role models.

Lastly, what will result in the most number of students learning in any given school year is a team of teachers committed to working with students, and importantly their parents, to improve the students’ academic results. And isn’t that what every parent wants?



The Best Way to Motivate Your Child

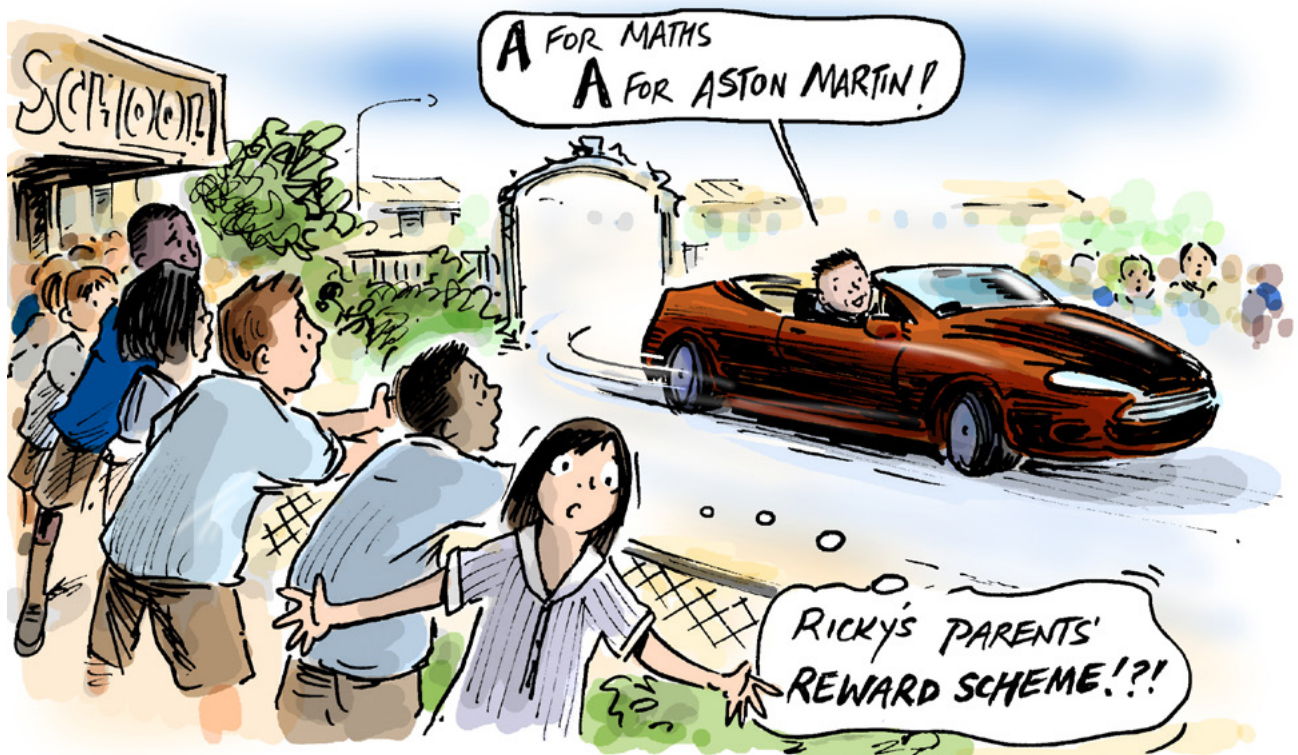
Frankly, motivating students to improve is tricky. This is because learning involves one human, teaching other humans something of value. And those humans involved are all [very] different and changing constantly.

There is a tried and proven way to motivate students however. And the good news is that it works with little ones and senior students alike. It's a powerful motivator for humans and has worked since the beginning of time. What is it?

REWARD!

Yes, I know, you've already heard that one before. Perhaps your mind went to bribing your children to tidy their rooms. But there's more to it than that!

Like most things, using reward to motivate your child at school depends on how you use it. If you use it well, your child will do well, but use it poorly and you'll feel perpetually frustrated.



How to Use Rewards to Successfully Motivate Your Child

Let's consider the keys to successfully implementing rewards with your child to improve his or her academic results at school.

Using age-appropriate rewards are critical to motivating your child. The gold star chart starts to lose impact once your child starts school. You need to be constantly discovering what your child really desires and suggesting those things or experiences as rewards.

Scaling rewards based on effort, not outcome, will develop a work ethic in your child that will serve him or her well beyond school. What's more, rewards should be scaled based on the amount of effort required. If the goal is particularly challenging then the reward should be appropriately large.

A mixture of rewards, both short and long range, should be encouraged. However, younger children should be predominately focused on short-term rewards which are ramped up as the child progresses through the year levels.

Student-led rewards should be the objective. You want your child to work with you in setting goals and corresponding rewards from the start, but their degree of initiative taken during this process should increase with every passing year.

Reward stretch goals not incremental improvement as your child matures. Most children will 'naturally improve' as they grow up and so you don't want to reward this type of improvement. Your intention is to reward extra effort.



Scaling rewards based on effort, not outcome, will develop a work ethic in your child that will serve him or her well beyond school.

Visual reminders of the rewards act as a powerful daily motivator. If your child wants a new computer game as a reward for achieving a higher maths grade, then encourage him or her to cut out a picture of the computer game from a catalogue and tac it to their bedroom wall.

In sum, it is important to take a long-term view with rewards. This isn't a gimmick. And it isn't a technique that will only work with young children. It works for all human beings, including adults. Apply it consistently over the years and your child will thrive at school, and in later life.

Australian Christian College (ACC) is an Australia-wide network of 9 schools that inspires improvement in our students as evidenced by the real-life stories below.



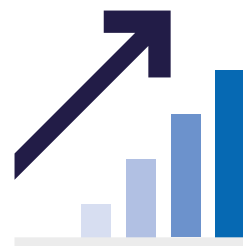
GABRIELLA TARGETT

"I love ACC because the teachers are patient and kind and have helped me improve my writing." In less than a year, Gabriella's spelling has improved by 1½ year levels. Overall, her English, Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar have all significantly improved.



"Gabriella has moved forward in leaps and bounds since the start of the year. Having struggled with reading and writing she has made great progress."

Samantha Saltmarsh (Mum)



HTEE MOO

"Mrs Woodman helps us with spelling: if we don't know the word, what it means or how to spell it." Htee Moo feels good about his progress. Before he couldn't spell and now he is getting 100% almost every week for the spelling quiz. He believes that he will continue improving.



"We are very proud of Htee Moo's progress in English. He is really applying himself with support from his wonderful teacher."

Hta Nah & Moo Ra Paw (Dad & Mum)



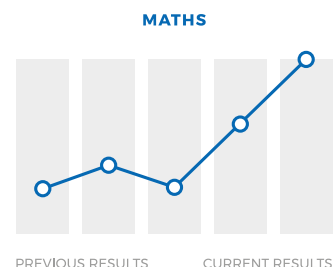
LEAH BEAMISH

"Before I came to this school, I couldn't even do times tables. Maths is easier now, I have improved heaps this year". Leah has been in the lower bands on NAPLAN in previous years with her Maths, but this year her NAPLAN showed that she improved by two year levels within the one year.



"I am so excited by Leah's amazing improvement in maths. I was delighted to read her recent NAPLAN report. I am thankful to the teachers at ACC."

Kelly Beamish (Mum)



While ACC is in 5 states of Australia, we are new to Tasmania and so we are making a risk-free guarantee to local families.

Try us out for a full school year and if we don't improve your child's academic results to your satisfaction we will refund your first year's school fees.

This offer is only valid for the first year of your child's enrolment. Some basic admission conditions do apply, but they are best explained when you visit for a campus tour. There is no-obligation on your part by booking a tour.



"You'll be amazed what your child can achieve by engaging in learning every day. Results tend to improve rather drastically."

David Noble - Principal

ACC Hobart

7 Golf Links Rd, Geilston Bay TAS 7015

Phone: (03) 6243 6113

hobart@acc.edu.au

[BOOK HOBART PRINCIPAL'S TOUR](#)



"At Australian Christian College we're really focused on helping students strive to improve their academic results."

Marty Howell - Principal

ACC Launceston

103-105 Georgetown Rd, Newnham TAS 7248

Phone: (03) 6326 8885

launceston@acc.edu.au

[BOOK LAUNCESTON PRINCIPAL'S TOUR](#)



"Students are encouraged to focus on improving upon their last result. Our teachers are cheering on and supporting our students."

Ron West - Principal

ACC Burnie

30 Seabrook Rd, Somerset TAS 7322

Phone: (03) 6435 1128

burnie@acc.edu.au

[BOOK BURNIE PRINCIPAL'S TOUR](#)



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