



Achieving Excellence Through Education



## Armenta Learning Academy

### What to do When, and Why, Students Tend to Shut Down

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Parents frequently ask my fellow educators and me for tips on how to deal with their students' attitudes towards learning. I make sure to point out that sometimes it has a lot more to do with what is causing the attitude, rather than the attitude itself. Parents and educators alike need to learn to tune-in to their students and the student's individual needs. Students can become overwhelmed and frustrated with difficult tasks. At this point, it is up to the parent, educator, and/or role model to intervene. Encourage students, assist where help is needed, and avoid "shutdown" by achieving success! Here are some warning flags, tips and strategies, and other useful advice to help along the way.

#### **When It Happens, Students May Be:**

- Overwhelmed with too many task demands
- Feeling a lack of respect from important adults
- Overwhelmed because the task has too many parts
- Confused because language is too complex
- Afraid of looking foolish
- Worried because a teacher or parent talks too fast
- Afraid of being criticized
- Unsure how to ask for the help they need
- Lacking self esteem
- Sick or tired
- Confused overall



#### **Signs of Frustration & Shut Down**

- Deep sighs and/or groans
- Squirming in seat
- Hand continually on head (afraid to look up)
- Blank look on face
- May make comments such as: "This is dumb!" or "Why do I have to do this?"
- Quiet and not asking for help when needed



#### **When That Happens:**

Students have less energy available for listening, performing, or organizing

- SHUT DOWN
  - Learning requires effort, especially for a child who learns differently
  - Even a small shift in a child's physical or emotional comfort can dramatically reduce the brain's ability to make efficient connections with the learning process

#### **Techniques That Help:**

- Encouragement / Use positive feedback for even the smallest of accomplishments



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- Get involved and make the learning situation more authentic and meaningful
- A motor break
- A snack or water break to fuel the brain
- Working area that is their own and without distractions
- No longer than 45 minutes on the same task, so that it does not become frustrating and tedious
- A quiet minute
- Respect from significant adults (avoid embarrassing them)
- Change of environment
- Change of subject matter or material

### Other Strategies:

- Break tasks into small, manageable units
- Observe when shut-down occurs and try to discover why
- Keep open communication with your children
- Talk openly about what is difficult and what or how they would like to learn
- Identify child's strengths and weaknesses by brainstorming with teachers
- Help child recognize his/her patterns or processing and learning
- Interpret child's nonverbal cues and accommodate needs as appropriate
- Let your child know it is okay to ask for help and it is not a weakness, but instead it is a strength.



- \* Remember, a child who feels understood and valued is a productive child and develops an "I can" attitude! We know how good it is as an adult to feel confident, assured and ready to take on the world! It is an amazing gift we can give our children and one that they can pass down to their own children someday. It is a valuable experience and lesson for life that keeps on going!



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