



Helping Your Child Improve In Their Academics

Don L'Amour Chimhanda

For Parents Who Believe

in Their Child's Potential



Summarised Blog Version



Student Version



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Foreword

You know that sinking feeling when you see a report card with disappointing grades. Deep down, you know your child is capable of so much more, but... life has gotten in the way. Maybe they're struggling with focus, confidence, or just the right support. You want to help them unlock their full potential, but you're not sure how. That's where this guide comes in. Inside, we'll walk through proven

strategies to help your child achieve the grades they deserve—without

frustration, guesswork, or overwhelm.

Let's get started.

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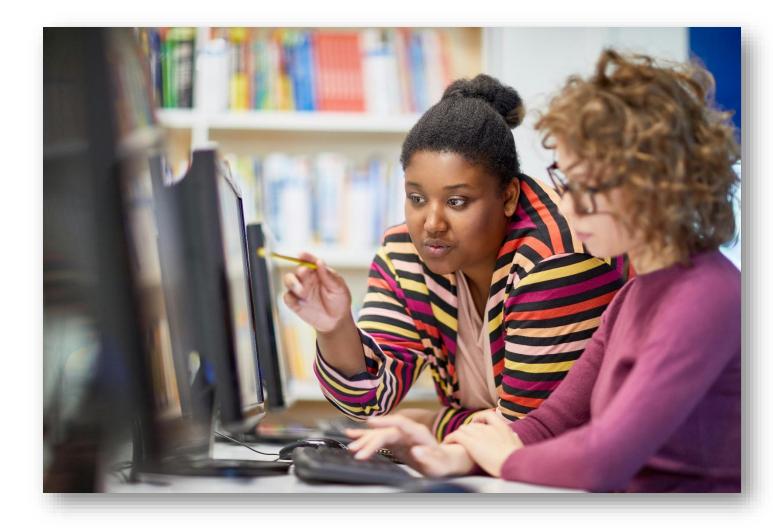
Introduction

Seeing your child struggle with academics can be an overwhelming and emotional experience. No parent should have to endure the heartbreaking mix of helplessness and frustration.



This booklet aims to cure that helplessness and provide you with a toolkit of strategies you can use to help your child improve in their academics, especially mathematics. Don't worry — these strategies are simple to understand and easy to implement. They are designed to deliver maximum results with a manageable level of effort on your part. Here is an overview of the strategies:

- 1. Provide unconditional support
- 2. Help them build study systems
- 3. Help them set SMART goals
- 4. Get them a tutor



Provide unconditional support

Support can make a world of difference, and often, the simplest way to provide it is through encouraging words. However, the pain and frustration of watching your child struggle can sometimes lead parents to express their emotions through negative comments, even unintentionally.



It's completely understandable—you care deeply, and you want to emphasise the importance of education. But certain remarks, no matter how well-meaning, can discourage your child rather than motivate them. For instance, try to avoid comments such as:

- "Why aren't you more like Tom? He's getting good grades."
- "You should be excelling, considering everything I've provided for you."
- "Back in my day, we didn't have all these resources, we performed well. You have all this, and yet you struggle, why?"

These kinds of statements can create feelings of inadequacy or resentment, making it harder for your child to stay motivated and open to learning. Instead, by shifting to constructive and compassionate communication, you can help foster a more positive mindset. Through your words alone, you have the power to instil:

- * A growth mindset: Teaching your child that improvement is always possible, and that failure is not the end of the road. This is especially important for students with lower grades, as it helps them see challenges as opportunities to grow rather than as permanent setbacks.
- * A strong work ethic: Helping your child understand that success is not determined solely by being "naturally smart" but by how much effort and consistency they put into their studies. A good work ethic is a game-changer, especially for high school students aiming to improve.



So, how can you instil these mindsets? Empathy is key. With empathetic and encouraging statements, you can influence your child's belief in themselves and their potential for growth. Here are some examples:

* "I understand that maths can be challenging at times. However, if
you keep working through it and remain patient, it will eventually
become easier. Hard work always pays off."

(This reinforces both a growth mindset and the value of a good work ethic.)

* "I see you didn't get the grade you wanted in maths this term. What
do you think you could have done differently to improve it?"
(This promotes accountability and self-reflection, helping them take
ownership of their learning.)

I'm not suggesting you let them off the hook or reinforce the idea that they're victims of their circumstances. Accountability is crucial for growth. However, it's equally important to communicate in a way that doesn't undermine your goals with negativity.

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Help them build study systems

Words can be powerful, but they're not enough on their own to drive meaningful change. That's why having a well-structured study system is essential. A study system isn't just a timetable—it's a comprehensive plan paired with clear rules that ensure the timetable is used effectively and consistently.



Life gets busy. Between work and other commitments, it's impossible to keep your child's academics at the centre of your attention 24/7. At some point, your focus will inevitably shift to other priorities.

Without a proper study system in place, this can lead to setbacks, and you may find that your child's academic progress has taken a turn for the worse by the time you refocus on their studies. Thus, you need a study system to ensure progress, even in your absence.

Study system rules

Here are the essential rules I recommend for a study system to ensure its effectiveness:



1. Your child must have dedicated self-study time.

This is separate from class time, tutoring sessions, homework, or any studying done at school during the day. Self-study is a focused, self-directed effort that takes place at home after school hours.

2. Limit self-directed study to two hours a day, every day.

Two hours is the ideal balance—long enough to make meaningful progress but short enough to maintain focus and consistency. Anything more can lead to diminishing returns, as most students start to lose focus after the second hour. Additionally, two hours is sustainable and achievable daily. If needed, you could adjust this to one hour per day, but consistency is key.

3. Choose a consistent time slot.

Find a time slot that works for your child every day, such as 16:00 to 18:00. This regularity helps build a habit, making studying a natural part of their daily routine.

4. Split the two hours between two subjects.

Have your child study two different subjects during their self-study time one hour per subject. Avoid spending the entire two hours on a single subject, as this can lead to mental fatigue. The variety keeps their mind engaged and helps them make progress across multiple areas.

5. Predetermine the focus of each study session.

The topics or sections to be studied should be planned in advance preferably at the start of the week, on a day like Sunday. This avoids wasting time deciding what to study during the session itself and ensures the study time is used effectively.

6. Stick to the schedule—no exceptions or gamification.

When it's time to study, your child should study as planned. Avoid trying to "make up" for missed sessions by extending study time on other days (e.g., "You studied one hour yesterday, so you must study three hours today"). This approach undermines consistency and can lead to burnout. The study schedule should be created collaboratively with your child and followed consistently by both of you.

By following these rules, your child's study system will become a sustainable and effective routine, promoting steady academic progress without unnecessary stress.

Studying rules

Most students, particularly those in high school, don't actually know how to study effectively—though they might think they do. Many simply skim through material or glance over notes while listening to music, believing they're being productive. However, these habits often lead to shallow understanding and poor results.



The following study rules are designed to maximise focus, minimise distractions, and create an ideal study environment that promotes real learning and retention:

1. No music while studying.

Music, regardless of genre, is a distraction for most students. While some claim it helps them focus, research suggests that it divides attention, leading to less effective study sessions. To ensure full concentration, make it a rule that studying happens in silence.

2. No phone usage during study time.

Phones are a major source of distraction, thanks to the endless stream of notifications, social media, and messaging apps. Scrolling through a phone, even briefly, can derail an entire study session. During the designated twohour study slot, phones should be set aside completely. If necessary, have your child leave their phone in another room or enable "Do Not Disturb" mode.

3. Limit laptop or tablet use to study purposes only.

While devices like laptops and tablets can be valuable tools for studying whether it's accessing e-textbooks, watching educational videos, or using learning platforms—they should be used strictly for academic purposes. Avoid letting these devices become sources of distraction, like gaming or browsing unrelated content.

4. Study at a proper desk.

Studying should take place in a dedicated study space. This means no studying on the bed, couch, or sofa. Such environments promote relaxation and can lead to drowsiness or lack of focus. A desk with a comfortable chair and good lighting provides the ideal setup for productive study sessions.

5. Avoid studying late at night.

Night-time studying is often counterproductive because students are typically tired and less focused by the end of the day. Instead of learning effectively, they're more likely to zone out or go through the motions without real engagement. Encourage your child to study earlier in the day when their mind is fresh and alert.

6. Use the right tools and techniques for each subject.

Effective studying varies depending on the subject. For example, mathematics might require practising past papers, while science may benefit from watching visual explanations on YouTube. Work with your child's teacher or tutor to identify the best strategies and tools for each subject. Understanding whether your child should focus on textbook reading, interactive resources, or problem-solving exercises can make a significant difference in their outcomes.

Why These Rules Work

These rules create an environment where your child can focus fully on their studies without unnecessary distractions. By following them, they'll not only improve their academic performance but also develop better study habits that will serve them well throughout their educational journey.



The Timetable

Let's say your child is studying Pure Mathematics, Probability & Statistics, Physics, and Chemistry.

To create an effective and organised study routine, you can use tools like Google Calendar to set up your schedule. An ideal schedule for their study routine might look like this:

Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
16:00 -	Pure maths	Physics	Pure maths	Physics	Pure maths	Physics	Pure maths
17:00	Chapter 3:	Chapter 1:	Chapter 3:	Chapter 1:	Chapter 3:	Chapter 1:	Chapter 3:
	Coordinate	Forces	Coordinate	Forces	Coordinate	Forces	Coordinate
	geometry		geometry		geometry		geometry
17:00 -	Chemistry	Prob & Stats	Chemistry	Prob & Stats	Chemistry	Prob & Stats	Prob & Stats
18:00	Chapter 3:	Chapter 3:	Chapter 3:	Chapter 3:	Chapter 3:	Chapter 3:	Chapter 3:
	Atoms and	probability	Atoms and	probability	Atoms and	probability	probability
	Molecules		Molecules		Molecules		

With this simple plan in place, your child now dedicates 14 hours every week to focused self-study. The beauty of this system is that it promotes independence—your child studies consistently without you having to remind, command, or nag them. This framework is designed to set them up for success with minimal ongoing involvement from you.

Your Role as a Parent

As a parent, your role in creating the study system is straightforward.

Set up the system:

During the first week, help your child establish the study routine and ensure they understand how it works. Guide them through creating a schedule and sticking to it.

Monitor the system initially:

In the beginning, you'll need to be more hands-on. Check in daily to confirm that your child is following the plan as intended.

Step back gradually:

Once the system is running smoothly, you can reduce your involvement to weekly check-ins and eventually monthly reviews.



The key is to let your child feel ownership of their study system. Avoid micromanaging them. Sitting with them as they study is only necessary during the first week or until the habit is firmly established. Once the routine is in place, shift your role to one of support from a distance.

Questions to Ask During Check-Ins

To ensure progress without hovering, you can have quick discussions after their study sessions. Questions like these can help you gauge how things are going:

"What did you learn in Pure Mathematics today?"

"Where did you write it down?"

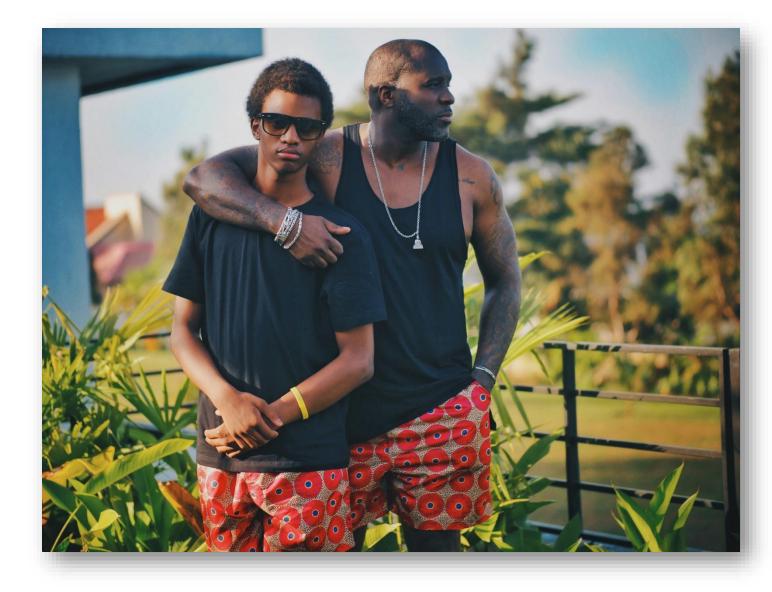
"Did you face any challenges during your study session?"



These conversations are most useful early on. As time goes by and the system becomes second nature, you'll need to check in less frequently, allowing your child to manage their studies independently.

Respecting Study Time

One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to guard their study time fiercely. If the chosen study slot is 16:00 to 18:00, ensure that nothing interrupts this period. Avoid assigning errands, chores, or other activities during this time. Treat their study time as sacred—it's their golden opportunity to focus and grow academically.



Equally important, resist the urge to impose additional study sessions outside the agreed schedule. Overloading them with extra, unscheduled study times can make them feel like they don't control their own system, undermining their sense of ownership and motivation.

Why This System Works

Without a structured study system, many parents find themselves constantly telling their children to study, often with poor results. Either their child doesn't study at all without prompting, or they study inconsistently and ineffectively. This system eliminates that struggle by creating a routine that is easy to follow and sustainable.

By investing the time to set up this system, you're giving your child the tools they need to take responsibility for their own education. This not only improves their grades but also teaches them valuable life skills like discipline and time management.



In summary

- * Set up the system and ensure it's followed during the first week.
- * Gradually step back, allowing your child to take control.
- * Guard their study time and avoid unnecessary interruptions or changes to the schedule.
- * Check in occasionally to confirm that progress is being made.

By doing this, you empower your child to succeed academically while freeing yourself from the constant need to monitor or intervene. A welldesigned study system is a win-win for both you and your child, fostering independence and ensuring steady progress. So, start building that system today and watch the transformation unfold!

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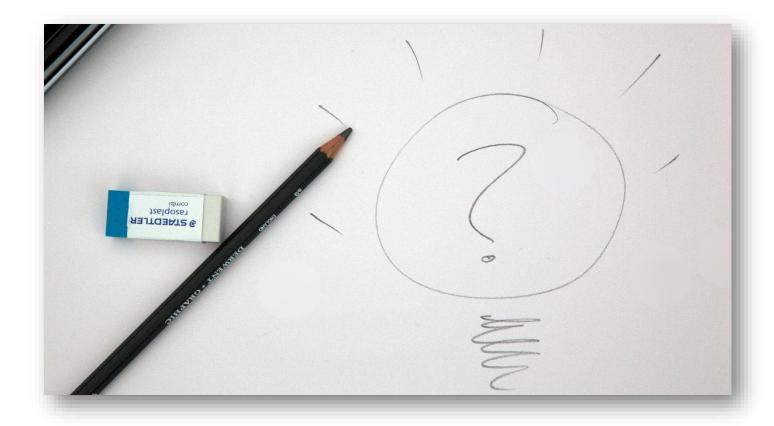
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Help Them Set Strategic Goals

When I talk about setting strategic goals, I don't mean drafting a 60-page

document for each subject or coming up with an overly complex plan.



Strategic goals are about creating **SMART goals**—specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely—and working collaboratively with your child to develop a plan for how to meet those goals. This process helps you track their progress throughout the year, identify areas for improvement, and intervene effectively when needed.

Let's walk through an example to illustrate how strategic goal setting works.

Why Setting Strategic Goals Matters

Without clear goals, it's easy for both you and your child to feel aimless. Vague ambitions like "do better next term" or "aim for an A" don't provide actionable steps, benchmarks, or a way to measure progress. Strategic goals break down big objectives into manageable parts, giving your child a clear path forward while building their confidence incrementally.



Imagine last year in Term 3, your child scored 35% in mathematics. Perhaps you were shocked by the result and hadn't realised things were that bad. Instead of responding with unrealistic or vague goals like, "Next term, I want to see grades in the 80s or 90s," you can use strategic goal setting to create a more achievable roadmap.

Breaking Down the Goals

The first step in goal-setting is to focus on improvement over time, rather than aiming for an overnight transformation. Let's say your ultimate goal is for your child to achieve an 85% grade in mathematics by the end of the year. Instead of jumping straight to that number, break the goal into smaller, incremental milestones that feel realistic and achievable.

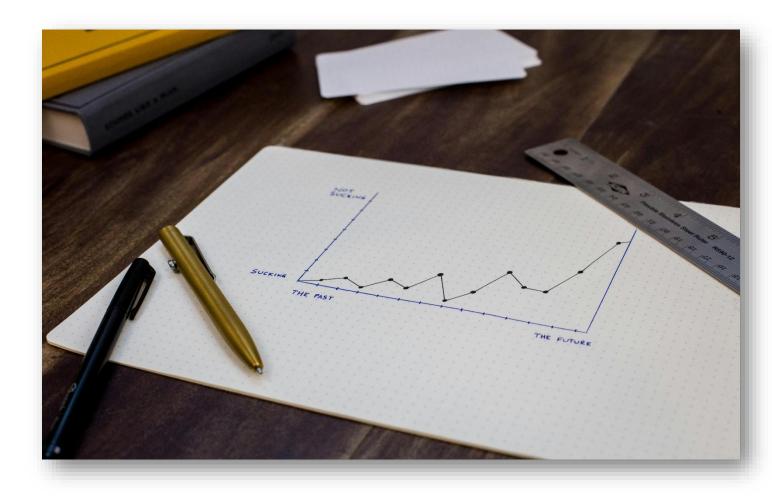
For example:

* Term 1 Goal: 55%

* Term 2 Goal: 70%

* Term 3 Goal: 85%

Breaking down the goals in this way provides your child with a clear sense of direction. It also prevents them from feeling overwhelmed by a big, seemingly impossible target. Each term serves as a stepping stone toward the larger goal, building both their confidence and their skills gradually.

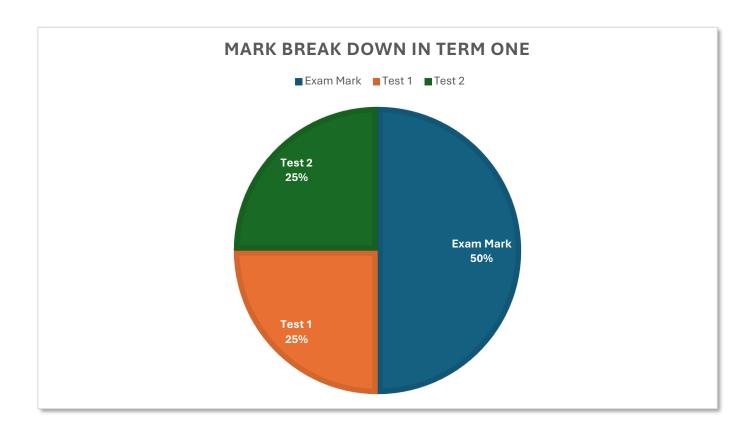


Additionally, these smaller goals allow you to measure progress and adjust as needed. If your child achieves 60% in Term 1 instead of 55%, for instance, you know they're ahead of schedule and can aim higher in the next term. Conversely, if they fall short, you have an opportunity to identify where the challenges lie and make necessary changes.

Creating Term-Specific Targets

Once you've set the term goals, it's important to break them down even further into specific components. This helps your child understand exactly what's required of them in each area and provides clear benchmarks for success.

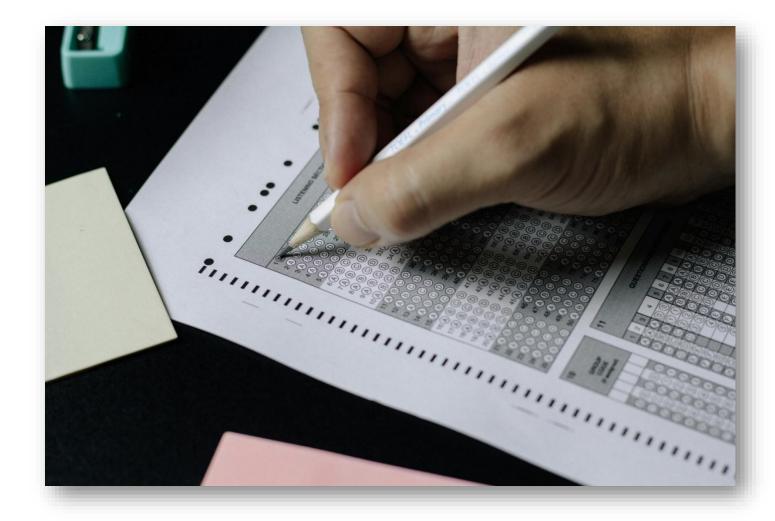
Let's take the Term 1 goal of achieving a 55% grade in mathematics. Suppose the mark breakdown for Term 1 looks like this:



- * Class Test 1 (50%) + Class Test 2 (50%) = Term Mark
- * Term Mark (50%) + Exam Mark (50%) = Final Term Mark

Using this breakdown, you can calculate the specific targets needed to reach the 55% goal. For example:

- * Exam Mark Target: 50%
- * Term Mark Target: 60%
- * Class Test 1: 60%
- * Class Test 2: 60%



By doing this, you create a roadmap for how your child can achieve the Term

1 goal. These smaller targets provide clear, actionable objectives for each

component of their grade, making the larger term goal feel less intimidating and more achievable.

Here's why this step is so important:

1. Clarity:

Your child knows exactly what they need to aim for in each test and exam.

2. Accountability:

You can track their progress against these targets and identify where adjustments are needed.

3. Motivation:

Achieving smaller milestones builds confidence and keeps them motivated to continue improving.

Once the specific targets are in place, it's time to add a strategy for how your child will achieve them.

Adding a Strategy to Achieve the Goals

Goals without a strategy are just wishful thinking. Once you've set the targets, work with your child to agree on a plan for how they'll meet them. This plan should be specific and written from your child's perspective to foster ownership and commitment.

Here's an example of a strategic plan for achieving 60% in a class test on simultaneous equations:

- 1. I will complete all my homework assignments on time.
- 2. I will pay attention in class and actively participate during lessons.
- 3. I will practise all the textbook questions on simultaneous equations.
- 4. I will ask my teacher for help with any concepts I don't understand after class.
- 5. I will stick to my study system and follow my daily schedule.

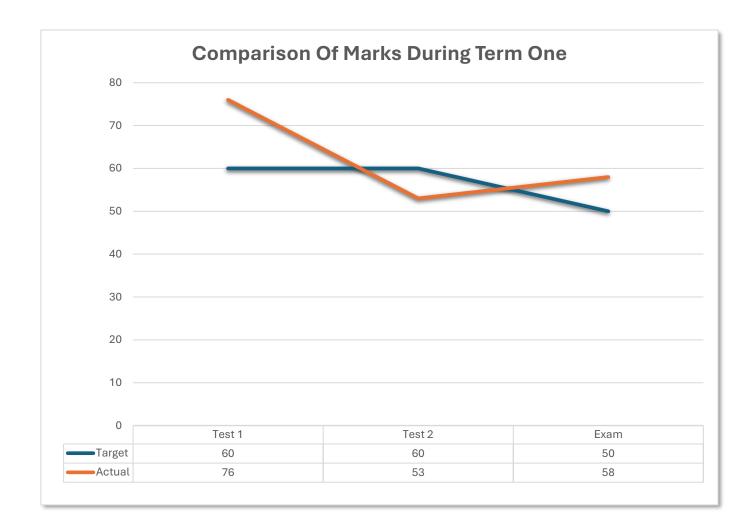
Tracking Progress and Holding Them Accountable

Once the goals and strategies are in place, your role as a parent shifts to monitoring and supporting their progress. Use the agreed-upon plan as a **measuring stick** to assess your child's behaviours and outcomes. Ask yourself questions like:

- * Are they completing their homework consistently?
- * Are they paying attention in class? (Check in with their teacher if needed.)
- * Have they practised the assigned questions?
- * Are they sticking to the study system and schedule?



Compare their performance to the targets you set. For example, did they achieve 60% on Class Test 1? If they exceed the target, celebrate and reward their effort—it's proof that the strategy is working.



Rewards don't have to be extravagant; simple actions like verbal praise, acknowledging their hard work, or small incentives like a favourite treat or extra leisure time can go a long way. You might also consider celebrating bigger milestones with a family outing or an activity they enjoy. These rewards not only reinforce their efforts but also make the process of achieving goals feel gratifying and encouraging.

What If Goals Aren't Met?

If your child falls short of a target, don't panic. It's natural to feel disappointed, and your child may feel the same way. Instead, use it as an opportunity to reflect and adjust:

- * **Talk to their teacher:** Find out if the goal was unrealistic or if there are areas where your child needs more support.
- * **Evaluate the strategy:** Perhaps the study plan needs tweaking, or they need additional resources or practice in specific areas.



Remember, the key is consistency. When your child commits to the

strategy, progress will come in time, even if it doesn't happen immediately.

The Bottom Line

Strategic goals provide a clear roadmap for academic improvement. When paired with a thoughtful strategy and consistent support, these goals transform vague ambitions into actionable steps.

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Get Them a Tutor

While the strategies outlined in this guide can significantly improve your child's academic performance, sometimes additional support is needed. Mathematics can be challenging for many students, and even with the best study systems and goals in place, some children may need extra help to fully grasp complex concepts. This is where a tutor can make all the difference.



Why a Tutor?

A tutor provides personalised, one-on-one support that complements the strategies we've discussed. Here's how a tutor can help your child:

1. Personalized Attention

In a classroom setting, teachers often have limited time to address each student's individual needs. A tutor can focus exclusively on your child, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and tailoring lessons to their specific learning style.

2. Mastery of Challenging Concepts

Mathematics builds on foundational concepts. If your child is struggling with a particular topic, a tutor can break it down into manageable steps, ensuring they fully understand before moving on to more advanced material.

3. Accountability and Motivation

A tutor can help your child stay on track with their study system, providing encouragement and accountability. This is especially helpful for students who may lack the motivation to study independently.

4. Exam Preparation

Tutors can help your child prepare for tests and exams by reviewing key concepts, practicing past papers, and teaching effective exam strategies.

5. Confidence Building

Many students struggle with math because they lack confidence. A tutor can help your child build self-assurance by celebrating small wins and showing them that they are capable of success.



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Conclusion

Helping your child succeed academically is a journey that requires patience, structure, and the right tools. By implementing a structured study system, setting clear and strategic goals, and providing consistent encouragement, you can help them build the habits and confidence needed for long-term success. These strategies not only improve academic performance but also foster resilience, accountability, and a belief in the power of hard work.

While these steps can make a significant difference, some challenges may require additional support. Our personalised tutoring services are designed to complement these strategies by providing one-on-one support tailored to your child's unique needs.

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Appendix: Strategic Goals Template

Student Name:	John Doe			
Subject:	Mathematics			
End-of-year target mark:	85%			
Current [recent] mark:	35%			
Year mark breakdown				
Term one: 55%	Term two: 70%	Term three: 85%		

Term one mark breakdown

Paper	Class test one	Class test two	Exam
Focus	simultaneous equations	Graphing	Chapter 12 –
	Quadratic equations	Circle theorems	Chapter 20
Target	60%	60%	55%
Actual	-	-	-

Term one agreement

- * I will do all my homework
- * I will pay attention in class
- * I will do practice questions
- * I will ask my tutor for assistance where I do not understand

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