



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania

Home Ways for School Days, Part 1 GETTING BACK TO SCHOOL

It's that time of year again! Parents, children and teachers exchange the mentality of summer vacation and relaxed schedules for a back-to-school mindset. HOME WAYS that ready children for school success include the following suggestions:

EASE BACK

Two weeks in advance of opening day establish the school routine for personal hygiene, nighttime rituals, bedtime, wake up schedule and breakfast. Going to bed directly from TV, video games, Internet/computer activity, or rough-housing is counterproductive to sleep. Soften lights and disengage from noisy activity 20-30 minutes in advance of bedtime. Eliminate sugar intake and caffeine between supper and bedtime.

SCHOOL WAYS

Pre-plan a workable schedule for Monday through Friday. Include sufficient morning time for readiness, breakfast, lunch prep, commute time, and opportunity to review the after school schedule for the day. Possibly prepare lunch and lay out school clothes and P.E. uniform requirements the night before. Provide a heavy-duty cardboard box where your child stores school bag, projects, and paraphernalia needed for school. Hold your child accountable for obtaining parent signatures on required paperwork and then storing it in the schoolbag.

HOMEWORK

During classtime teachers introduce concepts, create activities to use the new

information, individualize instruction and guide student application. Mastery, however, requires repetition, reinforcement, and study. That is the purpose of homework. Homework is time on task minus trips to the refrigerator, bathroom, sibling interaction or entertainment. Appoint a time and place for daily homework that minimizes distraction and permits easy parent supervision. Establish the criteria that your child uses the time for school work, even on weekdays that the teacher does not assign homework. Determine length of homework time according to the expectations stated in the School Handbook. (Generally that amounts to 10 minutes multiplied by the grade level.) Assist with memory work. Listen to lessons. Examine work for thoroughness and accuracy. If necessary use index cards to create personalized flash cards for quick review and drill of material that is foundational to learning. With a calendar available, help your child to divide a long-range project into small parts. For book reports, set time goals for reading a book over several days, taking notes, drafting the report, editing and creating a "turn in" version. Plan time for purchasing particular materials. By grade six hold your child accountable to create the time plan and submit it to you for input.

PUBLIC HYGIENE

Review standards of etiquette in the use of a public bathroom, that is, proper disposal of paper products, flushing the toilet, washing hands thoroughly, and removing from the sink surface any water splashed by the child. If a urinal is a new concept for your child, take time to familiarize him with its proper usage.

STANDARD OF PERFORMANCE

When we ask too much of a child, we frustrate him/her. When we ask too little, we insult him/her. Use personal observation and teacher input to determine a reasonable expectation. Store away pieces of your child's work that illustrate neat, accurate, care-filled performance. When need arises, use that work as a "base line" standard of expectation.

TEACHER SUPPORT

Comply with school regulations. Back up teacher decisions. Inform teachers about stresses in your child's life that may impact his/her security. Promote responsibility and maturity in your child by teaching him/her to accept ownership for choices, admit to a choice, accept the consequence without shifting the blame to others, to apologize and to practice respectful assertiveness. If you disagree with a teacher decision or school policy, do so privately. Approach the teacher with the respectfulness in tone and language that you want to receive. Keep confidential a conversation shared with a teacher. Rather than criticize the teacher to your child, teach him/her how to cope with the situation and to rise above it.

DEVELOP SECURITY

Security, or stability, is the sense of trust, emotional safety, and confidence that my needs will receive predictable response from the significant people in my life and situation. With this assurance, my energies are available to deal with unexpected stresses.

Parents support the development of security when they:

- Establish routine, procedure, and system.
- Organize the environment.
- Initiate safety precautions – both physical and emotional.
- Provide attentiveness and inclusion.
- Establish consistency, continuity, and predictability.
- Keep promises.
- Anticipate needs and schedules.
- Say what they mean and mean what they say.
- Avoid double standards. What they say is what they do. They model they want their children to live.

Dr. Patricia McCormack, IHM, a former Catholic schoolteacher and catechist, is a formation education consultant, an author of several books as well as the PARENT PARTNERSHIP HANDBOOK feature of *Today's Catholic Teacher*, and director of **IHM Formative Support for Parents and Teachers**, Arlington, VA. She speaks and writes frequently on topics of child formation. *Reach her at DrPatMcCormack@aol.com.*

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