



# Central Day School

## *Education With Eternal Value*

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John Spice, Head of School/Principal

**Dear Parents:**

9/2008

One major premise in the philosophy of Christian Education is the principle that the Christian School exists to support the home, and is an extension of the attitudes and values taught within. With that in mind, I would like to share a shortened version of an article that was published in 1981 by the Christian Home and School magazine. The article was reprinted with the permission of Mrs. Joanne M. De Jong, who was the librarian at Chicago Southwest Christian Junior High School, Oak Lawn, Illinois. Though the article is more than a few years old, its message is still very relevant today, based on timeless principles of education.

In His Service,

John Spice  
Principal

### **Parents Are Accountable Too**

by Joanne M. De Jong

As teachers watch students passing through their school systems they come to know which ones are benefiting most from the programs. They know there are certain values and skills which students must have, largely formed by parents in the home, to make them ready to be educated. A child enters kindergarten with a set of these skills and values, and they are reinforced as home influences continue during the child's growing years. What then can Christian parents do to help develop those values and skills which will make for successful, happy school years? Here are a few suggestions:

#### **We Must Teach Our Children God's Authority**

Children must be taught at home to understand and respect authority. As Creator and Sustainer of the universe, God constitutes the ultimate authority, and parents and teachers have been chosen by Him to exercise authority over children. Even though children may resent or disagree with those in authority, they must realize that God is pleased to rule them through these persons; persons who must be respected and obeyed because of the position or office they hold. Given this frame of reference, a child will be open to guidance and instruction. Without it, a child will benefit from a particular teacher's efforts only to the degree that he likes or dislikes the teacher. A negative response ("That teacher's a bore, a pain.") can obliterate entirely the teacher's effectiveness. Having thus categorized the teacher, the child can write him or her off as someone to be tolerated, ignored, or carefully watched for any infractions. On the other hand, if a child is taught that the Christian school teacher is there in place of parents whom God has entrusted with his training, the child will be open to instruction and guidance.

For example:

Son: ( Bursting into the family room after his return from school) "Do you know what happened today? Miss A. said that since none of us had done our homework we'd have to do an extra assignment before tomorrow; and, if we don't finish it, we'll have to stay in until it's done! That's not fair. Her assignments are so long. And we had a game last night!"

*Central Church Education Ministries  
Ernie H. Frey, Ph.D., Senior Pastor*

Parent's Possible Responses:

"Oh, she was probably in a bad mood. Maybe she had a fight with her boyfriend. They say she's really a crabby person. Why, Mrs. B was telling me...(now follows an expanded anecdote to document teacher's irritability). Don't worry, I'll help you finish the assignment. It shouldn't take too long."

Child hears: *I don't have to take the teacher seriously. I'll just have to work around her bad moods until I'm through with her. Hereafter this teacher will have little positive effect on this child.*

"Well, the school does encourage attendance at games. You got home at 7 and, by the time supper was over you were pretty tired. I suggest you and several classmates talk to Miss A. and explain how you feel. I'm sure she'll realize her demands were unreasonable at this point."

Child hears: *I have a right to evaluate and change things at school. My ideas are as valid as my teacher's. School is a democracy where majority rules.*

"As parents we are pleased that your teacher is trying to teach you to meet deadlines. Getting things done on time is important if you are to become a responsible adult. Training you to do that is hard for your teacher. Do you think she enjoys having you all angry at her? Or giving up her recess to supervise you as you work? It would be lots easier for her to forget the whole thing, but she knows she wouldn't be doing what we parents expect of her if she did."

Child hears: *My parents and teacher are united in trying to educate me. My teacher's firm ways will be good for me in the end.*

Suppose the parent really feels a teacher's action has been unfair, unreasonable, and unwise. Must the child become a martyr to the "respect for authority" ideal? Of course not. Help is as near as your telephone. Tell the teacher how you feel. Understanding and cooperation for the sake of the child is almost always the result.

### **We Must Maintain A Single Standard with Our Children**

In order to enroll their child in a Christian school, parents subscribe to certain fundamental beliefs. These same principles will be explained and applied in course work, in methods of discipline, and in social situations. Honesty, Christian charity, loyalty to God, country, and church will be upheld; materialism, profanity, cheating, violence, and unkindness will be taught as contrary to the teachings of Scripture.

Imagine the confusion of the child who is subjected to one set of standards at school and a different set at home. Children are "black and white" thinkers. To them, something is either wrong or right; they don't understand the gray area. Ideally they should see their Christian schools as institutions which are extensions of their homes, each holding the same set of values which are based squarely on God's Word.

### **We Must Teach Acceptable Behavior**

The infant comes into the world with an instinct for having his needs met. He knows that basic need will be met if he cries. So he cries when he is hungry, cold, bored, wet, uncomfortable, or lonely. The cries propel his "caretaker" into action to determine and meet the need. It works like magic. As the child grows older, he discovers more sophisticated methods of getting his way such as, whining, arguing, annoying siblings, or striking out at classmates. None of these are acceptable ways of gaining desired ends on an adult level. Left to "grow like Topsy", a child will never learn to consider others and the effects of his behavior on them. Love of neighbor and seeking the good of another are not native to the sinful heart. Our beautiful children will not grow automatically into happy, well-adjusted adults. Rather, they must be guided, trained, and disciplined. Parents should take advantage of the books, films, and lectures available to help them in this demanding and significant task. If the child is not disciplined in the home, society will not take up the slack.

### **We Must Help Children Develop a Sense of Responsibility For Their Behavior**

Because parents love their children so much, they often run interference for them. Unacceptable behavior is excused because the child is tired, hungry, or overstimulated. While this may have been

true when an infant, a maturing child must learn to lay the cause for bad behavior where it belongs, usually on self.

If we were to ask a group of junior high students why their work is not finished, we might be surprised to hear the variety of reasons given. We might hear:

“We had to go away.”

“Mother made me go to bed early.”

“I had to go to a church meeting.”

To the question “Why did your grade go down this term?” the answers may be:

“Other kids make too much noise when I’m trying to study.”

“I have too much to do.”

“Teachers pick on me.”

Some of these answers may be partially true, but a child needs to learn to accept responsibility for his own behavior. Honesty with self leads a child to the next step, that of accepting himself with all his talents and limitations as a unique creature of God. He starts to find out who he is and tries to discover God’s plan for his life. There is a saying which captures this matter of self-awareness and responsibility for the development of God-given talents:

*What you are is God’s gift to you.*

*What you make of yourself is your gift to God.*

#### **We Must Teach Children To Organize And Complete Work**

Even though IQ tests actually measure a child’s potential for success in the academic environment, a high IQ score does not guarantee success at school. A child may have a lot of native ability, but be so impatient, disorganized, restless, and indifferent about results, that his achievement never matches his potential. “Not working up to his ability” or “Can do better,” is frequently noted on his report card.

As the child’s earliest and most effective teachers, parents should have their children carry out tasks in keeping with the child’s age and experience. These tasks should be completed, and the child should receive praise for a job well done. Qualities of neatness, organization, perseverance, responsibility, and satisfaction with a job well done, though stressed at school, are essentially taught and practiced at home. Parents must not be satisfied with just sending a child out to do a chore because he usually dislikes working alone; rather, parents should work along with him in a relaxed, friendly fashion. As the child brings homework home from school, parents must show interest, provide a quiet, well-lit place to study, and supply some basic reference tools. Doing homework for him will encourage dishonesty because he will present it at school as his own work. He will learn to depend on his parents for help and tend to become lazy.

#### **We Must Be Always Teaching**

When you think of it, the classroom is an artificial community, removed from the mainstream of life. There a child learns the facts of math, science, and language, but he must be allowed to see how these actually function in the real world before they have a great meaning for him.

Parents must capitalize on every opportunity to teach. To understand one-to-one relationships, let the young child count spoons for table setting. Observe how the snow melts as the temperature rises. Notice which birds stay and which migrate. Read signs. Look at different kinds of trees and leaves. Turn off the car radio on long trips and talk together about pollution standards, car makes and models, highway courtesy, season changes. The topics are endless! Observe, prod, encourage, stimulate.

Parents, you are your child’s first and most important teacher. Rediscovering childhood wonders, seeing the world once more through the eyes of a child, is one of the sheer joys of parenting.

### **We Must Aim At Perfect Attendance**

Obviously, a child cannot learn his lessons well if he's not in school. It's very hard to make up missed work at home, and some of the missed work can never be made up. When a child misses a day of school, he misses a lot. When he returns, he will flounder for a few days before regaining his bearings.

Some absences cannot be avoided. Sick children should not be in school, but "*school sickness*" is another matter. A child may have symptoms to avoid something he dreads, such as tests. He is usually symptom-free on the day of the game or the school play. Wise parents find ways of dealing with "school sickness" and try to uncover its cause.

### **We Should Send Children To School With High Expectations**

Many immigrant parents and grandparents had something close to reverence for education. They marveled at the opportunities found in this land. Anyone could "get ahead" if he tried hard enough, but he would have to learn the language, a skill, a trade. He needed education.

Such forces do not drive today's children. Somewhere along the line school becomes a bore, a drag, too much work. Somewhat mesmerized by watching TV, school becomes an interruption to pleasure. And since no classroom is as entertaining as "Happy Days" or "Little House," hours in school for some are dull and plodding.

Parents can swing this attitude around. First of all, TV watching must be seriously monitored. It is nearly impossible to counter TV's influence. Compared to TV's message, stating what the Bible says about violence, greed, adultery, and disrespect seems pale, preachy, and ineffective.

Somehow we must convey to our children the idea that in school they will discover the secrets which God has placed in His marvelous universe. In school the whole world of books will be opened to them. They will find many new friends, learn games and skills. Teachers will be kind, helpful, and try to guide them. There will be movies, filmstrips, gymnastics, sports, playground fun, birthday treats, art and science projects.

But, most of all, the child must realize that this is his work, his God-given task and opportunity at this time of his life. God expects him to do his best. It is as important for him to try his best at school as it is for Dad and Mom to do their best at their tasks. The privilege of school brings with it a responsibility. School is exciting but serious business.

### **We Must Try To Raise Children In An Emotionally Secure Environment**

The 1960's and 1970's were decades of vast sociological change in the Western world. Adults seek personal fulfillment in jobs and marriage. Mothers juggle the demanding dual roles of housewife and career person. If marriages run into difficulty, often the question is not, "What is my duty before God?" but "What am I getting out of this? Is life passing me by as I load the dishwasher or drive my semi?"

Unfortunately, parents cannot control events to insure an idyllic childhood for their children. Moving to another environment, death of a close relative, illness, financial reverses - such stressful events will strike some families. Parents are encouraged to deal with them prayerfully and intelligently. There are many books with good advice for parents facing these crises.

Children cannot perform well in school if they are not emotionally secure and at ease. If they are preoccupied with the conflict and distress of their homes, they will not at that time be able to appreciate and enjoy school.

Parenting is hard work. It often demands total selflessness. The rewards may be few and deferred. But parents are accountable, too...to God. He will give strength and wisdom to parents who ask in faith!