

# Education News

## Hard Work: A Head Start On High School

(NAPSA)—Many parents, students and teachers may be intrigued to learn that in a nationwide survey on what should be taught in schools, “persistence and follow-through” received 93 percent approval as did “industry or hard work.”

Far too frequently, however, children stop caring about their education, and often this transformation is seen around the ages of 12 or 13, when students rely less and less on parents for direction and more and more on peers.

To understand this phenomenon, says Mary Mokris, Ph.D., education consultant with Kumon Math & Reading Centers, it may be useful to recognize the four natural stages many children experience as they discover the relationship between effort, achievement and ability:

**Stage 1**—Children 3 to 5 years old believe that by simply trying, they can accomplish anything.

**Stage 2**—Between 6 and 10, children begin recognizing people’s strengths and weaknesses, though they tend to continue to believe that hard work will produce success.

**Stage 3**—Between 10 and 12, the emphasis shifts from effort to ability. At this pivotal point, many realize that some students appear to succeed with little effort and begin resenting the fact that their own success was hard earned.

**Stage 4**—Students 13 and older begin to equate success with innate ability only. They think only the most able succeed. Their explanation for failure is not lack of effort but lack of ability. Many choose not to try at all.

While not all children stop try-



**Teens and 'tweens are often more influenced by their peers than by their parents when it comes to attitudes towards school.**

ing, many psychologists believe it essential to promote the value of effort while children are still in stages 1 and 2. Dr. Mokris recommends parents do this by praising their children, teaching them patience as well as good work habits and time-management skills.

One place for help, she says, is Kumon. The center really is about getting a head start on high school math and reading, while students are still in elementary or junior high school. It helps parents set goals such as having math students reach algebra before junior high, while helping children learn to value persistent effort for its own sake. The pupils learn to sustain an effort even when they think the task is boring, and they learn to do work not only when it’s fun and easy but also when it’s challenging. That can help pave the road to success for older students by helping them regain their lost confidence.

It’s one way parents can give children the best opportunity to learn and succeed.