

## Case 5.5: A Place to Study

It was Back to School Night. Ms. Grady decided over summer she wanted to cultivate better at-home study habits in students. Many families came to Ms. Grady's classroom that night and listened as she explained how important it was for students to have a designated place at home to study and keep learning materials.

In order to motivate students, Ms. Grady purchased a pencil box for each of them to take home. She filled the boxes with writing instruments. Shua, one of Ms. Grady's students, was especially excited about the pencil box. Ms. Grady was excited for Shua because his parents seemed responsive to her suggestions at the Back to School event.

A month into the schoolyear, Ms. Grady noticed Shua was turning in homework with food stains. She also noticed he was crossing out some answers instead of erasing them. When she asked Shua about this he explained his siblings also had been using his pencils and pens. They did not always return them, which was why he had not been using an eraser.

"And the food stains?" Ms. Grady asked. Shua explained he and his older brother do homework at the kitchen table, sometimes while others are eating.

Ms. Grady was sympathetic to Shua's situation and decided to give him another set of utensils, which she labeled with his name. "Remember to find a quiet, *separate* place to work instead of working and keeping your box of utensils at the table," she told him. Shua nodded.

A few weeks later, after seeing little change in the condition of Shua's homework, Ms. Grady followed up with him regarding where he was studying and whether his siblings were still using his utensils. Noticeably uncomfortable, Shua replied, "I still work at the table and sometimes they still use my stuff." Ms. Grady thanked Shua for his honesty.

Later, when the school day ended, she wondered how she should approach Shua's parents at the upcoming parent-teacher conferences. She remembered they seemed supportive about her expectations that students have a quiet place to study. If they were supportive in front of her, but did not follow through at home, she worried they also would not be supportive of her other ideas for at-home learning. She also wondered whether Shua's family might benefit from a referral to a local agency that could provide donations if the family needed school supplies or other household items, since his siblings were using Shua's supplies.

Feeling frustrated, she packed her things and left for the day.