

LESSONS FOR EXCELLING

IN JUNIOR HIGH & SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL



HOPE K. FIADJOE

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AND SENIOR
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ISBN: 979-8861-7-6900-6

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Dedication

I extend a heartfelt dedication of this book to:
my cherished young friends:

Livingstone Zottor,

David,

and

Emmanuella Akorsu

&

all junior high and senior high school students.

Write a better story than ours!

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to:

God, the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, for His unfailing love and grace towards me.

My Parents (Ebenezer Fiadjoe & Monica Klinogo) and Siblings (Vivian & Gladys) for their support throughout the years.

Mr. Patrick Laweh, Dr. Solomon Odemey, Dr. Cedric Amengor, Mr. Isaac Ablorh and all the Teachers of Ashaiman Presby JHS and Tema Methodist Day SHS for their mentorship.

My writing team: Rev. & Mrs. Tsali, Joseph Sackitey, Mrs. Laura Kporfor, Edinam Dugah, Yayra Dordoh, Mawufemor Amuzu & Eyram Anaglate for their feedback and personal contributions towards this work.

LiteMedya Team: for offering quality publishing and printing services.

Many unnamed individuals: family, friends, teachers, pastors, neighbours- who have supported and contributed in one way or the other.

Thank you for every help.

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Why I wrote this book

In this book, I have captured the invaluable lessons I learnt from the mistakes I made during my time in junior high school (JHS) and how I rectified them during senior high school (SHS). These very lessons transformed me from a struggling student, facing difficulties even to enter senior high school, into one of the best-performing students.

Surprisingly, the lessons are simple and familiar, yet many students overlook them. I still witness students repeating the same mistakes I made in junior high school, and others making similar ones in senior high school. If I could impart any wisdom to junior high or senior high school students, it would be the knowledge I have shared in this book.

Over the years, a few parents have sought my advice for their wards as they embarked on their senior high school journey. I shared with them the insights gleaned from my own experiences as a student.

By documenting these lessons in a book, I aim to reach anyone who may not have the chance to meet me personally. I believe it will serve as a valuable guide to any junior high school or senior high school student as they navigate through their schooling years. Furthermore, teachers and parents can also benefit from the contents of this book, using it as a tool to assist and support the younger generation.

The primary focus of this book is to excel in academic work. I am confident that anyone who reads it will find helpful tips to enhance their performance in school.

Hope K. Fiadjoe (2020)



Be Happy With Every Good Attitude You Have

Throughout this book, you will read about the numerous mistakes I made during my time in junior high school and how I learnt from them. However, there were certain positive attitudes I possessed in school right from the start, and three of them stand out.

Firstly, punctuality in school was essential to me. I made sure to be present every weekday, arriving early unless I was unwell or on holiday. In fact, I once received an award from my school for being the student who arrived earliest. This practice of punctuality has remained with me to this day.

Secondly, I actively participated in class discussions. I enjoyed asking questions and attempting the questions our teachers posed during lessons. Although some students ridiculed me for this, I didn't mind, as I knew it helped build my confidence to speak up, among others.

Thirdly, I held great respect for our school authorities and obediently followed the rules. Unlike some students who perceived disobedience as bravery, I saw no reason to intentionally break school rules. This attitude of obedience led to a positive reputation with my school authorities and even resulted in a former teacher personally recommending me for a job after completing my studies. Maintaining a good reputation with your school authorities is beneficial.

Besides obeying teachers and school authorities, I must also emphasize the importance of obedience to parents. It is crucial to appreciate their support, even if it may be less than expected. Maintain a supportive attitude towards them, and also show respect to the elderly and everyone you encounter,

regardless of age. I share this lesson because many students along the way become ashamed of their good and virtuous lifestyles and abandon them for wrong and deviant behaviours. Embrace and cherish every good attitude you possess, for they will lead you far in life. Having a negative attitude is akin to having a car with a flat tire; it will not take you anywhere near your destination.



Recognise That Your Current Level Is Different

Upon entering junior high school, I failed to fully comprehend the differences between this new educational setting and my previous experience in primary school, necessitating the need for increased effort and proper adjustment.

My primary school was a private institution with small class sizes, accommodating less than twenty pupils in each class. We were fortunate to have one teacher assigned to each class, who closely supervised and monitored our academic progress. This conducive learning environment had a positive impact on my studies, as it kept us consistently focused.

However, my junior high school was a public institution, where class sizes increased significantly, with over 50 pupils in each class. We were taught by different subject teachers, a common practice in Ghanaian junior high schools. While some teachers were exceptional, others left us struggling with their subjects. The workload increased substantially, and the topics became more challenging compared to primary school.

The lack of strict supervision from our teachers in junior high school led to a slight decline in my seriousness towards my studies. I failed to recognize the impact of these differences on my performance until it was too late. Consequently, upon entering senior high school, I made it a priority to adjust properly to this new level of education.

In senior high school, I observed that some students who had performed exceptionally well in their previous studies struggled in both terminal and final examinations. Their failure to adjust effectively to the unique conditions of the senior

high school environment hindered their academic progress. While some students previously benefited from the personal concern and support of teachers, others lacked such advantages in their new educational setting.

Drawing from my past experience, I resolved to take personal responsibility for my learning and performance in senior high school. I no longer waited for external motivation to study or complete tasks; instead, I proactively embraced self-discipline and went the extra mile. This decision became a significant game-changer in my academic journey.

Recognizing that each educational environment may present its own set of challenges and advantages, adapting effectively is crucial for success. Whether facing favourable or unfavourable conditions, assuming personal responsibility for one's learning and academic progress remains paramount. With the right attitude and dedication, students can excel regardless of the circumstances they encounter.

Therefore, I encourage you to make a conscious decision to take charge of your learning, regardless of the conditions you encounter. Commit to giving your best and striving for excellence, as this choice will significantly impact your academic success.



Keep The Company Of Responsible Friends

Once again, during my time in junior high school, I deeply regretted the close association I maintained with friends who had little interest in education. We were a group of seven neighbours in the same class, and we tended to stick together. However, besides occasionally completing homework in school before going home, we rarely engaged in any collective learning activities.

Instead, our evenings were spent at a favourite meeting spot in our neighbourhood, where we engaged in arguments, shared funny stories and jokes, and teased one another until nearly midnight before dispersing to our respective homes. On most Saturdays, we wasted the entire day watching

movies at someone's place, squandering valuable learning time.

I vividly recall a particular incident after we had completed the first two papers of our final examination. Instead of studying for the remaining seven papers, my friends and I changed clothes and headed straight to play football. Our neighbours were disheartened by our lack of seriousness and complained bitterly about our behaviour. Unfortunately, we simply did not care enough about our studies, and our lack of commitment was evident.

Thankfully, upon entering senior high school, I reassessed the company I kept. I made a conscious decision to befriend students who had a genuine passion for studying and ambitious aspirations for notable professions in the future. With these new companions, we often stayed back after school hours to cover additional topics on our own. After school, we would take various spots in our classroom and study for extended periods. Additionally, we met on most Saturdays in school

to study together. This single choice to associate with serious-minded friends greatly impacted my dedication to my studies throughout my time in senior high school.

In contrast, I also encountered schoolmates in senior high school who lacked seriousness and despised those who prioritized their studies. While I maintained a courteous relationship with them, I refrained from forming close bonds with such individuals. I made this decision based on my prior experience in junior high school, where the influence of unserious friends negatively affected my academic performance.

The importance of choosing the right friends cannot be overstated, as they can either aid or hinder one's progress. Many students who associated with the wrong crowd found themselves led astray, resulting in truancy, drug addiction, school dropouts, and even teenage parenthood.

The reality of negative peer pressure is significant, and it can have severe consequences on one's

character and behaviour. During their teenage years, young individuals may easily succumb to wrong influences in their quest for approval and attention from their peers. Therefore, it is essential to make wise choices when it comes to selecting friends.



Get Yourself A Good Mentor In School

During my time in junior high school, I failed to actively seek guidance from any seniors or teachers to assist me personally with my studies. Although some teachers encouraged me to approach them with any problems, I was too shy to do so.

Even though I sat next to the best student in our school, I only approached him a few times to explain certain concepts to me. My elder sister was also a senior in junior high, but I did not intentionally seek her help, despite her successful study strategy of buying exercise books and solving numerous practice questions for each topic. Unfortunately, I did not adopt this approach until I entered senior high school.

Throughout my junior high school years, there were people around me offering pieces of advice to help me succeed, but I was not humble enough to ask for their assistance, which could have greatly benefited me. However, I made a conscious decision to change this attitude when I reached senior high school.

In senior high school, I identified three seniors named Solomon, Isaac, and James, who were top students in their class and highly intelligent. I sought their guidance and consulted them on various study-related issues. They generously shared their learning techniques and past mistakes in various subjects with me. Additionally, my Chemistry Tutor, Mr. Patrick Laweh, kept a close eye on my progress every term. He had known me since my childhood and even played a crucial role in helping me gain admission to the school.

Knowing that my Chemistry Tutor personally monitored my progress further motivated me to take my studies seriously.

The impact of my senior, Solomon, was especially profound. He taught me a valuable skill in answering questions: before attempting any examination question, he would carefully read through all the questions, select the ones he could answer best, and brainstorm a few key points on his answer booklet before writing his responses. At the beginning of the subjective questions (Section B), he dedicated the first few minutes to brainstorm and plan his answers.

At first, learning this skill was challenging for me, but with practice and dedication, I mastered it. When the invigilator announced, “*You may start section B,*” I resisted the urge to immediately begin writing in my answer booklet. Instead, I took the time to choose the questions carefully and plan my answers thoroughly.

This approach proved to be incredibly beneficial, as it prevented situations where I had to discard entire answers because I realized midway through a question that I couldn’t address certain parts of it. Moreover, it helped me organize my answers

more effectively, ensuring that my strongest points were presented first, leading to better marks.

Having a mentor, like my senior Solomon, became one of my personal principles for academic success, which I strongly recommend to everyone. Finding a senior and regularly seeking their guidance can be immensely helpful. Simply discussing your academic problems and questions with someone willing to listen attentively can make a significant difference in your academic journey.



Know Your School's Performance History

Upon reflection, I realized that I responded poorly to the performance history of our junior high school. Year after year, very few students achieved exceptional results, with the majority obtaining average to below-average grades. As students, we indirectly blamed our school and teachers and unconsciously accepted these low results as the norm. We believed that no matter how hard we worked, the same poor outcomes were expected, and we failed to recognize the positive example set by the exceptional students.

Instead of being motivated by the history of our school to strive for excellence and become record-setters ourselves, I missed this opportunity. As a

result, my final results in junior high school were not exceptional, and I realized that I could have done better if only I had overcome this negative belief.

In senior high school, my school was categorized by the Ghana Education Service (GES) under grade C schools. Although students generally performed well, very few attained exceptional results compared to students in other schools. This historical context motivated me to work harder, as I didn't see it as something that couldn't be changed.

As a result, my grades in senior high school improved significantly. I met the grade requirements for most tertiary-level courses and achieved the best results in my school for my batch. Gaining admission to the university was not a struggle for me.

Regardless of your school's academic history, you have the power to make a difference and contribute to its richness. If your school has a great academic history, you can still aim to make it even better. If it doesn't have a good reputation, you can set a new

record and excel. Take charge of your education and strive for excellence. Challenge the status quo and be a positive force in shaping your school's history.



Value Your Education Over Petty Cash

I grew up in an environment where students had to hustle on the side to support their schooling. From primary school to part of senior high school, I had my fair share of such experiences.

For some, including me, engaging in financial ventures was a means to meet our educational needs. However, for others, their earnings became a substitute for their academic aspirations.

Suddenly, the allure of making money overshadowed their desire to continue with their education. Sadly, some of them could have achieved greater heights academically, but they settled for their modest earnings, only to regret it later.

I want to encourage you to work diligently to support yourself through school as much as you can. But at the same time, I advise you not to let the allure of small earnings, which may seem significant now, distract you from the bigger picture.

Furthermore, I strongly advocate engaging in legal financial activities. In today's world, internet fraud is on the rise, and it may appear to be a shortcut to instant riches. However, I urge you to resist the temptation of getting involved in such illegal practices. Many young people spend their time in internet cafes, seeking to defraud foreigners for quick money. In doing so, they abandon their education and disregard its importance, simply because they have seen their peers make overnight riches through fraudulent means.

The path of formal education may seem long and perhaps even tedious at times. However, in the long run, you will come to realize that staying committed to your education is truly worthwhile. It opens up opportunities, enhances your skills

and knowledge, and equips you for a more fulfilling and successful future. So, despite any challenges or temptations that come your way, I encourage you to prioritize your education and stay on the path to a brighter tomorrow.



Go Beyond The Effort Of Your Teachers

During my time in junior high school, I heavily relied solely on my teachers for learning. I didn't explore new topics beyond what they taught, nor did I attempt any additional questions beyond what they provided in class. Some teachers went the extra mile to help us, and despite minimal effort on our part, we performed well in their subjects.

However, I later realized that some teachers gave us easier questions, didn't expose us to a variety of questions, and glossed over the difficult aspects of their subjects. As a result, I mistakenly believed I had mastered certain topics when, in reality, I hadn't. It wasn't until later that I recognized this error.

Moreover, some teachers couldn't complete essential parts of the syllabus due to time constraints, which ultimately affected our performance.

Additionally, I lost interest in certain subjects due to ineffective teaching methods employed by some teachers. Although I attended their classes regularly, I struggled to keep up with the content they presented.

When I returned to my alma mater, I emphasized to the current students that most of their current teachers were the ones who taught us to reach our current positions. Hence, they should pay maximum attention and cooperate with these teachers. However, I also stressed that the teachers couldn't do all the hard work for them; each student had to take responsibility for their own learning.

In senior high school, I took a different approach. I sought out the best textbooks and purchased most of them, even sacrificing on fashion to save money for books. I realized that some of the government

textbooks we were given were inadequate, and we received them late. So, I studied new topics independently, including aspects of the syllabus our teacher couldn't cover before the final examinations.

I solved numerous additional questions beyond the examples provided by my teachers, recording them in separate exercise books that I called "OUTCOME." These books proved invaluable in my preparations, as they exposed me to a wide range of likely questions and how to answer them effectively.

For classes where I hadn't followed well, I attend and extract as much knowledge as possible. I put in extra effort independently and sought help where needed.

If you take nothing else away from this book, remember this crucial point: go beyond the efforts of your teachers. Take initiative in your own learning and put in the extra work to excel academically.



Make Time For Personal Study

During my time in junior high school, I rarely studied at home. I would only focus on my homework or do some quick studying during the examination period. Most of my free time was spent hanging out with friends, playing until late at night. My parents didn't express much concern as I had good terminal examination results and often assured them that I had completed my homework. However, looking back, I now realize that this habit of relying solely on schoolwork without any personal studies was a poor decision and could be detrimental to any student's academic performance.

In senior high school, I made a significant change and began studying at home every day, even

as a day student. Hardly a day passed without dedicating time to study or read something after regular school hours. Even when I had to help my mother with her work, I kept my books beside me and continued to study. I created a personal timetable, studying one subject every morning and two subjects in the evening, and I stuck to it diligently. I was disciplined and serious about my studies, and I avoided unnecessary distractions.

There were days when I stayed in school to study for a few extra hours, then went home in the evening, took a short nap, and continued studying throughout the night until morning. This plan suited me as a day student, and while it may not be suitable for everyone, I strongly recommend that you work hard on your own studies. I kept myself busy every day, tackling new questions, revising old ones, reviewing current notes, and studying new topics. In the end, all the sacrifices I made were worthwhile.

It's essential to put in hard work and not solely rely on self-confidence or complacency. Make

studying a part of your daily routine. For every student, personal studies should be an integral part of their everyday activities. Aim for at least five days a week of personal studies; this consistent effort will undoubtedly yield positive results.



Take Class Work Seriously

I encountered classmates who had the habit of fooling around during school hours and only studying after school. While I commend their effort to study later, I couldn't help but feel sad for those who blindly followed them, as they often ended up failing in their studies.

I believe that making good use of school hours is essential. We spend so many hours in school, and neglecting what we are taught in class is a missed opportunity. Personal studies outside of class are valuable, but they should complement what we learn during school hours. The combination of both class learning and personal studies is excellent for academic success.

Moreover, it's crucial to consider the concept of prime time for studying. Prime time refers to the time of day when an individual can learn most effectively. For some, it may be during the day hours, while for others, it could be during the evening hours. Some individuals can study effectively regardless of the time of day. It's essential to identify which time is most convenient and productive for you.

Additionally, knowing your optimal study duration, the number of subjects you can effectively cover, and the environment that works best for you is vital. Each person is unique, so it's important to examine yourself and discover what suits you best.

However, even outside your prime times, preferred subjects, or favoured environments, you can still engage in meaningful learning, even if it is for a short period. Making good use of every available time is crucial for academic progress.



Attempt Assignments On Your Own

During my time in junior high school, I faced a peculiar problem in Mathematics and a few other subjects—I couldn't start solving most questions on my own. I heavily relied on my friends to suggest the initial approach, and once they did, I would take it from there. While this approach helped me in class, it became a significant issue during examinations. No one would provide a starting point during exams; I had to begin and finish on my own.

Reflecting on what caused this problem, I realized that I had not been doing class exercises on my own. I often copied from my friends without utterly understanding the solutions or waited for

them to start before following along. Although I intended to review and grasp the concepts later, I never got around to it. This weakened my ability to think independently and confidently produce my own solutions. Additionally, due to the lack of practice with various questions, I felt lost when encountering slightly different problems from what was taught in class.

However, my story changed when I entered senior high school. I decided to take charge and began doing almost every classwork and homework on my own. If I didn't understand a question, I took the time to thoroughly read and research it. I still sought help from my friends for certain challenging assignments, but I stopped blindly copying answers for marking as I did before.

As a result of this change, I became more familiar with various question types, and I gained confidence in my ability to approach them effectively. The best part was the assurance that my answers were correct, and they indeed were.

My advice to you is to refrain from copying from your intelligent classmates. While it may yield good marks in your exercise book, it will hinder your ability to generate meaningful answers without assistance. It's okay to seek help and learn from others, but don't make it a habit. Take the time to understand how problems are solved and practice until you have mastered them. This will enhance your independent thinking and problem-solving skills significantly.



Use Your Vacations Wisely

When reflecting on my time in junior high school, I realized that I didn't make the best use of my vacation times. I would pack my past question papers into a file and never revisit them, even though they contained challenging questions that I struggled to answer. Additionally, I neglected to actively revise the topics we had studied in the previous term, and I ended up doing no studying at all during vacations.

One vivid memory from those vacation periods was when one of our neighbours brought out his television set every evening, and we would spend all our time watching movies. This leisurely activity caused me to forget most of what we had been taught by the time school reopened. The idea

that we would be accountable for three years of studying didn't even register with me at that time. Looking back, I realize I was quite naïve then.

However, my approach changed when I entered senior high school. While I recognized that vacations were meant for rest and renewal, I also understood the importance of using the time wisely for studying. I would take the scheme of work for the upcoming term from my teachers just before vacations and spend my break focusing on studying those topics. By the time school resumed, I had covered many of the upcoming subjects and gathered a collection of questions related to those topics.

During my independent study sessions, there were certain topics I could easily grasp on my own, but there were others that left me confused. Sometimes, I would take a break and return to the challenging topics the next day, finding that I gained some understanding. For a few topics, however, I had to wait until we were taught in class to fully comprehend them. Nevertheless, I never

gave up on my studies, and I want to encourage you not to give up either, even if you encounter challenges along the way.

For any level of schooling, especially junior high and senior high, where you will be required to write final examinations, remember that vacations do not mean the end of studying. Utilize that period wisely to review and prepare for the upcoming academic challenges.



Address Academic Challenges When They Arise

During my time in junior high school, I encountered a growing difficulty in understanding many of the topics taught in class. This issue was exacerbated by periods of illness, which caused me to miss numerous classes and struggle to catch up afterwards. Unfortunately, I didn't seek help or take the time to address these problems properly.

Despite accumulating these unaddressed issues, I didn't fully realize the impact because I could still manage to pass my terminal examinations. During these exams, I would simply avoid my weak areas or attempt them half-heartedly to secure a few marks. However, the consequences of leaving these problems unresolved would catch up with me later.

Upon entering senior high school, I made a significant change by investing in a variety of good books. This encouraged me to sit down and tackle difficult topics as they arose, seeking help from others when needed. Whenever I encountered topics I didn't fully grasp, I made sure to study them thoroughly that same day or dedicated Saturdays to give them the attention they deserved.

As a result, I left very few topics without a proper understanding, addressing them as they presented themselves.

As the days leading up to our final examinations approached, I was surprised to find that some of my classmates struggled with basic topics we had learnt quite some time ago. For some, it was because they hadn't revised those topics in an exceedingly long time. For others, they simply didn't understand the concepts and hadn't bothered to address the issue until it became crucial during the final exams.



Improve Your Handwriting If They Are Difficult To Read

One of my friends in school faced a significant challenge with his handwriting. When he personally read out what he had written, you would realize that his answers were correct.

However, in his absence, it was difficult to decipher many portions of his writing, leading to a loss of marks.

If you find yourself facing a similar problem, I recommend getting “*copy or tracing books*” to help you train and improve your handwriting. Practice writing frequently on your own and ask others to check and provide feedback until your handwriting becomes clearer and neater.

Remember that your ability to write legibly and neatly can have a significant impact on your success in school. Put effort into improving this skill.



Severely Deal With Any Distractions

I passionately believe that each of us has a bright future ahead. However, as we embark on the journey toward greatness, we will encounter various challenges and distractions that may discourage us or divert us from our path. The same applies to your academic journey.

Throughout your schooling years, you will come across certain things that hinder significant academic progress. These distractions can consume a lot of your time and attention. It might be an addiction to television or social media or getting involved in a romantic relationship at an early stage.

I could elaborate extensively on the impact of early romantic relationships on your ability to concentrate in class and focus on schoolwork. The heartaches, heartbreaks, and negative consequences many people naively experience from such relationships are not to be overlooked.

For junior high and senior high school students, relationships are often initiated too early and poorly managed at this level. It is wiser to focus on building good and healthy relationships with the opposite sex during these early years.

If you identify any serious distractions in your life, it is crucial to address them. Seek help from someone older or more experienced if needed.

Your goal should be to look back at your school days and know that you gave your best effort in pursuing your academic journey.



Check Yourself For Over-Commitment

I observed that some students took on an excessive number of activities, which significantly distracted them from focusing on their schoolwork. By the end of each day, they were often too exhausted to study and had to resort to last-minute cramming.

I advise you to carefully select a few activities that genuinely interest you and concentrate on excelling in those. This approach will allow you to effectively balance your academic commitments with your extra-curricular pursuits.

Participating in leadership roles and joining beneficial clubs or organizations can contribute to your overall development. However, I recommend

taking on only a few of these activities rather than overloading yourself with too many. This way, you can fully engage and benefit from each one without sacrificing your academic progress.

Pause and think over these - I

This page provides you with an opportunity to reflect on the content you have read so far. Take some time to go through each lesson and jot down the key concepts (the main points you've learnt) and your decisions (any changes or actions you plan to take).

Lesson	Key ideas	Key Decisions
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Learn About Effective Learning Styles And Techniques

In junior high school, my learning approach was unproductive, particularly in how I read my notes and approached certain subjects. I didn't realize the value of effective learning techniques that could improve my academic performance.

During a talk given by a Counsellor in junior high school, I was introduced to effective learning methods for preparing for final examinations. However, I didn't fully appreciate the teachings at that time, and unfortunately, I ignored them.

However, in senior high school, I learnt my lesson and discovered important learning ideas from various sources. I adopted the active reading

technique called SQ3R (Survey, Questions, Read, Recite, and Review) to better engage with my notes and textbooks. I also started combining an interesting subject with a more difficult one during my study sessions, which proved to be more effective.

In the school library, I came across a psychology book that offered valuable insights into effective learning. It emphasized the importance of rehearsing material multiple times to truly master it, and it highlighted the significance of spacing out learning sessions for better retention and recall. The book also introduced the use of mnemonics as memory aids, which proved helpful.

Moreover, I found a biology practice book that provided valuable advice on answering objective questions and supporting answers with drawings, among other helpful tips.

It's important to recognize that there is a wealth of information available to help students become more effective learners. Success in school is not limited to talented individuals; there are learning

strategies and techniques that anyone can learn to improve their academic performance.

I encourage you to pay attention to Learning and Excellence Seminars, read materials that focus on learning strategies, and adopt some of these techniques to excel in your studies.



Accept Practical Training Opportunities

During my time in junior high school, I had the opportunity to rear domestic fowls and exotic rabbits at home and also assisted my mother on her farm. When these topics were taught in class for our Agricultural Science lesson (now Integrated Science), I easily understood them due to my first-hand experience.

Similarly, during my university studies in Pharmacy, I noticed that my classmates who had practical experience working in a pharmacy had a better understanding of certain concepts, while some of us without such experience initially struggled. These experiences taught me the value of practical training in facilitating better comprehension of subjects.

Therefore, I would strongly advise students, especially those in senior high school, to seek practical training in a workplace related to their field of study. They should approach such workplaces and request to spend some days of their vacations there, even if it means doing so without pay. If there are opportunities for training workshops, they should seize them to acquire relevant skills.

For example, Visual Art students can spend time in an art studio or with a graphic designer, while Clothing and Textiles students can visit a fashion designer. Food and Nutrition students can gain practical experience with caterers, Business Secretarial students can assist with secretarial duties at a typing and lamination centre, and Business Accounting students can get involved in managing a local store.

Those interested in computer engineering can seek opportunities in computer repair and service centres, among many other possibilities.

Engaging in such practical experiences will not only enhance their understanding of academic subjects but will also benefit their overall life skills. I encourage students to consider enrolling for practical experiences during their vacations to broaden their knowledge and capabilities



Find Out What Your Next Level Will Require

During my time in junior high school, I didn't receive much guidance on the specific academic results that would be required for acceptance into the senior high schools I had chosen. While I knew I needed to achieve good grades, I was unaware of the exact aggregates needed for each school.

Upon receiving my Basic Education Certificate Examination (junior high school final examination) results, I faced disappointment as none of the schools I had chosen accepted me. My grades fell short of their consideration, and I was unable to pursue my desired General Science program. Consequently, I had to begin my senior

high school education in the Home Economics program. Had I been aware of the specific grade requirements or set clear targets for myself early on, I could have been better prepared and focused on achieving my goals.

I strongly believe that understanding the academic requirements for the next level of education can make a significant difference. During my senior high school years, I was determined to pursue Medicine to become a doctor, and I later added Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory Technology, and Optometry as alternative options.

However, these programs required exceptionally high grades in public universities, which initially seemed challenging given the standards of my senior high school. Nevertheless, having knowledge of the requirements early on motivated me to work harder and strive for excellence.

For junior high school students, I advise starting to work towards achieving your future grades early on. As for senior high school students, I

encourage you to find out the requirements for the programs you are interested in pursuing at the tertiary level and begin working towards meeting those requirements from the outset. Having clear targets and goals will help you stay focused and committed, making your life more organized and purpose-driven.



Master Vital Skills Or Topics

In every subject or program you study, there are essential skills that form the foundation for your success. It is crucial to identify and master these skills. Not all topics carry equal weight; some are of higher priority and significance.

As a science student, I found certain skills particularly helpful. Mastering the use of my calculator, expanding my vocabulary in English, and becoming proficient in plotting and answering graph-related questions were valuable skills. In mathematics, I found the topics 'change of subjects and substitution' and 'simultaneous equations' to be immensely beneficial for various mathematics-related subjects.

Additionally, learning how to articulate answers using the language specific to each subject was crucial. For example, in Biology, I realized the importance of providing biological explanations instead of generic English language in my answers.

Each subject has its own distinct language, from the introduction to the conclusion, and it is essential to become familiar with it.

It is essential to recognize the major divisions of the subjects you study and identify the topics that frequently appear in final examinations. Mastering these recurring topics is vital, and while it's beneficial to explore other subjects, don't neglect the major ones that often show up in exams.

I had classmates who were well-read and knowledgeable in a wide range of topics, even those not covered in our syllabus. While reading widely is commendable, some students focused too much on non-examinable readings and their academic performance suffered as a result. It's

essential to strike a balance and prioritize topics and skills that will be assessed in examinations.

Don't hesitate to seek guidance from your seniors or teachers regarding vital skills and topics. They can offer valuable suggestions and recommendations to help you excel in your studies. Once you have identified these essential areas, begin working on mastering them.



Prepare Properly For Every Examination

The way I approached exam preparation in junior high school was quite interesting. For some papers, I simply went to bed the night before without studying anything, relying on my ability to remember the material as I saw the question papers. I was incredibly confident in my memory.

English language was the worst subject in terms of preparation; I didn't study anything for it. Although I could come up with ideas as I encountered the questions, I didn't put in much effort to prepare for writing essays. I believed that being present in class during topic discussions would be sufficient to recall information and earn at least some marks.

This approach worked for my terminal examinations, as the questions were mostly based on what we had recently studied in one term. However, when it came to the final examinations, which assessed three years of material, my poor preparation hindered my ability to recall information taught over an extended period.

During my time in senior high school, I significantly improved my exam preparation, including English language. Well before the examination week, I dedicated time to thoroughly read my notes, create my own summaries, and practice numerous related questions. The evening before exams, I would focus on solving questions specifically related to the topics we had covered. If I encountered any difficulties or struggled to recall answers, I would revise those parts properly from my notes.

Due to the voluminous textbooks and teacher's notes, I preferred studying my well-organized summaries and practice questions, which I compiled into an exercise book ahead of time. Unlike some students who hurriedly wrote their

summaries on pieces of paper the night or morning before the exams, I prepared mine early and kept them for future use.

Being proactive in my preparation allowed me to avoid cramming and ensured I slept well before the examination day. I continued reviewing related questions until it was time for the exam. This approach proved to be more effective than relying solely on memory during the exam.

The key lesson I learnt is to prepare well for every examination and make it count. Adequate preparation can significantly impact your final results, and you may find that your performance in terminal examinations closely reflects your overall academic achievements.



Prepare Beyond Terminal Examinations Only

Another mistake I made during my junior high school years was my lack of preparation to perform beyond the terminal examinations. Throughout primary school, the focus was on passing terminal exams, outdoing classmates, and advancing to the next grade. Little consideration was given to how previous achievements would impact future outcomes. Unfortunately, I carried this mindset with me to junior high school.

In junior high school, the final examinations cover the three years of studies, requiring a different learning and preparation approach. However, I was content with passing each terminal examination, knowing it would carry me to the next term or

class. My goal seemed to be surviving term by term, and I felt complacent when I compared my performance to my classmates’.

Looking back, I should have realized that passing terminal exams alone is not enough. It is a means to prepare for the main final examinations, not the end goal itself.

When I entered senior high school, I decided to shift my approach. I aimed to do my best in both terminal and final examinations. To achieve this, I exposed myself to many standard questions early on. I found past questions in my textbooks, my seniors’ question papers, and past question books. Whenever I studied a topic and saw it was a past question, I made a note of it and attempted to answer it. My primary focus was on mastering the art of answering questions effectively.

I used the terminal examinations to train myself on proper question-answering techniques. I paid attention to the mistakes my teachers pointed out during these exams and worked on improving my strengths and weaknesses term by term.

I learned that it's not enough to excel in terminal exams; the work is not done until you replicate that performance in the final examinations. By preparing beyond the terminal examinations and tackling several standard questions, I felt confident and well-prepared when the time for my final examinations came.

I cannot stress enough how important this idea is if you want to perform well in both terminal and final examinations. Look beyond the immediate term and prepare for the long run. Take on various standard questions to ensure success in the ultimate exams.



Get Past Question Papers From Your Seniors And/Or Sister Schools

During my junior high school days, I didn't pay much attention to what other schools were learning. Although I had friends in various private schools who were performing well, I wasn't curious enough to request their papers or attempt their exams. I didn't inquire about their study methods or how they prepared for their examinations. If only I had taken the initiative to do so, I could have identified some of my weaknesses early on and worked to address them.

However, in senior high school, I actively interacted with friends from different schools, and I even collected some of their terminal

examination questions. I had a compilation of past examination papers from a senior in my school and another senior from a sister school. I diligently solved most of these questions. Some of them led me to revisit certain aspects of my textbooks and learn new lessons, which significantly contributed to my preparation.

Additionally, solving questions from various sources provided valuable insights into tackling critical problems.

Interacting with friends from other schools and exploring their study materials proved beneficial for my academic progress. It opened up opportunities to broaden my knowledge and gain exposure to different types of questions.

Therefore, I encourage you to engage with friends from other schools, inquire about their curriculum and the nature of questions they encounter, and try solving those questions as well. Such interactions can enhance your learning experience and contribute to your overall academic growth.



Work On The Subjects You Are Weak At

For numerous Science students, including myself as a General Science student, we often struggled with English language and Social Studies. It is possible that our inclination towards mathematics-related subjects contributed to this difficulty.

Similarly, many Business students encountered challenges with Integrated Science, while those studying Literature and Home Economics had a strong aversion to mathematics. This pattern was evident across various disciplines.

Unfortunately, the poor performance in these areas of weakness sometimes overshadowed our

excellent grades in other subjects. To ensure our academic progress wasn't hindered, it was essential to address these weaknesses. While achieving an A grade might be challenging, aiming for at least a C grade was important. Putting in some effort to improve these subjects was necessary, and group discussions with friends could be a helpful way to seek assistance and understanding. Managing our weak subjects well and not neglecting them was crucial.

In my senior high school, I witnessed the worst approach taken by some students to deal with their weaknesses. They intentionally refused to write these subjects, despite them being part of their registered papers. They claimed disinterest and believed these subjects were unnecessary for their future. As a result, they missed the papers during their final examination and had to retake them in subsequent years.

It is vital not to ignore weak subjects until they deteriorate further. Addressing them promptly and working on improvement is crucial to ensure overall academic growth and success.



Excel With Hard Work Not Cheating

Some students resort to surviving their terminal examinations by relying on cheating partners.

Instead of putting in effort, they depend on others to do the hard work for them and engage in various sneaky techniques using their fingers, feet, or positioning their papers in a certain way. But how long can this approach last?

This practice is not only unhealthy but also highly risky. In the final examinations, some students find themselves without their cheating partners and struggle to perform. Others get caught in the act, leading to the cancellation or suspension of their results. There are also those who pay large

sums of money for leaked papers, only to be deceived and left empty-handed.

I strongly advise you to embrace the attitude of hard work and abandon the search for shortcuts. The mindset you cultivate now is likely to stay with you for life. Dedicate yourself to working hard and earning your grades genuinely. In the end, you will look back with pride on your achievements.

Remember, it's not just about passing an examination; it's about the character and attitudes you develop in the process. Hard work is the right path to success.



Don't Give Up

Throughout my experience as both a student and a teacher, I have witnessed fellow students facing various challenges in school. Some have struggled due to severe financial hardships, while others have endured difficult circumstances at home, such as being maltreated because they were not living with their biological parents. These situations have had a profound impact on their academic performance, and some have even given up on school entirely.

However, there are also those who persevered through adversity and now share inspiring success stories.

Some students have simply found it difficult to grasp the concepts being taught in class. Despite

their repeated efforts, they feel lost and believe they are making no progress. As a result, they may conclude that education is not meant for them and that they will never succeed in school or life. Even parents and teachers may inadvertently enforce these negative beliefs, undermining their confidence and potential.

Though there is much more I could say, I want to emphasize one thing: Don't give up! No matter the challenges you face, continue to work hard, and seek guidance to address any difficulties. If pursuing a career with practical, hands-on skills aligns better with your strengths, don't hesitate to take that path.

The key is to keep pushing forward and never limit yourself. Strive to reach your full potential and never let anything be an excuse to hinder your progress.



Other Helpful Suggestions

a. Seek private tuition or extra classes:

Some students struggling with their studies have found significant improvement by attending private classes or tuition. The dedicated attention and patience provided by teachers in these sessions can be beneficial. Additionally, extra classes may cover topics not covered in school, better preparing students. If it's an option you can afford, consider it, but ensure you actively engage with the material rather than just accumulating notes.

b. Consider changing schools:

Some students who struggled in their current school have seen improvements after transferring to private schools. A change of environment with

new teachers and peers can positively impact students who are open to learning. Though not a guaranteed solution, it can be a viable option to explore.

c. Change your program of study:

Some students realize they are studying a program that doesn't align with their interests or strengths. Making a change may initially be challenging, but it can lead to greater fulfillment and success in the long run. Seek advice from those who can assist with the process and be courageous in pursuing a program that suits you better.

d. Explore other school options or programs of study:

Be open to considering alternative schools or programs if your first choice is not feasible. Don't limit yourself to one specific institution or program. There are other good options available that may align well with your goals and abilities.

e. Consider taking private examinations early:

Some students opt to take private examinations (e.g., November-December exams) early to gauge

their preparation and improve their performance. It can serve as an eye-opener for some, motivating them to work harder for their final examinations.

f. Re-sit for certain papers:

If you are not satisfied with your grades in specific subjects, consider re-sitting for those papers. There is no shame in seeking improvement through remedial classes or self-preparation. Persistence and dedication can lead to success, even if it takes multiple attempts.

g. Explore standardized tests for admission into foreign universities:

For those interested in studying abroad, standardized tests for university admission can open doors to various opportunities. Seeking preparatory classes and scholarships can help you further your education abroad. Do your research and consider this option if it aligns with your aspirations.



Prayer

One essential practice that must be an integral part of your life as a student is prayer. This is a lifestyle I wholeheartedly embraced during my time in senior high school, and it played a pivotal role in any success I achieved there.

Even to this day, I continue to prioritize prayer, and my family has been a strong source of support in this aspect.

Prayer is a way for us to express our dependence on God. It is an acknowledgment that we cannot accomplish everything on our own and that we need divine help. Through prayer, we seek God's strength, guidance, wisdom, understanding, and every other assistance we require.

As you explore the various suggestions I have shared in this book, I urge you to make prayer for your academic endeavours a fundamental consideration. Incorporate prayer into your routine before, during, and after any task or activity you engage in. Seek the Lord's guidance in all that you do.



The Big Picture

One of my greatest hopes for you is that you excel in your examinations and progress to the next level in your academic journey. However, this is not the only thing I expect. To me, education serves a broader purpose, and I find immense joy in witnessing the kind of person you are becoming through it.

There's a quote I once read that deeply resonates with me: 'The greatest reward for a man's toil is not only what he gets for it but what he becomes by it.' Take a moment to read it again, slowly. All the activities and challenges you encounter in school, as well as those outside of it, contribute to the development of various aspects of your life.

Education equips you with valuable knowledge and skills that will not only propel you to the next level but also enable you to lead a productive life. Your perspective on life and your approach to challenges will improve if you wholeheartedly engage in the process of education. Eventually, you'll come to realize that education offers you the most valuable rewards.

Embrace the training and experiences that come your way. Whether it's spending time reading and taking notes, preparing for tests and examinations, thinking critically under pressure, participating in weekly worship services, or taking on leadership roles in student clubs, none of it is a waste of time. Each activity contributes to your personal growth and development in one way or another. Embrace the process, and make the most of these formative years to grow holistically - intellectually, socially, spiritually, and personally.

Pause and think over these - II

This page provides you with an opportunity to reflect on the content you have read so far. Take some time to go through each lesson and jot down the key concepts (the main points you've learnt) and your decisions (any changes or actions you plan to take).

Lesson	Key ideas	Key Decisions
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Above all else

One of the most significant decisions you will make in life is choosing whom to commit your life to, whom to live for, and whose pleasure you will seek on this earthly journey.

I wholeheartedly recommend Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who sacrificed Himself for us. His purpose was to restore our original relationship with God (our heavenly Father) that was broken by our sins.

Jesus Christ is the only path to a genuine relationship with your heavenly Father. Only through His name can anyone attain salvation.

Through Him, you will receive more than you can ever achieve in this life – eternal security. He will grant you a new life. If you have not yet personally dedicated your life to Jesus Christ or wish to recommit yourself to Him, sincerely pray the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I acknowledge that my sins have broken my relationship with you. I believe that, out of Your love for me, You sent Your Son Jesus Christ to come and die for my sins. I sincerely believe in my heart and confess Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for granting me a fresh start with you. Bestow upon me the strength and ability to live for you. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

About the Book

This book shares the author's personal journey of learning and growth during senior high school, following an average performance in junior high school.

Its purpose is to guide and instruct every junior high and senior high school student, highlighting common mistakes to avoid and offering valuable practices to adopt for academic success.

The lessons provided shed light on helpful ideas that can empower any student to achieve and maintain good academic performance. Whether presently struggling or already doing well, this book offers valuable insights to help students improve and excel in their studies.

About the Author

Hope K. Fiadjoe is a young man driven by a mission to inspire people to embrace a life dedicated to God, giving their best, and realizing their full potential. He earned a Bachelor of Pharmacy and Master of Philosophy in Pharmacology degrees from the esteemed Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST, Ghana).

He enjoys teaching servant leadership, Christian spiritual growth, personal development, proper drug use, and health matters.

He actively serves in the local church and seeks to address global challenges like spiritual emptiness, poverty, illiteracy, diseases, and self-centered leadership through personal development and meaningful solutions.