

October 1, 2008

Dear Parents,

The leaves are quickly becoming the vibrant colors of autumn and the morning air has a chilly bite to it. It's October, one of the most beautiful months of the year especially in Foster and Gloucester. It also means our school year is well underway and everyone is settling into their classes and schedules. Your student should be doing homework, studying, or at the very least, reading every night. Parents, please, use this month to help your child get organized by setting up a schedule at home to organize her/his school work and extracurricular activities. The goal is to find a comfortable balance in the amount of time spent on each activity and provide at least 8 to 9 hours of sleep each night. Decide when homework/studying will happen - right after school, the hour or two before dinner, or right after dinner before TV time. Where will homework be done in your home – a quiet place free from distractions (no phones, TV, computer games, etc) is recommended. Setting up an “after school routine” now will ensure your child succeeds. Our young adolescents do better in school when their parents are involved in their lives and education works best when teachers and parents work closely with one another. If you would like more information about helping your child through the Middle School, feel free to contact us.

Some important information to share with you.

1. It is getting colder and **students need to wear a jacket, sweatshirt, or coat** to school. Students are in the school yard from 7:15 until 7:35 A.M.
2. **Testing:** during the month of October P.M.S. students will be tested. The RI Department of Education now requires that all students in grades 3 – 8 be tested with the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). The focus of the **NECAP** is student skills. It is important because all students must participate in the testing this month. Please encourage your child to do well as educational decisions will be based on the students' results. We expect to receive the results in February/March 2009. “Show what you know!”

3. Three years ago, Ponaganset Middle School became the first middle school in the state to join the **Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)** initiative. All faculty and staff agreed upon improving school climate and using positive supports to teach expected behaviors. A team of faculty members has been trained in how to use positive supports to promote positive behaviors. The acronym, **PRIDE**, is the format that has been adopted by the school to present these expectations. The letters in the acronym stand for **Positive, Respect, Integrity, Dedication, and Excellence**. The students at Ponaganset Middle School are being taught about these school-wide behavioral expectations. **PBIS and Ponaganset PRIDE** will be our focus to show students the pride we have in our school and the good consequences that result for acting in a positive way. Our PRIDE kick-off is October 24th.

4. Parent Meetings for the seventh grade New York City Trip and the eighth grade Washington, D.C. Trip will be on Wednesday, October 29th in the auditoria. In an effort to make these trips accessible to all students during these tough economic times, we are meeting and setting up payment plans earlier in the school year.

The school calendar is attached to help you in organizing your home schedules. We do hope you take the time to set up your middle school aged child for success by setting up a place and time for homework.

I would like to take the opportunity to say **THANK YOU** for supporting our magazine drive. Your generosity is overwhelming! What an honor it is to be a part of such a responsive community.

Sincerely,

Patricia Marcotte



Creating a Positive Homework Environment

Do you have a child who hates to do homework? If you do, it's important not to get into a power struggle over the issue. A power struggle creates stress in the household and rarely rewards participants with what they want.

As a parent, what can you do to get your child to turn in homework assignments on time? Setting up the right environment is key. Here are a few tips on what you need to have in your home:

- ✓ A good dictionary.
- ✓ A thesaurus.
- ✓ A world atlas.
- ✓ A metric ruler and a compass.
- ✓ Glue and a stapler.
- ✓ Lots of lined paper.
- ✓ Pens, pencils, colored pencils, a pencil sharpener, and markers.
- ✓ A library card.
- ✓ Internet access.
- ✓ Poster board.
- ✓ A subscription to your local newspaper for reading and studying current events.

What Teachers Expect

Attendance: Students should be on time every day. Parents should make sure their children are in school and on time.

Preparation: Students should complete their homework and be prepared to learn and participate in class. Parents should know what's going on at school and attend parent-teacher conferences.

Support: Parents should explain the importance of education to their children and support teachers' efforts in the classroom.

Respect: Teachers deserve respect from both students and parents. Parents should teach kids to respect authority.

Appreciation: The teacher's job is not easy. Busy teachers appreciate a smile or a short note of thanks.

High standards: Parents should instill in children a desire to do their best, not just to settle for getting by.

Academics first: Parents should remind kids that academics come first. Sports, extracurricular activities, clubs, and jobs are secondary.

--Adapted from the *Chicago Sun*

Times.

Where Do Our Children Learn Self-Control?

Parents are the most influential people in a child's life. Teachers, relatives, and close neighbors are other significant adults that children look to for influence. When these adults model self-control, children watch and learn important lessons.

Here's an example:

Dad has a minor accident that was his fault. He checks the condition of his child in the back seat and tells the child he will have to get out of the car. He sits quietly, calming himself, and then gets out of the car to check on the other driver. He apologizes in a calm voice and asks what he can do to help.

A different role model is the dad who slams the car door and screams at the other driver, slamming his fist on the other vehicle while claiming his innocence and the other driver's guilt. His child is watching, learning not to be

in control and not to be responsible, but to blame others for something he has done.

No adult is totally in control of all areas of his or her life. And, certainly, children are not in control of everything they do and say. However, adults often expect too much from young children. Children grow in self-control year by year; they're not as in control in elementary school as they will be in high school--and not as in control in high school as they will be in college. However, if the adults in their lives are not in control, then the chances of their growing in self-control are significantly diminished. Do your children a favor: model self-control.



How to Manage Conflicts with Your Children

Do you and your children often get into conflicts that result in one person being the "winner" and the other the "loser"? If so, you may be whipping up a recipe for future disaster in your relationship with your child. You really don't want either of you walking away from a confrontation feeling defeated. It's just not a healthy way to resolve issues. According to Laurence Steinberg

in *The 10 Basic Principles of Good Parenting*, what you want to shoot for is a way to settle your differences so that both parties feel satisfied.

It's normal for parents and children to get into disputes. However, if you fight with your child more than once or twice a week and those incidences almost always end in screaming matches or even physical aggression, you should seek professional help. This is not a normal level of dispute with your child.

When you do have the normal types of disputes that are bound to occur in parent-child relationships, you will ultimately have to choose from four different styles of resolution. You can:

⇒ **Assert your parental authority.** This approach will allow you to end the argument in your favor, but it's not always the best choice. Your child will probably resent this tactic and see you as an unfair autocrat. Nevertheless, there are times, such as when your maturity and experience tell you your child could be in danger, when asserting your authority is absolutely the right thing to do--for instance, when your child refuses to wear his or her bicycle helmet.

⇒ **Give in to your child's wishes.** If you are wrong about something, acknowledge it. Admit your mistake and allow the child to do what he or she asked to do. Remember, unfair rules undermine your authority. Another time to give in is when something is trivial to you but really important to your child--such as the

way your child might want to dress for a party.

⇒ **Compromise.** This tactic may be a good option if the compromise makes sense and leaves you and your child feeling satisfied. For instance, splitting the difference can make sense when your child does not want to practice the piano. You may be able to strike a deal where the child still has to practice, but for only half the regular time. Of course, compromise is not always appropriate. For instance, if your child does not like peas, striking a deal where he only has to eat half of them probably will not leave him feeling satisfied with the agreement.

⇒ **Practice joint problem solving.** In this type of resolution, when you and your child disagree about a rule, you work together to come up with a new rule that is satisfactory to both of you. So, if you have a child who is a finicky eater who doesn't want to eat vegetables and you want him or her to eat vegetables, sit down and come up with a list of vegetables that the youngster is willing to eat. You can then agree to prepare only these vegetables for the child. It will be more work for you, but it will take less energy than repeating the same fight every night. This method is a good one in many cases, but some young children may lack the reasoning ability that it requires. You have to be the judge.



One Sport at a Time

Orthopedic surgeons recommend not allowing a child to play more than one sport at a time. The incidence of injury when playing two sports is more than twice as high because children are more likely to be tired.

If a player gets hurt, doctors advise RICE: Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. If the child can't put weight on the area, see a doctor.

Safer Soccer

More than 5 million American kids, aged 5 to 18, play soccer in organized leagues, making it the nation's fastest-growing team sport.

At the same time soccer participation is growing, so are emergency room visits for soccer-related injuries. Typical injuries range from broken bones to sprained ankles and knees.

Doctors at the Institute for Preventative Sports Medicine in Ann Arbor, Michigan, say the actual number of injuries is up to eight times higher than a few years ago. Many are preventable. Here's how:

- ⇒ Check to see that goal posts are padded to prevent injuries from a collision. Goal posts should be securely fixed to the playing surface so they cannot tip or fall.
- ⇒ Make sure drills where players "head" the ball are done with lightweight balls.
- ⇒ Require players to wear well-fitted shin-guards and mouth protectors.



Thomas Jefferson's Ten Rules for the Good Life

1. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.

2. Never trouble another for what you can do yourself.
3. Never spend your money before you have it.
4. Never buy what you do not want because it is cheap; it will never be dear to you.
5. Pride costs us more than hunger, thirst, and cold.
6. Never repent of having eaten too little.
7. Nothing is troublesome if we do it willingly.
8. Don't let evils that have never happened cost you pain.
9. Always take things by their smooth handle.
10. When angry, count to 10 before you speak; if very angry, count to 100.