

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

SAINT MARY INTERPAROCHIAL SCHOOL
Mrs. Jeanne Meredith, Principal

Guiding Students for School Success

Start 2012 with high expectations

You *want* your child to succeed. You *expect* him to succeed. But does this really make a difference? Yes! Research shows that parents' expectations are linked to academic achievement. And when parents have warm, close relationships with their children, expectations are even more powerful. Talk with your child about what he'd like to accomplish in 2012. When setting expectations, remember to:

- **Be reasonable.** Expect your child to work hard, but don't set the bar so high that he's likely to fail. He should feel challenged and motivated, not overwhelmed.
- **Be patient.** Big goals are wonderful, but plan small milestones along the way. If your child needs to finish a long book, for example, figure out how many pages he'll have to read per day.
- **Be flexible.** Sometimes goals have to change. Maybe your child did poorly on a test, and he can't get an A in science. That shouldn't stop him from striving for something new, such as a B+.
- **Be optimistic.** Celebrate your child's accomplishments, no matter what. How hard he tries is more important than the final result.



Source: "Parental Expectations for Children's Academic Attainment," Child Trends, www.childtrendsdatabank.org/alphalist?q=node/366.

Make the rush before school less frantic—and more fun—by setting it to music!



Help your child create a three-song "playlist" of her favorite tunes. Each morning, start the music when she begins getting ready for school. Once the third song starts playing, she'll know it's almost time to go.

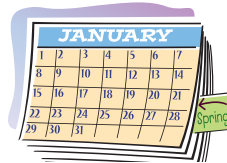
What do you do if she still can't get ready in time? Add a fourth song—and start earlier—tomorrow!

Source: A. Cohen, "Get Going!" *Woman's Day*, September 2011, Hearst Magazines.

Banish the blues—look back, then forward

Lots of people experience a letdown once the holidays are over and it's time to get back to work or school. If your child is feeling down, here's how to cheer her up:

- **Reminisce together.** "Let's look at some holiday pictures. We had such a good time, didn't we?"
- **Encourage her** to look forward. "It'll start getting warm again before you know it! Can you believe spring is right around the corner?"



Effective praise is enthusiastic, specific

Praise is a very powerful motivator when it comes to reinforcing proper behavior. To praise your child effectively when she does something well:



- **Show your approval.** "Great job, honey! I'm so proud of you!"
- **Define the good behavior.** "You did your homework before turning on the TV."
- **Describe the benefit.** "It's great that we don't have to argue now about your finishing your work!"

Source: R. Burke, Ph.D. and B.A. Barnes, *Common Sense Parenting: Using Your Head as Well as Your Heart to Raise School-Aged Children*, Boys Town Press.

Resolve to rein in back talk this year

Strive to make the new year more courteous and respectful by curbing your child's back talk.



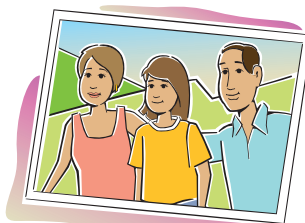
If your child talks back:

- **Refuse to engage.** Ignore any snarky, disrespectful comments. If he wants your attention, tell your child that he will need to speak appropriately.
- **Lay down the law.** If your child continues to talk back, enforce an appropriate consequence. "Since you can't speak politely, maybe you shouldn't speak at all. No more phone today."

Source: Dr. M. Borba, "Parenting Resolutions for Character: Curbing Backtalk and Boost Respect," Micheleborba.com, <http://tinyurl.com/7staff>.

Make the most of family time

You are your child's most important role model, and time together is essential. Yet many parents worry they're spending less time with kids than ever. Research tells a different story. It shows that since the mid-1990s, parents' time with kids has increased greatly.



Instead, something else may be lacking. In another study, kids were asked about their biggest wish for parents. It wasn't more family time. It was less tiredness and stress. When planning family time, consider relaxing activities, such as eating dinner together, playing board games and reading aloud before bed. Ask yourself, "What would help us enjoy one another's company and build a stronger relationship?"

Source: T. Parker-Pope, "Surprisingly, Family Time Has Grown," The New York Times, www.lynnbenjamin.com/blog/?p=111.

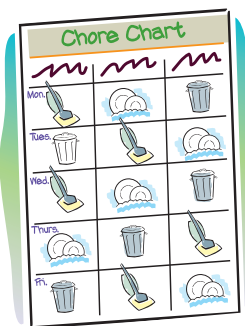
Questions & Answers

Q: My child acts completely helpless! If I'm not driving his "forgotten" homework to school, I'm doing his "forgotten" chores. How can I get him to be more responsible?

A: By resisting the urge to do so many things for him! It's easy to fall into the habit of picking up his slack—especially when he's giving you so much slack to pick up. Still, it's crucial that he learn to do things on his own. That's because learning responsibility is a major stepping stone on the road to adulthood.

To teach your child to behave more responsibly:

- **Outline his responsibilities.** "I want you to be more responsible!" may be met with a blank stare. So let him know exactly what his responsibilities are: "You're responsible for taking your homework back to school and for doing your chores."
- **Make it easy to succeed.** Map out his daily responsibilities on a chore chart and remind him to write important school assignments on a calendar. That way, he'll always know exactly what's expected of him.
- **Develop consequences.** Give your child fair warning about what will happen if he continues behaving irresponsibly. "From now on, if you leave school papers at home, I will not bring them to you. I'm truly sorry if it means you will earn a bad grade."
- **Follow through.** Your efforts will be meaningless unless you enforce the consequences you've laid out. That means no relenting when you get a tearful "I forgot my homework again" call from school!



Bystanders shouldn't ignore acts of bullying

Your child may not be a bully or a victim, but she's likely to be a bystander—someone who sees bullying take place.

This can be a scary, helpless feeling. Talk with your child about how to handle it. Should she join in the bullying? (No.) Should she do nothing? (No.) What are her other choices? (She might stand up for what's right, tell an adult who understands, or be kind to the victim—even if it's after the incident.)

Source: "Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders," At Health, www.athealth.com/Consumer/issues/BulliesVictimsBystanders3.html.

Does more 'stuff' mean more happiness?

Do you think giving your child more things will make him happy? Think again!



Research shows that kids who believe having more of something (such as money or gadgets) will make them happier are actually likelier to:

- **Feel unfulfilled.**
 - **Have poor relationships.**
 - **Struggle with substance-abuse.**
- So keep your child from falling into the "more stuff means more happiness" trap. Explain that the best things in life—such as family and friends—aren't "things" at all!

Source: J. Taylor, Ph.D., *Your Children Are Under Attack: How Popular Culture Is Destroying Your Kids' Values, and How You Can Protect Them*, Sourcebooks.

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