



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

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

Parent Guide for Fostering School Success – Part 2 SCHOOL MECHANICS

Identity means *who I truly am* or, at least, who I believe I truly am. The *evaluation I place on my perception of myself* is called **self-esteem**. Self-esteem does not come from verbal compliments, exaggerated praise, or from receiving awards and trophies. Self-esteem is rooted in respecting and being satisfied with the choices I make, even if some choices include pain or sacrifice. Positive self-esteem results when I look at my choices, behaviors, efforts, accomplishments, abilities, skills, and character and I respect what I see! Positive self-esteem is related to substance; not to wishful thinking. Identity formation, then, is at the heart of self-esteem and is crucial to conscience formation, moral attitudes, spiritual development, prosocial behavior, healthy personal relationships, and personal achievement -- at school and beyond.

In 1990 the *California Task Force to Promote Self-esteem and Personal Responsibility* defined self-esteem as: "Appreciating my own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others." This definition captures the substance of self-esteem and reflects the research of the psychological community that suggests that **the major identity formation task of children during elementary school years relates to the development of initiative and industry**. A child who grows in these areas demonstrates direction, purpose, method and competence. Consequently, such a child appreciates his own worth and importance and grows in the ability to be accountable and responsible.

As a parent you are the primary agent of your child's identity formation. There are many ways that you set the foundation for self-esteem. This communication focuses on the mechanics of school practices that foster growth in identity formation and, therefore, in self-esteem and achievement. By teaching these standards with consistency, and supporting the school when it teaches these standards, you foster initiative, industry and school success.

Decide which standards listed in this newsletter describe your child *as a pattern* under *usual, repeated circumstances*. May the results speak words of wisdom for you, affirm your parenting style, and serve as a guide to determine how to best provide for the ongoing identity formation and self-esteem development of your child.

School Practices that Foster Self-Esteem and Achievement

- Does your child accept responsibility for his actions, choices, and behavior?
- When you discuss mis-behavior, does your child “own” her behavior as opposed to shifting blame to others or shifting emphasis or focus from herself and the issue-at-hand to another topic?
- Does your child show respect for others - - as evidenced by self-control of speech and body toward others: parents, teachers, aides, peers, objects (books, possessions, equipment, environment, etc.)
- Is your child growing in an awareness that his projects, assignments, paper work, behavior, and personal appearance SPEAK A MESSAGE to others about his opinion of himself and the value, appreciation, or expectations he holds for himself?
- Does your child come to school/class prepared for the activities of school? (PE clothes, ruler, pencil, projects, books, lunch, etc.)
- If your child comes unprepared in some way for school activities, does she accept the consequences without whining?
- Does your child complete assignments care-fully, with fore-thought and method?
- Does your child submit assignments and requirements on due date?
- Does the quality of your child’s work demonstrate your child’s ability?
 - correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization representative of grade level curriculum
 - sentences which are, indeed, complete thoughts
 - no cross-outs, complete erasures
- Does your child return parent-signed notices on due date?
- If your child ever fails to return parent-signed notices on due date does he accept the consequences without whining?
- Does your child have the ability to LISTEN and to demonstrate the skill of listening by:
 - following the given direction
 - being able to repeat the spoken message
 - being able to re-word the spoken message into other words that convey the same meaning
- Does your child finish responsibilities and activities once begun? Does she have the habit of taking a task to the finish line?
- Does your child “follow through” on teacher requests and suggestions? If the teacher writes a note or directive on a returned paper or worksheet or homework book, etc. does your child do what is suggested or respond to the teacher-written question/comment?
- Does your child respond to RSVP-type of communications?

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