


To embrace, encourage, and empower through a network of Christian educators.

A Special
M15 Edition

Teacher Tips for Doing School Well

By Lance Howard - Vice Chair & Public School Representative



As you review how your school year is going for your students, take a moment to review some suggestions for how to start the school year and this new semester. As you review this list, evaluate the students' long-term goals in light of their current progress. Then identify some potential next steps that will help your students find greater short-term success!

HONORING THE PAST

SHAPING THE FUTURE

In an online article found on Scholastic's (the popular children's book publisher) website, I found the following 10 areas

that were compiled by teachers to help a student be more successful at school. Send this list to parents, especially if a child is not making the progress you desire.

1. **Sleep.** Encourage your child to keep regular waking and sleep times. Keep in mind the number of hours of sleep your child needs, based on his or her age.
2. **Positives.** Keep learning positive, and take time to recount the positives with your child! Bring to mind the field trips, special games, fun assemblies, etc. that the child has enjoyed in the past.
3. **Knowing where to go.** Make sure your child is familiar with key places/people at the school. This should include the nurse and the counselor.
4. **Be supplied well.** Make sure your child has the right materials and supplies and keeps them on hand in order to complete any assignments.
5. **Talk about your child's learning experiences.** Be informed about the assignments and deadlines for completing the assignments. Encourage your child to tell the funniest and the worst thing that happened that day. Do not ask, "How was your day?" That will receive only a one-word answer.
6. **Encourage your child to bring home the assignments that need to be completed at home.** Many homework and school projects are designed to be done at home. Provide a time and place for this work to be completed. If possible, display the child's work or special project at home. This tells the child the work or project is valuable and appreciated by you.
7. **Support your child and his/her school activities/events.** Students work harder when they know that parents will attend an activity or event. Parents can also learn much by communicating with the teacher and other parents at these events.
8. **Monitor your child.** Watch the child's sleep, appetite, and behavior patterns for potential concerns.

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Child's Play

Submitted by Melodee Simmons
Early Childhood Learning Center/
Preschool Representative

Do you remember what you enjoyed playing as a child? I loved roller skating, playing ball, climbing trees, and so many things. We didn't have a lot of toys compared to today's children, but we never lacked for things to do. Of course, we didn't know we were learning while we played, but we were. We were learning social skills. We learned how to get along with different people, how to compromise and take turns, and how to follow rules. We were learning how to plan and build. Did you ever build a fort and have to figure out how to make it stand up? Our creativity was developed as we imagined ourselves as cowboys or princesses or pirates. Sometimes we had to pretend one object was really something else. Recently a woman I met told how she would use a small twig off a pine tree as a doll. She pretended the pine needles were the dolls' hair. She said she never tired of playing with her "dolls."

We developed our gross-motor skills through running, riding bikes, and playing ball games. Our fine-motor skills were fine-tuned with games like Jacks and Marbles. Even a game of Hide-and-Seek helped us to learn to listen for small sounds and to plan strategies. All of this learning and developing was done with a lot of laughter and fun, and sometimes a few tears. After all, it's not always easy to learn and grow, but we did. We gained skills, both mental and physical, that would be with us for the rest of our lives.

Play is a vital part of a child's growing and learning. Fred Rogers, from "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood," said, "Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is in reality the work of childhood." The sad thing is too many children are missing that necessary part of their development. They spend time in front of a television, computer, portable DVD player, and now cell phones. I've heard parents brag about how their toddler-age child could pull up his or her own apps to play games. Of course, the parents are quick to say the apps are educational apps.

We need to allow children the opportunity to play without our direction or our limiting them with our interference. Recently our preschool was given some sturdy cardboard boxes for the children to use for play. One teacher asked, "What do I tell them to do with it?" (Continued on page 4.)

THE NEW
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Partnership with Parents - It Just May Be Our Greatest Untapped Resource!!!

Submitted by Marilyn J. Dominick
Public School Representative

I've always known that maintaining good relationships with parents of our students is important, but the true value and significance of the effort of families and educators working together has taken on new meaning for our family this school year. All three of my grandchildren have teachers who make it a priority to keep our family informed about what is going on in their classrooms. And, with today's technology, communication between home and school is easier than ever before!

I cannot even guess at the number of times frustrated parents have contacted me during my career as a public school administrator to express their concern about the lack of communication from school concerning their child. Many times the issue was a failing grade that was a complete surprise, and the parents wondered why their child's teacher had not let them know of a problem before it was too late for them to take any action. In fact, much to my dismay, I have even been that parent!!! Now, I would love to believe that my children were always honest with me, and I could believe them when they said school was going just fine for them. My sons would never try and hide their lack of success in class from me, would they?
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Partnership with Parents...

Submitted by Marilyn J. Dominick (Continued from page 2.)

Well, guess what? It happened. More than once! And more than once, I heard from their teachers that students are very aware of how they are doing and need to take responsibility on their own to do the right thing. Sounds great, doesn't it? But what about the times that it just doesn't happen that way?

Teachers are very busy. In the upper grades, it is not unusual for student loads to be over 100! It is challenging to stay on top of the issues with each one of our students. We may not see the teaching of personal responsibility as one of our many tasks. We need all the help we can get, and we need the support of informed parents more than ever before.

Good news! The days of sitting in the faculty room on the phone making many calls to parents are over! In this day of super, real-time technology, it is much easier to keep parents and families informed about homework, classroom activities, and even "good news" communication!

The vast majority of parents really want to do a good job of raising their children. However, many just do not know how to do that as far as success in school goes. A segment of our parents may not have had a positive school experience themselves, and they are hesitant and intimidated by any communication with school. It may even appear to us that there is a lack of caring on their part, and that they feel education is the school's job, not theirs. Others are very comfortable with us, and they want to be involved and informed. Still others are helicopter parents who want to know every detail, often taking on the responsibility for student success themselves, thus never helping their students learn how to prosper on their own. As you think about the parents of children in your own classes, I'm sure it wouldn't take long to categorize them.

Bottom line - I've never met a parent who didn't want the very best for his or her child. So, that's where we start! Here are a few tips on tapping into the family/school partnership:

- Before school begins, or even now, send a letter home initiating the idea of a partnership. In it, express your desire to provide the best learning situation for your students, and to do an even better job, ask for help and communication with families. We are better working together than in isolation. At the bottom of your brief and heartfelt, letter, place an area for email and text information. (Continued on page 5.)

Pray for Children Worldwide By the Staff of NCM Magazine

[Editor's Note: As we begin a new year, we tend to think of the children in our families or the children we teach. However, there are 2 billion children living in our world, many of whom live in dire circumstances. Take time to be pray for all children, but pray especially for those who live in less-than-desirable circumstances.]

"Lord, thank You for the gift of children. Thank You for their enthusiasm and joy, for the awe-filled way they explore Your world, for their full-hearted trust in You. There are 2 billion children living in our world, and You care deeply about each of them. When You were here, You told the disciples to let the children come to You. Forgive us for the times when we, too, have failed Your children, whether through ignorance or selfishness. As we become aware of the issues that affect children around the world, show us how to love and to act with compassion.

Human Trafficking: Around the world, 5.5 million children are victims of human trafficking, including forced labor and sex trafficking. Lord, we pray for children who are trapped in slavery—in places like Madagascar and the United States—that they would sense Your presence and Your love. Open our eyes to the evil happening in our own communities and around the world, and give us the courage to speak out and take action.

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Teacher Tips for Doing School Well

By Lance Howard (Continued from page 1.)

9. Read with your child. Set aside quality time for this. Be a role-model for reading, as you spend time reading.
10. Communicate with your child's teacher. Keep in regular contact with your child's teacher. Make the teacher aware of changes in your home that might affect the child's progress at school. And every teacher likes a note of appreciation from a parent.

Detailed information about each these suggestions can be found at <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/back-to-school/10-teachers-tips-kick-starting-new-school-year>

Remember that in order to have your academic goals realized, you need to evaluate how you are doing. Then plan your next steps that will help you reach those goals! Enlisting the help of parents can often help you succeed.



Join NEW at their M15 Sponsored Workshop featuring Adam Lewis and Julie Keith, sharing insights and perspectives on how to reach special needs children and their families.

Child's Play

Submitted by Melodee Simmons (Continued from page 2.)

I told her, "Don't tell them anything. Just put some boxes in a couple of your classroom centers and see what happens." She was excited when they started playing with the boxes, and she saw the imagination they were using.

Children need to be given the opportunity to explore, create, and imagine. When was the last time you brought boxes into your classroom? How about some cardboard tubes from paper towels? Put some different items in your art center, I always look for different shapes of pasta for the children to use creatively. Ask parents for some old pots and pans and other household items that they are not using anymore. Put them in your Home Center. Put some metal and non-metal items in a clear plastic jar, and add a large magnet with it in your Science Center. No need for explanations. Just watch, answer questions when asked, and see the fun and learning that will happen.

Let children be children for the few short years they have. Let learning be an exciting experience.

Pray for Children Worldwide

By the Staff of NCM Magazine
(Continued from page 3.)

HIV and AIDS: Almost 18 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS (15 million of those children live in sub-Saharan Africa). Lord, we pray for provision for children who have been orphaned or are left vulnerable because of this horrible disease. Help us as individuals and as congregations to care for vulnerable children in tangible ways, both in our own communities and in communities around the world. Help us to love others as You love them, and help us to see the needs around us.

Child Marriage: Every 3 seconds, a girl is forced or coerced to marry. Every 3 seconds, a girl is forced to grow up too soon and give up any dreams she had for her future. Lord, we pray for a way out for parents in Bangladesh and Mozambique and other countries where parents who are caught in poverty believe they have no other option. We pray for the young wives. Please remind them of their worth and dignity in You. And show us ways to lift up the young women around us.

Education: Around the world, there are 58 million young children who should be in school but are not. Education opens doors to possibilities for the future. So we pray, Lord, that You would provide a way for children to gain an education and possibilities for a hope-filled future.

Lord, give us Your heart for children in our homes, communities, and the world. Amen."

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Partnership with Parents...

Submitted by Marilyn J. Dominick (Continued from page 3.)

You might include a comment area, to gather input on how to better communicate with each other.

- Using the contact information you gather, keep the parents informed of general information, homework assignments, upcoming testing, special projects, and a brief overview of what you are covering each week.
- If you need extra hands, ask for parent volunteers, or even grandparents. Many schools even have grandparent programs for children who don't have grandparents close by. Of course, you'll need to comply with your district's policy on volunteers. There are lots of retired educators who are also grandparents.
- If your schedule allows, initiate a coffee chat once each month before or after school. Even though it's outside of your contractual day, such a gesture often pays off by allowing you to learn what is going on in families and what concerns exist. You have an opportunity to know parents as people. The question should always be: Together, how can we enhance your child's educational success?
- Be where your students are present with their families – concerts, sporting events, award ceremonies, etc. Getting to know families outside of the school day causes a personal connection, and they will work harder for you. If you happen to run into a student at the store or anywhere else outside of school, say something like "What a special treat to see you outside of school! I thought I was going to have to wait until tomorrow!" They will feel so special and proud in front of their mom or dad, grandma, grandpa, aunt, uncle, older sibling...
- Time invested = big payoff in student success.
- Create a webpage on your district's website, and keep it up to date. Copy and paste info between this and email/text communication so you don't have to duplicate effort.
- Celebrate even the smallest of successes for students who may not otherwise be celebrated. They are going to want to please you again and again if mom and dad get a text or an email letting them know how awesome they are!

I'm sure you can think of many other ways to harness this great resource of families working with us. The list can go on and on!

Next to parenting and evangelism, you are doing the most important work in the universe. Thank you for that! A great education can give families hope and break the hold of generational poverty or other less than perfect circumstances. It is God's will that we be the very best educators we can be and, with His help, we are making a huge impact for His Kingdom.

Colossians 3:23 says "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." Showing families that you care allows Christ's abundant love to flow through you and into your students. God bless you as you teach!!!



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