



The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

Home & School:

Together We Can Make a Difference



February 2018

Parent and Family Engagement Newsletter

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Skip Forsyth

My dad had high expectations of my brother and me – in athletics, in public settings, and in the classroom. You might say he was old school. He wasn't one to gush with praise, but if I missed the mark I'd hear about it. He never spanked. He never grounded. But, I knew what was coming. He called them "pep talks," but they were stern lectures. After the lecture was over, it wasn't over. For the next couple of days he'd ask if I had thought about his "pep talk." If I didn't have a reasonable response, I'd get another "pep talk."

My dad's favorite coach was Vince Lombardi. You may not know the legend, but you've probably heard him quoted, and my dad loved to quote him in our "pep talks:"

- "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing."
- "Winners never quit, and quitters never win."
- "The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary."
- "The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand."

Although my dad had high expectations for us academically, he rarely looked at my homework or test results. He was interested in two things: Did I have good conduct in the classroom and the school? Did I demonstrate maximum effort? He believed if I developed my character and worked toward a goal that had value, the rest would take care of itself. You might say, he believed in the law of reciprocity, "you reap what you sow." I guess I have my dad to thank for receiving the eighth grade "Outstanding Citizenship" award. He taught me personal responsibility and self-motivation.

We are rapidly approaching that time of the school year when the "high stakes" state assessments become a primary topic of conversation at ball games, at PTA meetings, on Facebook, and in the teacher's lounge. Parents and teachers have high expectations of students. The State (TEA) has high expectations of schools. The Fed's (USDE) have high expectations of the State.

Although I do not advocate my dad's method of "pep talks" to produce results, we can help our children learn personal responsibility. Let's find ways to develop intrinsic motivation in each child, because many times the only reward is knowing "we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand." I realize the STAAR tests measure results, not effort, but I wonder... twenty years from now when your child is successful in their chosen profession, will you attribute their success to STAAR mastery or to mastering the law of reciprocity as they pursue high expectations.

The Greatest Parents On Earth

**I will never take for granted
how greatly I've been blessed;
For when it comes to parents,
Mom and Dad, you are the best!**

**You nurtured and protected me
and taught me with great care.
And every time I've needed you,
you were always there.**

**If you could look into my heart
how quickly you would see,
the special place you hold there,
and how much you mean to me.**

**May you receive the blessings
you are so deserving of
for your caring, and your sharing,
and each sacrifice of love.**

**And may you carry in your hearts
these words forever true...
No parents anywhere on earth
could be more loved than you.**

Ron Tranmer



Helping Your Child Through the Midyear Slump

If Wednesday is hump day, then February is hump month. The holidays have passed and you're midway through the year and school is decidedly not fun anymore for both kids and parents. Students and educators can also go through a "slump" during the first part of the second semester. Similar to the pre-holiday euphoria is the post-holiday letdown. The stage is set for a slump.

Your child may respond to these third quarter adjustments in less than positive ways. If a student's academic grades decline or there is greater incidence of conduct issues, the student may be experiencing the third quarter slump. Often during the third quarter, the content within the curriculum has reached a point where most information is new to the student and; therefore, the level of difficulty has increased. This may cause student frustration and discouragement that may lead to a number of unsatisfactory student behaviors ranging from apathy to acting out.

So, how can a parent help his/her student avoid the third quarter slump? The following proactive measures are good any time of the year and will help you and your student develop effective student habits:

- **First** of all, establish family routines including time for studying, recreation, family meals and sleep. Children in particular thrive on consistency and definitive boundaries. Children find comfort in knowing the expectations and routines of the family. By placing importance on doing certain things at a certain time, parents are teaching time management skills and helping the student to discern the things that are the most important. Make sure your student is getting enough sleep. The winter can cause all of us to want to sleep more, but children really need the additional sleep for healthy growth.
- **Second**, the new year is a good time to replenish school supplies and refocus on organizational routines, strategies and practices. Perhaps, you and your student can do a mid-year binder check or notebook clean-up. This helps the student realize accomplishments from the first semester and get re-organized for the next semester. New materials, new organizational strategies or a new way of looking at something are always good to spark renewed energy and motivation.
- **Third**, avoid over scheduling your student, but encourage some co-curricular activity. Many students actually perform better when they are involved in an activity of interest apart from their required school course work. By continuing to maintain family routines and by allowing your student to participate in an activity of enjoyment, many students actually improve their time management skills. These activities can be a stress reducer and help to eliminate seasonal blues experienced by some students.
- **Fourth**, keep the lines of communication open between you and your student's teacher. If you discover your student's grades are sliding, conferences with the teacher can help you learn what you can do to help the situation. Educators can provide helpful suggestions and incredible insight into the observed behaviors of your student. If a student is struggling with new material, the parent and teacher can work together to develop a supportive intervention plan.

Finally, celebrate the learning successes. Students often just need to know that we, as parents, recognize their effort and achievements. Helping your student stay motivated, reinforcing organizational practices, and maintaining open dialogue will help your student avoid a slump during the third quarter or any other time. Be encouraged...it's just a short while longer to keep moving forward and onto the promise of a relaxing, well-earned summer.

Seddon Prater, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Knoxville Catholic Schools

<http://knoxvilleparent.com/2014/01/helping-your-student-avoid-the-3rd-quarter-slump/>

Boost Your Child's Self-Esteem

A positive sense of self is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child. Children with high self-esteem feel loved and competent and develop into happy, productive people. To help build your child's positive self-image as he grows, consider these dos and don'ts.

Give compliments every chance you get. We take a lot of things our children do for granted. When they clear the table, do their homework, or feed the dog, say, "Thanks!" Otherwise, you are missing a great chance to reinforce the behavior you want.

Avoid put-downs, even as jokes. Children take them seriously. They may not admit it, may even laugh with you, but on some level they believe the put-down is deserved and this contributes to poor self-esteem.

Don't compare your children. "Your older brother was able to do this faster" only discourages a child and causes resentment. Remember that each child is different and special.

Give children choices. Giving children choices--within a reasonable set of options preselected by you--makes them feel empowered. For example, at breakfast you might offer your child the option of eggs or pancakes. Learning to make simple choices while he's young will help prepare your child for the most difficult choices he'll face as he grows.

<http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/development/social/boost-your-childs-self-esteem/>

Children thrive on praise. Here are some words of praise you can use to build your children's self-esteem and help them know they're loved, appreciated, and respected.

You ROCK!! You make me smile
I'm So Proud of You
Keep up the good work.

Cool! You should be proud of yourself.
You've got it!

Amazing effort! Great!
You're very talented.

Phenomenal! YOU'RE A GREAT EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS.
Great answer.

Awesome! Good for you! Well done.

THAT'S INCREDIBLE!
What a great listener. Super job.

WHAT AN IMAGINATION!



Maintaining Children's Health

Good physical health requires good nutrition, good hygiene, and regular exercise. Good health also calls for medical and dental checkups on time and immunizations on schedule.

Hygiene

Introduce children to the basic concepts of good hygiene and encourage them to practice good health habits every day. Tell your youngsters to:

- wash their hands prior to every meal and before snacks. Wash hands after playing, sneezing, using the toilet, or touching an animal.
- shower or bathe every day. Be sure to have them shampoo their hair daily and wash their private areas.
- brush their teeth after meals and before bed. Floss as your dentist recommends.
- wear clean clothes, including clean socks and underwear, each day.



Nutrition

Establish good nutrition habits early in your children's lives and praise them for eating right. Do your best to help them:

- eat a variety of foods daily, especially whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- control their weight.
- limit fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
- eat foods with plenty of fiber.
- have sugary treats only in moderation.
- avoid too much salt/sodium.
- eat "fast food" only in moderation.
- start each morning with a good breakfast.



Exercise

Regular exercise is vital to healthy growth and development and to emotional health. Physically active children are less susceptible to depression. Make daily exercise, at least an hour a day, part of every child's good health habits. Join your children in exercise whenever possible. It can build family bonds and help you stay in shape.

Taken in part from positivepromotions.com

Togetherness

Regardless of what constitutes your 'family,' the feeling of being a family member is important for the healthy growth and development of your children. Building family bonds with memories and traditions can help support your children's sense of security.

Suicide



Introduction

Every year close to 800,000 people take their own life and there are many more people who attempt suicide. Every suicide is a tragedy that affects families, communities and entire countries and has long-lasting effects on the people left behind. Suicide occurs throughout the lifespan and was the second leading cause of death among 15 to 29 year olds globally in 2015.

Who is at risk?

The link between suicide and mental disorders (in particular, depression and alcohol use disorders) is well established. Many suicides happen impulsively in moments of crisis with a breakdown in the ability to deal with life stresses, such as financial problems, relationship break-up or chronic pain and illness.

In addition, experiencing conflict, disaster, violence, abuse, or loss and a sense of isolation are strongly associated with suicidal behaviour. Suicide rates are also high amongst vulnerable groups who experience discrimination, such as refugees and migrants; indigenous peoples; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI) persons; and prisoners. By far the strongest risk factor for suicide is a previous suicide attempt.

Immediate Risk

Some behaviors may indicate that a person is at immediate risk for suicide.

The following three should prompt you to immediately call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or a mental health professional.

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or obtaining a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live

Prevention and control

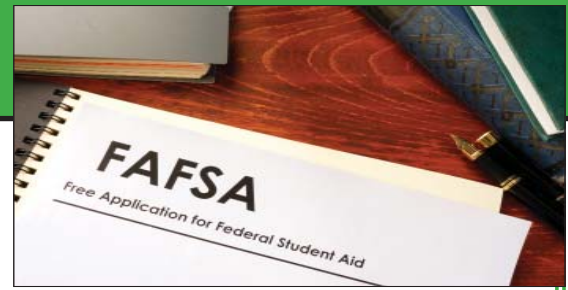
Suicides are preventable. There are a number of measures that can be taken at population, sub-population and individual levels to prevent suicide and suicide attempts. These include:

- reducing access to the means of suicide (e.g. pesticides, firearms, certain medications);
- reporting by media in a responsible way;
- introducing alcohol policies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol;
- early identification, treatment and care of people with mental and substance use disorders, chronic pain and acute emotional distress;
- training of non-specialized health workers in the assessment and management of suicidal behaviour;
- follow-up care for people who attempted suicide and provision of community support.

Suicide is a complex issue and therefore suicide prevention efforts require coordination and collaboration among multiple sectors of society, including the health sector and other sectors such as education, labor, agriculture, business, justice, law, defense, politics, and the media. These efforts must be comprehensive and integrated as no single approach alone can make an impact on an issue as complex as suicide.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The service is available to everyone. The deaf and hard of hearing can contact the Lifeline via TTY at 1-800-799-4889. All calls are confidential.

Taken in part from an article in World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs398/en/>



Here's what students and parents should be doing to manage federal student aid.

STUDENTS TO DO: ALL YEAR

- ✓ Work hard all the way to graduation—second-semester grades can affect scholarship eligibility.
- ✓ Stay involved in after-school activities, and seek leadership roles if possible.

FALL

- ✓ As soon as possible after its October 1 release, complete and submit your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), at fafsa.gov, along with any other financial aid applications your chosen school(s) may require. You should submit your FAFSA® by the earliest financial aid deadline of the schools to which you are applying, usually by early February. Refer to the "FAFSA: Applying for Aid" section of this site as you go through the application process.
- ✓ After you submit the FAFSA, you should receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) within three days to three weeks. This document lists your answers to the questions on your FAFSA and gives you some basic information about your aid eligibility. Quickly make any necessary corrections and submit them to the FAFSA processor.
- ✓ If you haven't done so already, register for and take the standardized tests required for college admission. Check with the colleges you are interested in to see what tests they require.
- ✓ Apply to the colleges you have chosen. Prepare your applications carefully. Follow the instructions, and **PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO DEADLINES!**
- ✓ Well before your college application deadlines, ask your counselor and teachers to submit the required documents (e.g., transcript, letters of recommendation) to the colleges to which you're applying.
- ✓ Complete any last scholarship applications.

SPRING

- ✓ Visit colleges that have invited you to enroll.
- ✓ Review your college acceptances and compare the colleges' financial aid offers.
- ✓ Contact a school's financial aid office if you have questions about the aid that school has offered you. In fact, getting to know your financial aid staff early is a good idea no matter what—they can tell you about deadlines, other aid for which you might wish to apply, and important paperwork you might need to submit.
- ✓ When you decide which school you want to attend, notify that school of your commitment and submit any required financial deposit. Many schools require this notification and deposit by May 1.

TO EXPLORE:

- ✓ Understand the FAFSA better by watching the videos in the "FAFSA: Apply for Aid" playlist at www.YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid.
- ✓ Follow or like the office of Federal Student Aid at www.Twitter.com/FAFSA and www.Facebook.com/FederalStudentAid to get regular financial aid tips.
- ✓ Make informed decisions about student loans; the following resources are important at this point:
 - Federal Versus Private Loans
 - Federal Student Loans: Basics for Students

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REMEMBER: Register for all tests in advance and be sure to give yourself time to prepare appropriately! If you have difficulty paying a registration fee, ask your school counselor about getting the fee waived.

PARENTS TO DO:

- ✓ Work with your child on filling out the FAFSA.

TO EXPLORE:

- ✓ Make sure your child's personal information is safe when he or she applies for financial aid. For tips, read Federal Student Aid and Identity Theft.
- ✓ Read IRS Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education to see how you might benefit from federal income tax credits for education expenses.
- ✓ Understand the benefits of federal student loans.
- ✓ Help your child learn about the responsibilities involved in accepting a student loan by reviewing "What should I consider when taking out federal student loans?" with him or her.
- ✓ Look at communications from schools to which your child sent FAFSA information. Booklets a school may offer you or your child which might be useful are: Direct PLUS Loans, the Federal Student Loans: Basics for Students and Federal Student Loans: Direct PLUS Loan Basics for Parents booklets might be useful to you.

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/prepare-for-college/checklists/12th-grade>

College Students and Parents: What You Need to Know About the 2017–18 FAFSA®

What's changing for 2017–18?

Starting with the 2017–18 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), these changes went into effect:

- You'll be able to submit your FAFSA® earlier. You can file your 2017–18 FAFSA as early as October 1, rather than beginning on January 1. The earlier submission date will be a permanent change, enabling you to complete and submit a FAFSA as early as October 1 every year.
- You'll use earlier income and tax information. Beginning with the 2017–18 FAFSA, students will be required to report income and tax information from an earlier tax year. For example, on the 2017–18 FAFSA, you and your parent(s), as appropriate, need to report your 2015 income and tax information, rather than your 2016 income and tax information.

The following table provides a summary of key dates as we transition to using the early FAFSA submission timeframe and earlier tax information.

When a Student Is Attending College (School Year)	When a Student Can Submit a FAFSA	Which Year's Income and Tax Information Is Required
July 1, 2017–June 30, 2018	October 1, 2016–June 30, 2018	2015
July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019	October 1, 2017–June 30, 2019	2016

WHAT A TEENAGE BOY NEEDS MOST FROM HIS MOM

Touch. Your teenage son will pull away from you physically, and that is normal. But even the most rigid, sulky teenage boy needs hugs from Mom. Don't get awkward and keep a distance. Create a "hug a day" rule or something that makes it routine and normal. He'll love it even if he refuses to show it.

Boundaries. Our boys need to know what is absolutely okay, and what is absolutely not. They may resist rules, but deep down they feel safe when there are clear-cut rules without exceptions. Make them clear and consistent, and have absolute consequences in place for when they break rules. **Boundaries = Security.**

A sense of humor. Teenagers...are hilarious. No more knock-knock jokes or bad made-up jokes that never seem to come to a conclusion. Teenagers actually GET STUFF. There's hardly anything like the bond of a good laugh.

<http://monicaswanson.com/what-a-teenage-boy-needs-most-from-his-mom/>



THINGS A FATHER SHOULD TELL HIS DAUGHTER ABOUT DATING

Be confident in who you are. Helping your daughter understand who she is and what she stands for starts long before the teenage years, but the message needs additional focus during this time when insecurities can creep in. Remind her that she is always enough, and that she doesn't have to do anything to fit in.

Guys are not into drama. Despite the fact that teenage girls seem to be all about "hidden messages" and reading things into every nuance of a relationship with their friends, guys are not that sophisticated. If she has a rough patch in her dating relationship, talk about it and then get over it. Bringing it up again and again only strains the relationship further.

Dressing modestly actually empowers you. Help her understand that what she wears not only reflects on her, but is also an opportunity for self-empowerment.

The relationship between fathers and daughters is a special one and she will look to you for the most important dating advice she will receive.

<https://www.thespruce.com/what-to-tell-daughters-about-dating-1270993>

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<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>

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